

Israel – God’s Chosen People.

Israel is a small country with a small population, yet it constantly attracts attention on the world scene. One of the reasons for this is that it is surrounded by a large number of hostile neighbours, intent on the overthrow of the Jewish State. The reason that they have survived as a separate people after thousands of years of adversity, is that they belong to God. *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself...”* Deuteronomy 7:6.

The history of Israel began about 2000 BC with the man Abraham. God made special promises to Abraham regarding his descendants and their occupancy of the land of Canaan, as Israel was then known. These promises were repeated to Abraham’s son, Isaac, and to his grandson, Jacob, whose name was changed to “Israel”. The important features of these promises are discussed in the pamphlets “The Gospel” and “God’s Plan of Salvation - The Promises” (pamphlets 5 & 6).

The Children of Israel went down into Egypt where they initially flourished, but later became slaves to the Egyptians who treated them cruelly. It was then that God provided Moses to be their deliverer. God said to Moses... *“I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt”* Exodus 3:10. *“And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God ... and I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage”* Exodus 6:7,8.

God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt with wonders and miracles and gave them a law at Mt. Sinai, which they were required to keep. Obedience would bring wonderful blessings in the promised land (see Deuteronomy 28:1-14), while disobedience would bring terrible curses and punishments (see vs. 15-68). *“If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people... And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”* Exodus 19:5, 8. This was, however, an agreement which the Children of Israel (the Jews) did not keep. Because of their disobedience, their history over the past 3,500 years has been an amazing fulfilment of God’s Word, although there has always been a faithful minority who will be rewarded at the Resurrection – see Hebrews 11:32-40.

The Jews’ rejection of their true Messiah, Jesus Christ in about AD 33, was followed in AD70 by the total destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The Jews were then scattered into all the countries of the world. But they continue to survive. Why? The Bible says of God’s people... *“he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye”* Zechariah 2:8. This is a description of the close relationship God has with Israel.

God said... *“I am with thee... to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished”* Jeremiah 30:11. God also said... *“Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off... He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock”* Jeremiah 31:10. This gathering has already seen the return of Jews to their homeland where the State of Israel was established in 1948. Jerusalem was re-gained in 1967 and is now awaiting the day when *“one king” [Jesus Christ], shall be king to them all”* Ezekiel 37:22.

Israel (the Jews) has suffered a great deal in the centuries that followed Christ. To the point where systematic procedures have been used to try to commit genocide on them!

When Jesus returns to Jerusalem, at a time of another time of great distress to the Jews, they will gladly accept him as their Messiah and will undergo a complete change of attitude toward him. As God has foretold... *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you... and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God”* Ezekiel 36:26-28.

The importance of the history of Israel lies in its connection with God’s Plan of Salvation. Christ declared in John 4:22... *“salvation is of the Jews”*. We can be included too, for the Gospel *“is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentiles]”* Romans 1:16.