

Israel in Bible Prophecy

There is much talk in the Christian world concerning the nation of Israel. Most Christians believe that Israel and the Middle East will be the epicenter of end time events. This belief has been made popular by the famous *Left Behind* series where it is taught that a third temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem; and that Antichrist will sit in this temple claiming to be the Messiah. This Antichrist will then make a covenant with the Jews, causing the sacrifices to cease during a midst of seven-year tribulation period that begins after the Secret Rapture. As we consider the teachings found in this popular series of fictional books, we must go to the Bible to discover what the truth is. A correct understanding of Israel is of utmost importance in order to have a correct understanding of eschatology (end time events). An incorrect understanding of Israel will automatically lead to faulty conclusions about end time events. So here are the questions we will proceed to answer in this study...

- *What is Israel's role in end time events?*
- *Is modern day Israel still the Israel of God?*
- *Who is Israel in the Old Testament?*
- *Who is Israel in the New Testament?*

(1) Where did Israel originate?

ANSWER: It all began with a man named **Abraham**. God called him to be the father of a special people. God wanted to bless world through his descendants. At the age of 100 years old Isaac was born to Abraham. And Isaac and his wife had twin sons, **Esau & Jacob**. Of the two: the Lord called Jacob to be the promised son. Jacob is the one whose name was changed to Israel (Gen.32:28)

(2) What is the significance of names in the Bible?

ANSWER: In The Bible, names represent character. Jacob means "*Supplanter, Deceiver,*" a name that fit the description of his character and a reflection of his life. Jacob deceived his father Isaac into believing that he was Esau and stole the birthright blessing from his brother. Badly betrayed, Esau sought to kill Jacob, causing Jacob to flee for his life as a fugitive. He remained in another land for twenty years. Though he sinned much God had mercy on him and gave him a vision of a ladder reaching Heaven from Earth. That ladder represents Christ who connects the Earth to Heaven (**John 1:51**). Through this vision, God gave Jacob the assurance that his was sin was forgiven and that He would receive the promised blessing.

(3) How did Jacob have his name changed?

ANSWER: After 20 years living with his uncle in Mesopotamia, God instructs him to go back home to receive the blessing. On his way home he sends messengers with gifts to greet Esau, but Esau who is a skilled hunter responds by bringing 400 men to seek vengeance. Jacob felt totally helpless and defenseless in protecting his family and possessions, and remembering the sins of his past, he goes in desperation to pray to God.

Filled with guilt and remorse that his sins may end up endangering his family (**Genesis 32:24-28**), he prays, filled with remorse and guilt of his past sin. Then suddenly, he is overtaken by someone, and now involved in both a physical and mental battle (**Genesis 32:24**). While wrestling with this person all night, he realizes that this is a supernatural being and more than he can handle (**Genesis 32:25**). **He was physically weakened** by a *night of wrestling*, and suffers a **terrible injury** that leaves him powerless to fight on. Jacob was at the **breaking point**. Ready to give up!

But now realizes he's been fighting the very One who came to save him. The only One who could give him peace! (**Genesis 32:26**), the Heavenly Messenger tells Jacob to let him go. Jacob knows **his**

only HOPE is to hang on to this *powerful Messenger*. Jacob responds that he will not let him go. In **desperate faith** he *pleads* for the **Blessed Assurance!** His faith clings to God in prayer!

In (**Genesis 32:27**), the Heavenly Messenger responds by asking Jacob, “*what is your name?*” We know that the Heavenly Messenger already knows Jacob’s name, but he asked this as a testing question. Because twenty years earlier, Isaac asked Jacob the same question and three times he lied to his father about his identity (**Genesis 27**). The result of this lie was that Jacob had to flee from home, never to see his mother again, with a brother that hated him seeking to kill him. Jacob responds to this testing question and responds that his name is Jacob (**Genesis 32:27**). In the confession of his name was a *confession of his sinful condition and unworthiness*. In acknowledging his unworthiness he was given the blessing he asked for.

(4) What happened when Jacob told the truth of his life?

ANSWER: (Genesis 32:28) No longer would he be known as a liar or deceiver. God changed his name from Jacob to Israel, which means one who has prevailed with God, and the “*Prince of God.*” The change of his name represented the change of his character. Jacob had clung to God in the time of deepest despair! He may have *lost the wrestling match* but *won the spiritual victory!* Thus we come to our first essential conclusion that Israel applied to one man that gained a spiritual victory! By humbling ourselves to God, God can change our names and give us a new character and life.

- Symbolizing a change of character & lifestyle!
- Comes from hanging on to God in prayer.

Therefore, **Israel** in its original sense, **applies to one man**, who gained not a physical victory but a spiritual victory with the Lord. One of the rules of Bible study is the **law of first usage**, where when topic or word is first introduced in the Bible, it sets the precedence of how that word or topic is understood from that point on.

(5) How many sons did Jacob have?

ANSWER: Jacob had 12 sons who were the Heads of 12 Tribes of Israel, and are the descendants of Abraham. *Now Israel is broadened to include all the genealogical descendents of Abraham who gained that spiritual victory in their father Jacob.* Now the name Israel is applied from one man to a *specific nation*. (Corporate term)

Among his sons: the youngest was his favorite was Joseph: who as a man of integrity & faith in God! Because of the purity of his life, Joseph was *rejected* by his brothers and *sold* as a slave in Egypt. *Because of his faithfulness* in every circumstance, **God** honored him & exalted him in Egypt to be a ruler in Egypt next to Pharaoh. And then *a devastating famine hit all lands*. Joseph had dreams from God that led him to the place where he was able to save his people (Israel) from wrath of the famine. Israel was brought to Egypt where they are protected for a time.

Then there arose a Pharaoh that knew not Joseph and enslaved the children of Israel. And after generations of slavery, God sent a deliverer named Moses to call His people out of Egypt.

(6) What did God call the Children of Israel?

ANSWER: God called corporate Israel His son (**Exodus 4:22**). The children of Israel were freed from Egyptian slavery and God sent them through the Red Sea into a wilderness wandering forty years heading towards the Promised Land where He made a special covenant with Israel.

(7) Was the covenant conditional or unconditional?

ANSWER: The covenant was conditional. Based upon:

- **Exodus 19:5-6** – “If obey my voice and keep my covenant then” they would be a special people.
- **Deuteronomy 28:1-2** – Obey & Live!
- **Deuteronomy 28:15, 25** – Disobey & die!

(8) Did Israel remain faithful to the covenant?

ANSWER: After the reign of King David & Solomon, Israel was divided into two tribes, Judah in the South, and Israel in the North. Because they did not keep the covenant, they were led into captivity.

- **Israel** lost by Assyrian captivity because of their apostasy. (Kings & Chronicles)
- **Judah** went into Babylonians captivity because of their apostasy. (Jeremiah)
- They remained scattered until the **time of Nehemiah** when Jerusalem was rebuilt (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther).

Thus, the Israel in the Old Testament is:

#1 – One man who gained spiritual victory

#2 – Descendants of Abraham that gains a spiritual victory by faith.

(9) Were only blood descendants of Abraham Israel?

ANSWER: But Israel was not just blood descendants, but those faithful to covenant! The condition of being an Israelite was also obedience. This was clearly taught in the New Testament. Paul wrote that to be of Israel, one must have the faith of Abraham (**Galatians 3:6-7**). Jesus also taught the same thing where the true descendants of Abraham would do the works of Abraham (**John 8:39-40**). Thus, Lineage doesn't amount to anything if you don't have faith! Thus a *true Israelite is not just literal descendents, but those who are faithful!*

(10) Who is Israel in the New Testament?

ANSWER: The New Testament begins with Christ. When Christ came to this world, He does something amazing where he retraces, point by point the history of national Israel by his very life. Notice the following parallels:

1. In the New Testament Jesus' earthy father Joseph had a dream and leads Jesus to Egypt as a place of refuge from Herod who was seeking to kill the Christ. In the Old Testament, Joseph the son of Jacob had a dream that led the Children of Israel to Egypt where they had refuge from a famine.
2. God calls His Son Jesus out of Egypt, the same way God called Israel out of Egypt (**Matthew 2**).
3. After being called out of Egypt Israel goes through the Red Sea. Going through the Red Sea is symbolic of baptism (**1 Corinthians 10:1-2**). Jesus went through baptism in the River of Jordan and began his public ministry.
4. After the Red Sea, the Children of Israel went into the wilderness for 40 years. After being baptized Jesus went to the wilderness for 40 days.
5. In the three temptations of Christ in the wilderness, Jesus used the promises from the word of God to overcome. He quoted specifically from the book of Deuteronomy which was specifically written for National Israel to overcome temptation (**Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, 10:20**). *Where Israel failed, Jesus was victorious!*

(11) How did the New Testament writers refer or view Jesus?

ANSWER: In (**Hosea 11:1**) literal Israel was called out of Egypt and in (**Matthew 2:13-15**), we see it fulfilled in Christ where this text quotes directly the verse in Hosea. We see over and over again in the New Testament of how Jesus “fulfilled.” Jesus applied the prophecy of Israel from the book of Isaiah (**Isaiah 61:1**) to himself (**Luke 4:17-21**) and proclaimed Himself as the fulfillment of national Israel.

(12) Who is Israel in the New Testament?

ANSWER: Jesus is Israel today. The Prince of Peace.

- **Jesus is the true Over-comer:** The only one “*without sin*” Won not so much a *physical* but *spiritual* victory on cross!
- National Israel is called a vine. (**Psalms 80:8**) Jesus is called the True Vine (**John 15:1**).
- (**Isaiah.41:8**) – **Israel is the Seed of Abraham.** (**Galatians.3:16**) – Covenant made to Christ the **true Seed!** *Why is He the true Seed?* – Because He exercised same faith and the same works of Abraham. *Jesus is true Israel of the New Testament! Just as in the Old Testament.*
- Israel was Jacob & then applied to descendants! In the New Testament, Israel is Jesus & thus also His descendants!

(13) How do we become the descendants of Jesus?

ANSWER: *Not by birth, but by rebirth! Not by our own blood. But by the blood of Jesus!* (**John 3:3**) Jesus meets with a leader in national Israel: Nicodemus who thought himself secure because of his natural lineage! But Christ showed him the vital need for Nicodemus to:

- Enter kingdom (receiving promise) requires re-birth or to be born again!
- Literal Jew must become a spiritual Jew!

In fact the Apostle Paul said the same thing (**Galatians 3:26-29**) – We become children of Israel through faith in Jesus and baptism. Baptism symbolizes being born again. In the Old Testament, the sign was Circumcision, in the New Testament it is Baptism. It is now God’s church that is **Spiritual Israel**, and now *heirs to the promise*. Therefore it is not about race, but it is about grace! Regardless of nationality, those who are baptized and faith in Christ are part of the seed of Abraham.

(14) How is the New Testament church heirs of the promise?

ANSWER: The Apostle Peter calls the New Testament Church the Chosen nation and Royal Priesthood (**1 Peter 2:9**). Israel of old was referred to the same (**Exodus 19:5-6**). Thus the covenant promise transferred to the New Testament Church. The true overcomers cling to Christ just as Jacob did.

- **James.1:12** – New Testament church called *12 scattered tribes*.
- **Galatians.6:16** – **Gentiles** in Galatia called “*Israel of God*”
- *So according to New Testament, Bible teaches that there are 2 Israel's. National Israel after flesh. Genealogical descendants! True Israel of God after the Spirit! Made up of people of every race on earth including Jews who believe in Jesus.*

(15) Did God say “all Israel will be saved?”

ANSWER: Yes but *which Israel?* – Spiritual Israel! He will save all who accept Jesus by faith! *Does this include national Israelites? Yes! But how?* (**Romans.11:23**) – **Through faith in the grace of Jesus!**

(16) How is God seeking to save the entire human race?

ANSWER: (Romans.2:28-29) – Must be circumcised in heart!. **Salvation** has *always been* a heart issue! National Israel got so caught up of the outward symbols and ceremonies, that they neglected the issue of the heart.

(17) Must God fulfill all His promises to national Israel?

ANSWER: God's promises are conditional. If Israel does evil in God's sight, God can "relent" or abandon the promise (**Jeremiah 18:9-10**).

- God is not *obligated* to keep any promise. *Why?*
- **Promises** are only for those who *meet it's condition!*
- God's **love is unconditional** but not His salvation!

(18) In whom will this promise be fulfilled?

ANSWER: To the only **ONE** that *met every condition!* The only one that met every condition is Jesus (**2 Corinthians 1:20**) because Christ overcame where Israel failed, now all the promises apply to Christ and the church. We can claim every promise by faith and the promise of re-gathering of Israel is fulfilled in the New Testament Christian church in the last days.

(19) Wasn't the establishing of Israel in 1948 a fulfillment of Bible Prophecy?

ANSWER: The re-gathering of Israel in 1948: Monumental event! But cannot be fulfillment of prophecy because the nation if Israel does not fulfill the conditions.

- Established as a **STATE** but not **KINGDOM!**
- **I submit: In last days:** Satan uses modern Israel as *a decoy!*
- Turn our minds away from *the real issues* of prophecy!
- Instead of our eyes earthward we should look *heavenward*.

(20) What about the rebuilding of the Third Temple being rebuilt in Jerusalem?

ANSWER: There is a Popular teaching based upon *the Left Behind Series* that a **3rd temple** will be *rebuilt* in Jerusalem. God will give Jews another chance during a **seven year tribulation**. And in the Middle of seven year tribulation, the Antichrist will appear as Messiah. However, it is a misapplication of **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**. It is the faulty assumption that the Temple referred in this text is a literal building. But is the Temple referred in the New Testament a literal building? The answer is *No!*

What does New Testament teach about temple?

- **God's people in Old Testament: Literal Israel**
- **God's people in New Testament: Spiritual Israel** *In the same way...*
- **God's temple in Old Testament: Literal Building**
- **God's temple in New Testament: Spiritual Building!**

Remember in Daniel.9 God gave His final ultimatum to the nation of Israel: 70 weeks of probation... (**Dan.9:24**) – Israel was to accomplish a list of things. They include:

- To Finish Transgressions
- Make a end of sins.
- Make reconciliation for iniquity
- Bring everlasting righteousness

They were given 70 prophetic weeks of probation to be faithful of God and listen to what He says, or else they would be *cut off*. In regards to the 70 weeks, we know that a day equals a year in Bible prophecy (**Ezekiel 4:6, Numbers 14:34**) and therefore 490 years were given to Israel for probation. The 70 weeks began at 457 B.C. with the decree by Artaxerxes for Israel to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and city. This period of probation ends in A.D. 34 where Stephen stoned to death. Stephen presented a **indictment** to the Jewish religious leaders by presenting *covenant lawsuit* of crucifying the Messiah. The Jewish nation ended up silencing Stephen by stoning him to death. The stoning Stephen signified Literal Israel's rejection of God's covenant and now the promise was transferred to the Gentiles.

Then the gospel went to the Gentiles and the words of Christ was fulfilled where the kingdom would be taken from literal Israel (**Matthew 21:43**). The **kingdom** was taken from them and *given to Gentiles!* **No longer** was literal Israel to be God's *showcase of grace*. Now The **New Testament church** is called *Holy Nation & Kingdom of Priests!*

(21) When Christ came to His chosen nation literal Israel what happened to Him?

ANSWER: Christ came to His own people, the children of Israel, but His own received Him not (**John 1:11**). National Israel did not want freedom from **sin** but freedom from **Rome**. He wasn't the Messiah they were looking for. *Finally after 3 1/2 years of loving labor*, Christ submitted Himself to the Cross!

- *Instead of crowing Him king, they crowned as criminal!*
- *Instead of putting Him on throne, they nailed Him to cross!*
- ***But just a few days before they crucified Him, in words of agony Jesus wept over His chosen Nation (Mathew 23:37) – Promise unfulfilled because: "Ye would not!"***
- They were *zealous* of their temple. But they reject Him who the temple services pointed to
- They choose their *ceremonies* over their *Savior!*
- In esteeming the temple more than the Savior it pointed to their idolatry.

(22) What would happen to the Jewish temple because it was a object of idolatry for the Jews?

ANSWER: Christ now disowns the literal temple (**Matthew 23:38**). He states that it used to be "My House" for ALL nations (**Mark 11:17**). It was no longer "*temple of God*" but *temple of the Jews!* The Jewish nation Committed an **abomination** that brought **desolation** to the temple. *Immediately after Christ pronounces the Desolation* of the temple, He departs never to return (**Matthew 24:1**). And then prophesized with the destruction of the temple (**Matthew 24:2**) that would be fulfilled later by Titus in A.D. 70.

Thus **ended** Israel's *special standing* before God as the CHOSEN Nation.

- Their *temple is desolate* & void of God's presence.
- *So when Paul spoke of Antichrist coming into temple, Was he saying that the Jewish temple would be rebuilt? – NO!*

(23) What is Paul's understanding of the true temple of God?

ANSWER: The Apostle Paul writes that the New Testament Church is God's temple (**Ephesians 2:19-22**). That the Christian Church is Spiritual Israel and a Spiritual Temple (**1 Corinthians 3:16-17**). Therefore the Temple referred to in the New Testament is the Church and the believers in the Church. So when Paul is referring to the Antichrist, it refers to him creeping within the church, bringing his doctrines and deceptions within the Church.

The CROSS brought a clear transition between testaments!

- *Horizontal:* Literal to *Spiritual Israel*.
- *Vertical:* Earthly to *Heavenly Sanctuary*.

(24) Why would a third temple being built not be a fulfillment of prophecy?

ANSWER: The Jewish temple pointed forward to Christ in its types and ceremonies. A rebuilt temple after Christ would be a denial of Christ! Would God lead anyone to build something He denies Himself? No! This is a diversionary tactic of Satan. Many expect Antichrist to come but it is already crept into the church spreading its deceptions and doctrines.

Looking deeper, we've discovered...

1. Probation closed on National Israel: AD 34
2. In New Testament: Israel is Jesus & His followers
3. Temple of God = Christian Church
4. God is calling all nations to be Spiritual Israelites: By re-birth!

(25) How was end time Israel described?

ANSWER: They have both faith and works (**Revelation 14:12**). When the Saints of every nation will be gathered together in the New Jerusalem where Jesus would rule in the throne of David as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is when all the promises to Israel will be completely fulfilled.

Spiritual Israel is the only Israel that has end-time significance Many have pointed fingers & blamed Jews for killing Christ. **God loves them** just as much as every other sinner! ***What put Christ on the cross? But whose sin? All races are condemned because of sin!*** As Jesus looked down from cross, *He saw humanity. And He prayed: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do...."* The forgiveness of God embraces every race! And He invites every nationality to be part of true Israel, His church whom He loved and died for to rescue us from the depths of sin.

(26) How many want to be a true Israelite today?

ANSWER_____