

CHAPTER 9

Good News for the Jewish People

Our Love for the Jews

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

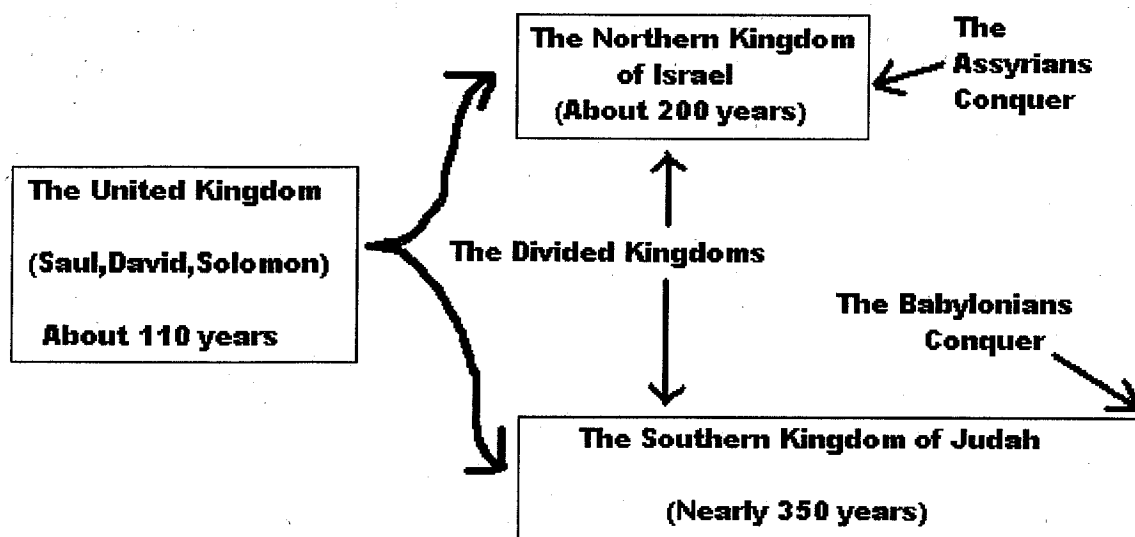
Thousands of years ago God called out a nation to be for Himself: "The LORD hath _____ thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself (a special people for His very own) above all the _____ that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). This was God's special nation--the nation Israel!

Israel was surrounded by nations that worshipped false gods and idols made with their own hands. In the middle of this religious mess, God wanted His chosen nation Israel to be His witness (Isaiah 43:10-12) and to clearly point to the one true God: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is _____ LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:14).

God gave this nation so much (see Romans 9:4-5)! He adopted the nation and said, "Israel is my S _____" (Exodus 4:22). Through Moses He gave the Jewish people the law and the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 4:8). He gave them great and wonderful promises and made covenants (binding contracts) with them. God even came and dwelt in the midst of this nation--first in the tabernacle and later in the temple. No other nation could say, "The living God dwells in our midst!" God's rich blessing was on this nation.

As the centuries passed the nation began to turn away from God. The kingdom of Israel was united under Saul and David and Solomon, but after the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided into two parts: 1) **the northern kingdom of Israel** (with its capital in Samaria); 2) **the southern kingdom of Judah** (with its capital in Jerusalem). The kings of the northern kingdom were very wicked and led the nation away from God. After about 200 years God judged the northern kingdom of Israel by allowing the Assyrian army to conquer the land and carry the people away as captives.

The Southern kingdom had some good and godly kings (such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah), but even the Southern kingdom of Judah increased in wickedness and was unfaithful to the Lord. Finally after almost 350 years, God judged the southern kingdom of Judah by allowing King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to come and conquer the land and carry away the people as captives. It was at this time that the city of Jerusalem and Solomon's great temple were destroyed!



Years earlier God had told the children of Israel that obedience results in blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-2) and He warned them that disobedience results in curses and judgment (Deuteronomy 28:15-16).

After being captive in Babylon for 70 years, Cyrus (the king of Persia) gave the Jews permission to return to the land of Palestine. Thousands of Jews returned and the temple was rebuilt and later the walls of the city were rebuilt. The Jews, at least a small remnant of them, were once again in the promised land.

About 400 years later, the Jewish people were visited by their own Messiah and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came unto His own people, but did they receive Him (John 1:11)?

Did they want Him to be crowned as their King and Lord and Saviour (Matthew 27:21-23)? Some of the Jews believed on Christ (such as Paul and Peter and John and James and many others) but most of the Jews rejected the very One that God had sent to save them!

The Lord is slow to anger, and He did not judge the nation of Israel immediately. In fact, God graciously made known the good news of salvation **to the Jew first** (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:5; 3:26). God, in His matchless grace, reached out to the very nation which had crucified His Son!

When Paul entered a city on his missionary travels, he normally went to the synagogue first (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; 17:10; 18:4; 18:19; etc.) to preach the gospel to the Jewish people. Often the unbelieving Jews were the ones who persecuted Paul the most (Acts 13:45; 13:50; 14:2; 14:19; 17:5; 17:13). Often they were "enemies" of the gospel (Romans 11:28 and see what Paul said about the Jews in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

Finally the day of God's longsuffering came to an end. About 40 years after the crucifixion of Christ the Roman General Titus captured and completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple which was there. Jesus predicted that this would happen (Matthew 23:38; 24:2). Since this time the nation Israel has been without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without a priesthood and without a temple (Hosea 3:4). For nearly 2000 years the Jewish people have been scattered and persecuted throughout the world. During the Second World War millions of Jews were slaughtered under Hitler and the German persecution.

In more recent years, however, a remarkable event has taken place in Jewish history. A nation has been reborn (1948). Thousands of Jews have been returning to their homeland. Once again the Hebrew language is being spoken. This small country is surrounded by enemies on every side, but since 1948 the nation Israel has been able to resist its enemies and survive.

CONCERN FOR ISRAEL

In Romans 9:2 Paul said, "I have great heaviness and continual _____ in my heart." What was it that made Paul sorrowful? He was greatly concerned for his kinsmen, the Jewish people (Paul himself was a Jew). See Romans 9:3-4.

Paul was sorrowful because most of the Jewish people had not recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Often when he preached the gospel, many Jews would reject his message. What was Paul's desire and prayer for Israel (Romans 10:1)?

Today we need to have the same concern for the Jewish people. Most of them do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Today Jewish people still go to their synagogues and the Old Testament Scriptures are read to them (compare Acts 15:21). Why don't they believe the Bible? Why don't they see that Jesus is the One that God promised would come into the world? Why don't they understand that the Old Testament is all about Jesus (Luke 24:27,44)?

The Bible says that they do not see because they are blind: "their minds were B _____" (2 Corinthians 3:14). There is a veil on their heart (2 Corinthians 3:15). Is there any hope for the Jew? Yes, there is good news for every Jewish person. When a person turns to the Lord with all of his heart, the veil shall be _____ (2 Corinthians 3:16) and the person will no longer be blind.

In Romans 11:25 Paul said that B _____ in part is happened to _____. Notice that this is not TOTAL blindness, but just PARTIAL blindness. Today there are some Jewish people who can see very well! There are some Jewish people who have believed the good news of salvation and have accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you know any Jewish people who are Christians?

Today God is in the business of saving souls! God saves all those who call upon His name (Romans 10:13), including Jews (Romans 10:12)! God delights in saving sinners, whether they are Jewish sinners or Gentile sinners!

DEBTORS TO ISRAEL

The Jewish people have many enemies in the world today. Those who hate the Jews and who are against the Jews are described by the word ANTI-SEMITIC. Should a Christian be anti-Semitic? Actually, a born again believer who understands God's Word should be one of the best friends a Jewish person has.

Have you ever thought of how much we owe the Jewish people? Consider the following:

1) Jewish people wrote the Bible.

If it were not for the Jewish people, we would not have the Bible! God used Jewish men to write the Bible. These "holy men of God" (see 2 Peter 1:21) were Jews! Almost the entire Bible (except for the books authored by Luke) was written by Jews.

2) Jewish people preserved the Bible.

It is a miracle that a book as ancient as the Bible should have been preserved down through the centuries. God used the Jewish people in a special way to preserve the Bible. Century after century the Jewish scribes copied the Bible by hand (in the days before there were printing presses). If it had not been for these labors, we would not have the Old Testament today.

3) The great heroes of the Bible were Jews.

The great men of faith that we read about in the Bible were Jews: Abraham (the father of the Jewish people), Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, John, Peter, Stephen, Paul, etc. We have learned so much from the lives of these men, and they were all Jews.

4) The Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew.

The Saviour Himself was a Jew. His mother Mary was a Jew. The Bible says, "salvation is of the _____" (John 4:22). The greatest man that ever lived--our God and our Saviour--was a Jew (Romans 9:5)!

IS JESUS REALLY THE MESSIAH?

When Paul first went to the city of Thessalonica, he spent three sabbaths (three Saturdays) showing them from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (see Acts 17:2-3). Like Paul, we need to be able to open the Bible and show our Jewish friends that Jesus is the Messiah, the One that the Old Testament Scriptures promised would come into the world.

WHO IS THE MESSIAH?

HOW CAN WE RECOGNIZE HIM?

WHEN WILL HE COME?

1. He must be of the tribe of Judah: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **Shiloh** (the Messiah) come" (Genesis 49:10).

Who is the Messiah?

2. He must be of the house of David: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom" (Isaiah 9:7). The Jews knew that the Messiah would be the "son of David" (see Matthew 22:42).

3. He must be God: "His name shall be called . . . the Mighty _____" (Isaiah 9:6).

4. He must be born of a virgin: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

5. He must be born in Bethlehem: "But thou, _____ Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2).

6. He must perform amazing miracles: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be _____, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man _____ as an hart: and the tongue of the dumb _____" (Isaiah 35:5-6).

7. He must die: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be _____" (Daniel 9:26).

8. He must have His hands and feet pierced: "they _____ my hands and my _____" (Psalm 22:16 and compare Zechariah 12:10).

9. He must die for man's sins: "He was wounded for _____ transgressions, he was bruised for _____ iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5 and see also verses 6,8,10).

10. He must rise again from the dead: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). The Old Testament clearly said that the Messiah would live and reign forever and ever (see Isaiah 9:7 and Daniel 7:14). The Old Testament also said that the Messiah would die (Daniel 9:26). **How can a dead Messiah live and reign forever and ever?** This is a question that really puzzled the Jews in the days when Jesus walked this earth (see John 12:32-34). The only answer is that God must raise Him up from the dead. This is the only way that a dead Messiah can live and reign forever!

WHO IS THE MESSIAH?

HAVE YOU RECOGNIZED HIM?

Peter once said to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ _____ (the MESSIAH), the Son of the living God!" (Matthew 16:16). Our prayer and desire is that the Jewish people that we know might come to recognize Him as the Messiah and Saviour!

A WONDERFUL FUTURE FOR ISRAEL

When Christ came to earth the first time, the nation Israel rejected Him (John 1:11). When Christ comes to earth the second time, the nation will receive Him (Zechariah 12:10) and the nation will be saved and forgiven (see Romans 11:26-27).

God has not cast off His people Israel (Romans 11:1)! He has a glorious future in store for them. According to Jeremiah 31:37 God will never break His promises to the Jews and He will never cast off the nation Israel unless man is able to do one of two things:

- 1) **Measure the heavens** (that is, be able to count all of the stars).
- 2) **Search out the foundations of the earth** (that is, be able to dig a hole to the center of the earth).

This is bad news for the enemies of Israel and for all anti-Semitic people everywhere. If they really want to destroy Israel, then they need to build bigger and better telescopes or start digging deeper holes!

The Jews are God's chosen people. The Hebrew prophets about a glorious kingdom age upon the earth where there would be peace and joy and righteousness (read Isaiah chapter 11 for one example of what the kingdom will be like). The future for the Jewish people is bright and full of hope. That wonderful future begins when a Jewish person trusts Christ and receives Him as his or her personal Saviour. May we do everything we can to present Christ clearly before our Jewish friends and neighbors!

For a more detailed discussion of God's good news for the Jewish people, see our booklet entitled, Message to Israel.

J.C.Ryle on Israel (Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, under Matthew 20:1-16):

"Let us beware of supposing from this parable that the distinction between Jew and Gentiles is entirely done away with by the gospel. To suppose this is to contradict many plain prophecies, both of the Old Testament and the New. In the matter of justification, there is no distinction between the believing Jew and the Greek. Yet Israel is still a special people and not 'numbered among the nations'. God has many purposes concerning the Jews which are yet to be fulfilled."