

It was a real challenge to get this lesson finished last night when most the country was following the election results. Fortunately, God's promises and His prophecies do not depend on how the people in the United States voted. His promises stand firm regardless of our choices.

When I spoke to you last, it was on the subject on the prophecies that prepared the Jewish nation for the first coming of Messiah. And of course, this time I will tell you everything I have learned since about His Second Coming. This event is the ultimate fulfillment of the hope of every Jew and Christian since Adam and Eve. For this is the time when Satan's head is crushed by the heel that he has been striking at since the earth began.

Slide: the Second Coming 1 This major event includes several parts:

the return of Jesus Christ as King, His revelation to the nation Israel as their Messiah, The raising of the dead, The last judgment, The beginning of the kingdom of God at the end of this age.

We are living in exciting times when the birthpangs have been taking place and we are coming closer and the fulfillment of many Biblical prophecies that the world has been waiting centuries to see take place.

Dan left us last week in the Battle of Armageddon. The antichrist will have turned against Israel after having been previously welcomed by them and have rebuilt the temple with his help. When they refused to worship the antichrist, the world powers align themselves against Israel and the nations will be in anguish at the natural disasters that are occurring throughout the world all at the same time. It looks like a certain defeat of Israel; the antichrist thinks that nothing can stop him from complete decimation of the most contested piece of land since the beginning of civilization. And then....according to chapter 19 in the Book of Revelation: the event for which the Jews and Gentiles have been waiting for thousands of years:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. His eyes are like blazing fire and on his head are many crowns. The armies of heaven are following him and on his robe and on his thigh he has his name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The glorious appearing will be a spectacular event clearly visible to everyone on earth. Finally at the end of the seven-year tribulation, Christ will return with His church. Jesus explicitly said so when the high priest asked Him to identify himself in Mark chapter 14: The high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?' Jesus said, 'I am, and you will see me, the Son of Man, sitting at God's right hand in the place of power and coming back on the clouds of heaven.'"

The response provided by Jesus caused the high priest to tear his own clothing in horror. Why? Because the high priest knew Jesus was not only claiming to be the Messiah, but was proclaiming Himself the equal of God.

The *second coming of Jesus Christ* is a favorite topic of speculation among both believers and non-believers alike who usually scoff at the idea. Self appointed prophets who claim to know

when the second coming will occur are nothing new. It began with the early church and will continue until Jesus' 2nd coming. Scripture labels ALL such people, churches, denominations, groups, who place a date and time for this as False Prophets. Some claim that the second coming has already taken place: Preterists are one group and Jehovah Witnesses another, who have predicted the date of Jesus' second coming in excess of 100 times. After all their predicted dates passed without Jesus' glorious return, they gave up the predicting and now claim that Jesus' Second Coming has already occurred.

Slide: Second Coming 2 Christians use a range of names for this concept of Jesus Christ's *second coming* or return:

- The day of the Lord as it is called in 1 Thess. 5:2
- The last day, which Jesus called it in John 6:39
- Jesus also referred to the coming of the Son of Man in Matthew 24:27.
- Paul calls it the day of the Lord's wrath in Romans 2:5, and the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Thess. 2.
- Peter calls it the day when His glory is revealed (1 Peter 4:13)
- It is also called the Apocalypse or Revelation.
- In Acts 10:42, the apostles refer to it as the time when Christ will judge the living and the dead, which we'll learn about next week.

Unlike the “thief in the night” event, where Jesus will not be visible to the world, when He comes to take out His church in the rapture, this Second Coming will not be unexpected because of its timing at the end of the Tribulation, the darkest seven years in world history, and the great battle taking place in Israel.

In the midst of what appears to be total devastation for Israel, the Lord will go out and fight against those enemy nations as He fights in the day of battle. He will speak a supernatural plague that will kill all the enemy soldiers in their tracks. Their flesh will rot and they will be so panic-stricken that they will turn against themselves to their utter defeat. Even the animals in the camps will be stricken with a sudden plague. If there was ever a time for Messiah to show up, this would be it! Just when it seems that nothing else can possibly go wrong, a great sight will appear in the sky, descending in the clouds, coming back in the same way his disciples saw Him go into heaven on the day of His ascension. Visible from the east to the west...as far as the eye can see, all faces are turned upward as the vision of Jesus in the clouds looms closer and closer to the earth. Revelation 1- 7 says, “Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him – even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will weep because of Him.

Visible to the world, His coming will cause a mixed reaction, as you might expect. Imagine the sudden anguish as the Israelites look at His pierced hands and feet and recognize the One they have longed for their entire lives.

“Oh no, it was He, the very one we refused to accept when He came during the time of the Romans! The one we crucified! Centuries of effort to remain faithful to the false teaching of our leaders! Centuries of national rejection! Centuries of persecution...now seen as well-deserved, because we rejected Jesus as our Messiah when He lived on earth!”

For others, they know exactly what to do, their knees bow in worship and they give glory to God for sending their long awaited Redeemer who will smite the enemy and bring about a desperately needed victory.

As Jesus' feet touch the land on top of the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west forming a great valley and the grief-stricken people will run for their lives, weeping bitterly, as one mourns for the loss of a child. Jesus will strike down the nations, capture the beast along with the antichrist and throw them into the lake of fire, killing the rest of the army with His sword, leaving the birds to gorge themselves on the flesh of the slain.

A day of wrath for many, the day His glory is revealed for others. But for the Jews, one of great revelation, a day of repentance, a day of restoration.

Slide: Dispensational Theory

The majority of fundamentalist Christians in America subscribe to what is known as dispensationalism, a theory which predicts that at the second coming Jesus Christ will commence his reign over a re-established Jewish nation in Israel. The belief that the Jews must be returned to the Biblical lands of Judaea and Samaria before the world can end is why many Christians support aggressive stance for Israel to resist pressure to give up land which according to Scripture is destined for them. However, the majority of the Christian world both within and outside of America, including the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican and most Presbyterian churches, rejects dispensationalism. Let's look at what the Bible says about the restoration of Israel and how it relates to the Second Coming, and why we believe it to be a valid interpretation of the Bible.

Slide: Genesis 15:18 Let's go back to the beginning:

Genesis 15:18 *On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, To your descendants I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates....*

Slide: map of Israel Israel is the land lying at the intersection of three continents that has endured the constant push and shove of many civilizations in every direction. Directly in the path between Egypt and the Northern military powers, it was under the control of almost one hundred different people groups during the ancient times. Yet only the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have the covenant promise of inheriting this land. God's relationship with Israel is eternal. God gave his word to Abraham, Moses and the other prophets about his unique relationship with Israel.**slide .Deuteronomy 7** records it this way: (Deut. 7:7-8)

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers."

But despite His many blessings and opportunities to see his great faithfulness, the people of Judah became proud and began to drift in their relationship with God. As the nation began to turn its back on God, the Lord mercifully raised up prophets to warn them and call them to repentance. When they refused to repent, the prophets prophesied that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and the nation would be taken into captivity.

But as we read in Amos chapter 9, God's plan was always to restore the land to His people, as their inheritance. Where they would live in rebuilt cities, eat the fruit of the land and be a prosperous nation, as a testimony to His great love for His people.

Slide: Israel AD timeline But as we all know, Israel rejected Christ when He came to earth the first time, squandering His promises for many more generations. God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the Jews were dispersed among the Gentile nations of the world. Since then they have wandered from nation to nation suffering bitter persecution.

In the 7th Century A.D. a new religion burst mightily upon the world scene, Islam. The prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca about 570 A.D. who went forth, and conquered Mecca in 630 AD. That city became the spiritual center of Islam. The prophet died in 632 and his followers, the Arabs conquered Syria and Iraq, followed by Egypt, then Persia in 640-643 - as part of the charge they believe was given to them by Allah through his prophet Mohammed. Arab armies moved into the Holy Land and were in full control of Jerusalem by 638. The Muslims set about clearing the site of the temple mount, which by then had a Christian church built on it, to build their own great mosque of Jerusalem. According to their tradition, Muhammad and Gabriel went up to the Sacred Rock, which of old times had stood in the centre of Solomon's Temple; for a meeting the company of the prophets, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others of God's ancient apostles. From the Sacred Rock, Muhammad, accompanied by Gabriel, next ascended, by a ladder of light, up into heaven; to meet with Allah.

The plan for the mosque was deliberately built as a political, economic, and religious counter attraction to Mecca to build up the importance of Jerusalem as an Islamic center for pilgrimage and worship. The holy spot of Judaism, the traditional site of Abraham's sacrificial altar for Isaac, is now to be identified with the spot where Mohammed ascended to heaven. From the Muslim point of view the Dome of the Rock was the best way to overpower the attractions of Christianity and for the Jews, removing the reminder of their sacred history.

So for the last 1300 years, with only one exception, the Temple Mount has been in the hands of Muslims. On July 15, 1099 Jerusalem was taken from the Muslims by the Crusaders from Europe. The Dome of the Rock was converted into a Christian Church called "Temple of our Lord." The Crusader occupation was relatively short-lived. The Muslim leader Saladin proclaimed a jihad, or holy war, to retake the land of Palestine. After ninety years of Crusader control, Jerusalem surrendered to Saladin's army on October 2, 1187. The golden cross that was placed on the Dome of the Rock was torn down. Saladin rededicated the church as a mosque. Jerusalem was back in the hands of the Muslims and Europe was ready to avenge the defeat. A Third Crusade was undertaken to free Jerusalem from the armies of Saladin. Richard the Lion-hearted led England and other Crusaders in a fruitless attempt to retake the city. To this day, the Temple Mount remains in Muslim control. **Slide Dome of the Rock**

However, even during the Jewish exile extending over many centuries, the people known throughout the world as the Jews continually expressed hope for a return to Jerusalem, for the rebuilding of the city and of their Temple.

(An account exists of Napoleons visit to the Temple Mount of the 9th Av, the day of the commemoration of the Temple's destruction. When asked what all the crying and wailing was

about, Napoleon was told that the Jews were mourning their Temple that had been destroyed 1900 years previously. Touched by the incident the French Monarch said, "a people which weeps and mourns for the loss of its homeland 1800 year ago and does not forget - such a people will never be destroyed. Such a people can rest assured that its homeland will be returned to it.")

God cannot establish His Son in Israel as King of the Jews unless the Jews are living in Palestine, their promised homeland, so it was God's plan to restore the Jews to Palestine before the Second Coming of Christ. In the late 1800's, the Jews began returning to Palestine, and when World War I began in 1914, there were 80,000 Jews living in Palestine and 5 times that many, 400,000 Jews, had settled in their homeland by 1939.

Satan saw what was happening. He knew that the Lord was re-gathering the Jews for a reason, and he knew the reason: *the Second Coming of Christ*. So Satan raised up Adolph Hitler to murder six million of God's chosen people as an outright act of hate and revenge. This massive slaughter created enough sympathy for the Jews that the United Nations granted 5000 square miles of Palestinian land to them after World War II.

One of the most prophesied events in the scriptures is the gathering of Israel. This event is central to God's relationship with Abraham's descendents. So, when in 1948 Israel became an independent nation for the first time in many centuries, it was a sure sign that the fulfillment of end time prophecies was at hand. The Arabs have fought viciously to destroy Israel, but with no success. There are some four million Jews living in Palestine today and despite their small size, major political unrest and acts of terror, the nation continues to prosper, and its military forces are considered to be among the most powerful in the world. Jesus likens Israel unto a "fig tree" in Matthew 24:32-34, and He likens the *restoration* of Israel unto a fig tree putting forth leaves. He said that He would return during the same generation which witnesses Israel putting forth leaves as a nation. So we can expect His return perhaps in our lifetimes.

While some teach that the Kingdom promises for Israel are no longer valid because the Jews rejected Christ, But Paul reminds us otherwise in Romans chapters 9 through 11. God's word has not failed because the Israelites rejected Christ. "By no means", Paul exclaims! At the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace, as we all are, so that the kindness of God will be revealed. According to recent information, Messianic Jews are coming to faith in Yeshua in increasing numbers, but for many, the words of (slide) **Romans 11:25**, are still the reality: *Israel experiences a hardness of the heart until the full number of Gentiles has come into the Kingdom.*

After that time, according to (slide) **Jeremiah 31**: *I will put my law in their minds and write in on their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people. I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.*

As soon as Christ has vanquished the enemy at the Battle of Armageddon, He will turn His attention to His beloved prodigals, the people of Israel who rejected Him as Messiah when He came the first time. He will chastise them for their failure to believe the Scriptures and the prophecies. Psalm 89:32 says, *I will punish their sin with the rod, but I will not take my love from them, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my*

lips have uttered. Many will repent for the sin of their rejection, and for them, the Lord will lovingly forgive and invite them to take their part in His new kingdom.

Slide new Jerusalem Everything in Israel will be transformed. The great worldwide earthquake that will occur when Jesus returns will radically change the earth's topography, including that of Jerusalem. The land will stretch out around Jerusalem with Jerusalem towering at the center and the commanding city gates open for everyone to come in. The city will be considerably enlarged and greatly beautified, and the most magnificent temple in history will be built in the midst of it under the personal supervision of the Messiah. It will house the Prince of Peace and will also serve once more as the home of God's spectacular Shekinah glory. But that glory will not be contained within the Holy of Holies. Incredibly, Isaiah says that the Shekinah will hover over the whole city of Jerusalem as a cloud by day and a fire by night, providing a canopy to protect the city from heat and rain. Living water will flow out of Jerusalem and go the east and west, all year long and the Lord will be king over all the earth. At that time, there will be one Lord and His name the only name. Never again will the city be destroyed; it will from now on be a safe city.

Sounds like a fairy tale, doesn't it? And indeed it, it will end like one: where everyone lives happily ever after. But, of course, it's not yet, but the signs of the times are looking very ripe.

In the meantime, God is calling you and me to live with an eternal perspective. In Hebrews 11 we are told that Abraham lived by faith as "an alien" in this world, "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" Abraham did not consider his arrival in the Promised Land to be the fulfillment of God's promises to him. Rather, he lived yearning for his ultimate reward, namely, life with God in an eternal city — the new Jerusalem. Jesus is adding rooms to that city right now to accommodate the members of His body.

Let us therefore live as aliens and strangers in this world, never becoming too comfortable with it. The things of this world can be very distracting, but we must remain focused on the end goal. This world is only temporary, but the restored Israel will be everlasting and eternal. Therefore, we should set out to live godly lives in order to secure His promise for ourselves. For where our treasures are stored, there our minds and hearts will be also.

The record of Israel in prophecy means that God is sovereign. He is in control. Even when everything seems to be out of control here on earth, we can be assured that God has the wisdom and power to orchestrate all the evil of Mankind to the triumph of His will in history and we have the great hope that we will be participants in the great victory party on the other side.