



Israel and the Purposes of God

“What is so special about Israel?”

The Nation of Israel has been called “God’s timepiece,” for the Seven Feasts lay out a timetable of events that lead us to the end of this age, and to the completion of our redemption.

- The first four feasts occur during the springtime.
 - Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Weeks, and they all have already been fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament.
 - The final three feasts occur in the fall.
 - Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles, and they will soon be fulfilled by the rapture of the Church, the return of Christ, and the Millennial reign with Christ.
 - Jesus’ death and resurrection was not the end of the story for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, for even now, our “redemption [still] draweth nigh!”
- However, at some point after the rapture of the Church, the great and terrible Day of the Lord will bring an end to the intentions of men as God releases His judgment upon those who refused to receive Him as their Savior and Lord.
- In our last study, Jesus was on the Mount of Olives answering His disciples’ question as to when that final event would occur.
- In Matthew 24:3, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, **“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”**

Jesus actually answered the questions in reverse. He began by describing the evil nature of the world from the day He ascended into the heavens until the day He returns to the earth.

- This is called the “Church Age,” the “Age of Grace,” the “Age of the Holy Spirit,” the “Times of the Gentiles.”

- Jesus said, life on earth would include wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and false messiahs.
- But rather than being disturbed by them, as if they indicated that the end of the age was near, we should expect them, for they are but the beginning of sorrows
- Jesus compared them to the birth pangs of a woman about to give birth – they will increase in their intensity and rapidity until the end of the age.
- Jesus made a distinction between the wars between nations, which would be as common as strife between neighbors, and the wars between kingdoms, as in WWI and WWII, which changed the dynamics of the whole world.
- WWI created the desire among people to provide a homeland for the Jewish people and launched the ministry of Zionism.
- WWII resulted in the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948, which is the most significant prophetic event since the ascension of Jesus Christ.
- Since we are at the kingdom against kingdom stage of world-wide war, with the possibility of WWIII starting any moment, along with massive earthquakes, floods, fires, volcanoes, severe famines and damaging pestilence in various places around the world, we are at the end of the age.

Then Jesus answered the second question regarding the events that would affect them in that day. (See Luke 21:12-19)

- Most scholars agree the events Jesus spoke of here related to the persecution of the Jews in the first century church, for such activity is documented in the 4th and 5th chapters of Acts.
 - The disciples would suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders. (Mark 13:9a and Luke 21:12a)
 - They would also suffer at the hands of the Gentiles. (Mark 13:9b and Luke 21:12b)
 - They would have the opportunity to witness for their Lord. (Luke 21:13)
 - They would have many opportunities to preach the gospel. (Mark 13:10)
 - When questioned they would be given the words to speak. (Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:14 -15)
 - They would be rejected and betrayed by members of their own family. (Mark 13:12 and Luke 21:16)
 - They would be hated by all. (Mark 13:13 and Luke 21:17)
 - Their eternal salvation would be guaranteed. (Mark 13:14, Luke 21:18)
 - Through their patience and endurance, they would win many souls to Christ. (Luke 21:19).

Then Jesus answered their first question: (Luke 21:20-24)

- When the disciples saw the city of Jerusalem surrounded by the armies of their enemies, Jesus said those who had received Him as their Savior and Lord needed to flee for their safety.
- The Romans had done this in 63 BC and again in 54 BC.

- Israel revolted against the Romans in 66AD, but the Romans forced them to retreat, and the Christians feared for their lives.
- When Roman General Gallus withdrew his main force to Caesarea, the Christians viewed this as their opportunity to escape, and they formed a Messianic community across the Jordan River at Pella, which is now Jordan. They divided into two groups – the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. Some see this as an example of the rapture of the Church as God provided a way for those who had received Jesus Christ to be spared from the wrath of the Romans.

In answering their first question, Jesus also described the first half of the time of Tribulation. (Matthew 24:9-14)

- While these events may be similar to those described in Mark 13:9-13, and Luke 21:12-19, they are differentiated by the phrase, **“but before all these things.”**
- In Matthew 24:7-8, Jesus said **“Nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but all these things are the beginning of sorrows.”**
- Jesus was speaking prophetically of future events – the two world wars that have already occurred and the third world war that will occur before He returns to the earth. The world wars, with an increase in earthquakes, famine and pestilence are all part of the birth pangs, or sorrows, which are the sign of what is to follow.
- Once the birth pangs are through, we can expect the main event to occur, which we know as the Time of Tribulation.
- In Matthew 24:21, Jesus said, **“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever be.”**
- Actually, it is better known as “The Day of the Lord,” or “The Day of Jacob’s Trouble.” (Daniel 9:24-27)
- Revelation 6:17 – **“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”** This is a fulfilment of the promise God made to Israel in the Deuteronomy 28:63-67, **“And it shall be, that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known – wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul.”**
- The events in Israel since 70AD will show that this prophecy has been fulfilled in its most literal sense. It describes the experience of the Jewish people including their expulsions from many European nations, the Inquisition, the Pogroms and the Holocaust, and we consider the situations that exist for many today with the growth of anti-Semitism.
- From man’s perspective, it appears that God has abandoned Israel, but that is not so. God has determined to redeem Israel, and we may live to see the final events of their restitution come to pass.