



Israel and the Purposes of God

“What is so special about Israel?”

As we consider the history of the Jewish people and the centuries of suffering they endured for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, is it possible to define one particular event, action, or attitude that caused them to suffer such tribulations and trials?

- Even before Jesus entered Jewish history, the Israelites suffered greatly at the hands of the Philistines, the Syrians, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Romans.
- Because of their disobedience and idolatry, God allowed the Jewish nation to be removed from their land and enslaved by ungodly nations.
- But since 70 A.D., God has allowed the Jews to suffer far worse atrocities than any other nation on earth, including the Holocaust.
- If the Jews are God’s chosen people, why would He allow them to suffer such indignities?

The answer is contained in a correct understanding of God’s purposes for the nation of Israel and Jesus’ earthly ministry.

- While Jesus used many methods to reveal Himself as the Savior sent from God, including His miraculous ministries to those who were hurting because of their physical infirmities, His main priority was to defeat the power of Satan, i.e., to redeem lost man from his bondage to Satan and sin, and He did that by His death, burial, and His resurrection.

In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus gave the parable of building two houses – one on sand and the other on rock.

- In the beginning, both houses appear to be sturdy.
- However, when the storms of life come, the house built upon the sand will crumble, and the house built upon the rock will stand.
- This was Jesus' message to the Jews:
 - Continue to build your lives on the traditional Pharisaic interpretations of the Law of Moses, which would lead to their spiritual death, or accept His teachings and His example as the new design for their lives and receive God's gift of everlasting life.
- However, this choice placed them in a precarious situation.
 - For centuries, the Jews had trusted the Rabbis as the voices of God's wisdom. However, the Rabbis did not teach based on their knowledge of the Scriptures but rather upon the previous teachings of the Rabbis, which included their errors.
 - The teachings of Jesus were different from the scribes.
 - Jesus didn't teach according to the views and opinions of others – He taught as one who had authority, and while they loved to hear Him teach, they were afraid to go against the traditions of the Rabbis.

In 2 Corinthians 3:2-11, the Apostle Paul confirmed that the Law of Moses, which was first written on stone, had been replaced by something new and more glorious, and that was the Law of Jesus.

- The Law of Jesus contained everything the Law of Moses contained, as far as the level of righteousness necessary to be acceptable unto God.
- However, as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:2-4, ***“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”***

Even though Jesus proved Himself to be the Messiah, the One sent by God to offer access into the Kingdom of God, only a few Jews believed in Him and received Him as their Savior.

- However, there was one event that happened about midway of Jesus' earthly ministry that seemed to be the final straw in the ongoing battle between Jesus and the Jewish Religious leaders.
- Historians believe this may have been the one event that sealed the fate of the Jewish nation and led them to suffer more than 2,000 years of persecution.

In Matthew 12:22-30, the gospel writer said a man was brought to Jesus who was "**demon possessed, blind, and mute,**" and Jesus healed him.

- Most people were astonished and wondered if Jesus really was the Son of David because Jesus had followed the procedure of the Mishnah for casting out demons.
 - There was a means of communicating with the demon.
 - The demon's name was discovered by asking.
 - The demon was addressed by that name and driven out.
- However, the Pharisees could not deal with a blind mute because they were could not communicate with the mute man, and therefore, they were helpless.
- So, knowing the only person who could heal a blind mute was the Messiah, and having seen Jesus not only heal this man, but cast a demon from him, the Pharisees were in a dilemma.
 - Did they accept Jesus as the God-sent Messiah, or did they reject the One who might just be who He said He was?
 - If they did reject Him, how could they explain what everyone had seen with their own eyes?
- In Matthew 12:24, the Pharisees said that Jesus was demon possessed – that the spirit within him was an evil spirit that gave Him power through the ruler of demons – thus denying the power and authority of the Holy Spirit.
- In Matthew 12:28, Jesus said what He had done not only validated His ministry but it proved He possessed the very power of God – i.e., the

“Kingdom of God” had come to them, and they had rejected it.

- That was “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit: the unpardonable sin.”

Sadly, this rejection by the Jewish leaders sealed the fate of that generation of Jews and set the pattern for their suffering for the next 2,000 years, and as we know, the worst is yet to come before that final remnant of the Jews is saved.

- In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus predicted Israel’s suffering by educating them on demonology.
- When a demon is cast out of a person, it will look for another body to inhabit, and if it cannot find one, it will return to the body from which it had been cast out. If the demon finds his former dwelling place empty, he will take seven other spirits even more wicked and inhabit that body so that the last state of that man is worse than the first.
- Since the evil spirit of the Pharisees had not been replaced by the Holy Spirit, there was nothing to prevent its return, and this time with seven more demons.
- Jesus said, **“So shall it be with this wicked generation.”**
- In less than 40 years, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was torn down and burned with fire, and the people who survived were scattered around the world to be rejected by the world.

Jesus confirmed that in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:1-51. As Jesus exited the Temple for the last time, He told His disciples that it would soon be destroyed, and a little later, the disciples asked Jesus: **“Tell us when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”**

- In verses 4-6 – Jesus described the characteristics of the time in which we live today – a time of false messiah’s, deception, wars, and rumors of war.
- In verses 7-8 – Jesus described the characteristics of the end of this age – global conflict, worldwide war, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, and other supernatural catastrophic events.
- In verses 9-14 – Jesus described the characteristics of life in Israel once they had officially rejected Jesus as the Messiah – persecution, betrayal, martyrdom, etc. (See Luke 21:12-19, and Mark 13:9-13) Most scholars believe this describes the activity documented in Acts 4-5.