

BEYOND TODAY[®]

A Magazine of Understanding

May-June 2018



ISRAEL AT 70

THE AMAZING STORY

God's Enduring Love for Israel 10 • Israel's Amazing Accomplishments 14
Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Center of Conflict 17 • Who Are the Palestinians? 28

FEATURE ARTICLES

4 Israel at 70: The Amazing Story

As modern Israel turns 70, we look back at what led up to the amazing reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land after centuries of exile, and the struggle the tiny nation has endured since. But Bible prophecy shows the bigger story lies ahead with promises and yearning yet unfulfilled.

10 God’s Enduring Love for Israel

The 70-year existence of the modern Jewish state is part of a much greater story—that of God’s committed love for His people as part of a plan that will culminate in offering salvation to the whole world.

14 Israel’s Amazing Accomplishments

In its short history the state of Israel has become one of the world’s greatest scientific and technological innovators. What are some of its achievements, inventions and innovations that are making a significant difference in global society?

17 Jerusalem’s Temple Mount: Center of Conflict

For centuries Jerusalem has been a center of conflict. And no part of Jerusalem has been as contentious as the Temple Mount, long a center of conflict and controversy. What’s behind it all? Will it ever cease? Believe it or not, your Bible foretells a joyous and glorious ending!

22 Another Temple Mount Battle: Where Was It Located?

We’re used to seeing headlines about bloody clashes between Arabs and Israelis over the Temple Mount. But another battle, involving old arguments, is reemerging—being waged over history and archaeology as it relates to where the Jerusalem temples actually existed. What do the facts of history and archaeology tell us?

28 Who Are the Palestinians?

The Israeli Jews are regularly accused of invading and occupying land that is not theirs—the land of Palestine that purportedly belongs to the indigenous Palestinian people. But just who are the Palestinians? Is the land theirs? Let’s take a journey through history to see exactly what the truth is.



10



17



34

STUDY SECTIONS

34 Mini-Study: Focus on the Middle East

What does Bible prophecy tell us about the future of the Middle East? Will this troubled area ever see peace? If so, how will it come about?

DEPARTMENTS

27 God, Science and the Bible

Discoveries from the world of science that support the biblical record

32 Current Events and Trends

An overview of events and conditions around the world

38 Letters From Our Readers

Readers of *Beyond Today* magazine share their thoughts

39 Beyond Today Television Log

A listing of stations and times for the *Beyond Today* TV program



Scott Ashley
Managing editor

Life in a Dangerous Neighborhood

Several things stood out when I last visited Jerusalem several years ago.

The first I noticed on the ramp that all non-Muslim tourists must ascend to visit the Temple Mount. There in a bend in the ramp were several dozen riot shields, obviously placed there by the Israeli police for quick access when things start to get ugly.

The second was particularly disconcerting to me as a student of biblical archaeology. In one corner of the Temple Mount hundreds of tons of dirt had been bulldozed out, loaded on dump trucks and secretly hauled away to make room for a huge underground mosque. Here in one of the world's greatest and most significant historical sites, a vast amount of archaeological evidence had been discarded or destroyed with no oversight and in direct violation of Israeli law.

The third I encountered after descending from the Temple Mount to a parking lot to meet up with my ride. There a dozen or so Israeli police officers were strapping on body armor, checking their weapons and loading tear-gas launchers.

Why? Because Friday prayers would soon begin at the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque atop the Temple Mount, and it was common for the Muslims there, after being stirred to a frenzy by the imam giving the Friday sermon, to hurl stones at the Jewish worshippers praying at the Western Wall below. The Israeli police were donning riot gear for this sometimes-weekly occurrence.

Later as we were touring the City of David our Israeli guide pointed out the bright green flags flying in the Arab Silwan neighborhood on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley from the Old City of Jerusalem. The flags signaled the inhabitants' allegiance to Hamas, the Islamic terror group sworn to Israel's destruction.

On the final night of our trip our Israeli taxi driver picked us up at our Jerusalem hotel for the hour-long trip to the airport. He was visibly worried. That afternoon his eight-year-old nephew had been playing in his Jerusalem neighborhood when an Arab man suddenly appeared out of nowhere, stabbed the boy several times and ran away. Late that night surgeons were still trying to save his life, and our driver didn't know if his nephew would survive.

Such is the tenuous state of peace in "the city of peace."

Don't get me wrong. I love visiting Israel and Jerusalem, and I recommend that anyone wanting to gain much deeper insight into the Bible spend some time there. I've never worried about my safety there, and it's safer than many Western cities.

These occurrences just show the sad reality that Israel exists in a dangerous neighborhood, surrounded by people who want to destroy her. The charter of Hamas, the terror group that rules Gaza along Israel's southwest border, illustrates why peace is unlikely to break out anytime soon. Some excerpts (emphasis added throughout):

"Israel will exist and will continue to exist *until Islam will obliterate it*, just as it obliterated others before it."

"The Islamic Resistance Movement . . . *strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine*" (which to Hamas means the whole land of Israel).

"*There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad*. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences *are all a waste of time and vain endeavors*."

The Palestinian National Authority, which governs the West Bank, is little better. The Palestinian Covenant, which lays out its ideology, states in Article 9: "*Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine* . . . The Palestinian Arab people assert *their absolute determination and firm resolution to continue their armed struggle and to work for an armed popular revolution for the liberation of their country* . . ."

The real issue, as these statements make clear, is *Israel's very existence*. Both the Palestinian National Covenant and the Hamas Charter call for violent jihad until the land is ethnically cleansed of Jews and Israel is no more.

But against all odds, Israel manages to not just survive but to thrive. It's an astounding story and one that, amazingly enough, was indicated ages ago in Bible prophecy.

In the pages of *Beyond Today* we provide a much-needed biblical perspective on our world. The land of Israel is pivotal in the Bible, and you need to understand why. As Israel celebrates the 70th anniversary of its founding as a modern state, you need to read this issue carefully to better understand God's hand at work in this amazing land! **BT**



Israeli police gear up for possible riots instigated by Muslim imams during Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.



Israel at 70

THE AMAZING STORY

As modern Israel turns 70, we look back at what led up to the amazing reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land after centuries of exile, and the struggle endured since—and ahead to promises and yearning yet unfulfilled.

by Steven Britt

The modern state of Israel, likely the most complicated and controversial geopolitical entity in the world today, was born 70 years ago on May 15, 1948. Many have described the history of its existence, settlement and survival as miraculous.

And, given that Bible prophecy reveals a Jewish political presence in Jerusalem and the surrounding area in the end time, and given that this development seemed unlikely if not impossible for centuries, it is quite sensible to recognize the hand of God at work in bringing this about. God declares that He brings to pass what He has foretold (Isaiah 46:9-11).

What is the story behind the formation of the Israeli state? Many readers will be somewhat familiar with the Jewish nation's existence in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, but what followed after that? The amazing story is a remarkable testimony to God's faithfulness in bringing about what He promised and foretold.

The Jewish people saw their ancient presence in the land formerly known as Canaan, and in New Testament times as Judea, Samaria and Galilee, as a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham—the territory referred to as the Promised Land. And even after the Romans cast them out, the Jewish people continued to look to God's promises and prophecies of bringing the tribes of Israel and Judah back to the land.

Observant Jews, those who continued to follow Jewish religious traditions, retained a deep longing to return to their homeland. Their annual Passover and Yom Kippur (or Day of Atonement) services typically ended with the plea, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

After so long, the dreams of a people would at last begin

The dreams of a people would at last begin to be fulfilled with the remarkable events leading up to 1948 and in the years since. **Yet there is a much greater fulfillment still to come.**

to be fulfilled with the remarkable events leading up to 1948 and in the years since. Yet, as the Bible reveals, there is a much greater fulfillment still to come.

The Diaspora

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus foretold the temple's imminent destruction (Matthew 24:2). The plight of Jewish exile from the land of Israel began in A.D. 70 at the hand of the Roman emperor Vespasian through his son and successor Titus, who was then a general, just 40 years after Jesus spoke those words. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of God where Jesus had worshipped and taught were destroyed.

The Jews expected the Messiah to be a nation-restoring king who would set them free from Roman rule—not the sacrificial Lamb of God sent to free them from a spiritual slavery they were ensnared in yet largely ignorant of.

The Jewish desire for independence from Rome ultimately led to uprisings that brought about their own undoing, and to this day the Arch of Titus stands outside of the Colosseum

in Rome as a testament to the conquest that initiated 1,800 years of "Diaspora"—the dispersion and scattering of the Jewish people out of the land of Israel. The building of the Colosseum itself was funded by the spoils of the war with the Jews.

Another Jewish attempt to cast off Roman rule 65 years later, the Bar Kokhba revolt of A.D. 132-135, was crushed by the Romans under Emperor Hadrian. This resulted in the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem, which was transformed into a pagan city with a pagan temple atop the Temple Mount.

The centuries dragged on, and the Promised Land was eventually conquered and subjected to Muslim rule, which would last for *many more* centuries. It seemed impossible that Jewish rule could ever be reestablished there.

The Zionist movement

It's important to understand that, from the Roman destruction of Jerusalem onward, the Jewish people were persecuted almost everywhere they went—not just under Roman paganism but under the often-antisemitic version of Christianity that succeeded it. Through the Dark Ages, the later Middle Ages and even the Renaissance and Enlightenment, the Jews continued spreading out in search of peace, but found none.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anti-Jewish pogroms—large-scale, targeted rioting and persecution against the Jews—spread across the Russian Empire.

In 1896 Theodore Herzl, a Jewish political activist of Hungary and Austria, summarized the downtrodden condition of the Jews in his famously influential pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State"), stating:

"In countries where we have lived for centuries, we are still cried down as strangers, and often by those whose ancestors were not yet domiciled in the land where Jews had already had experience of suffering."

Herzl has been called the father of Zionism—the movement to reestablish a homeland for the Jewish people, Zion being a name for Jerusalem. His passionate advocacy for a Jewish state was instrumental in what would shortly unfold. But to make his vision a reality required something more than ideals: his dream needed international political support.

That political support took a distinctive step forward more than 20 years after Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in the wake of political upheaval in World War I. By that time, the Muslim Ottoman Turks had ruled over the Holy Land for more than 500 years. Herzl's proposal was to humbly petition the Turkish Sultan for the land or else purchase it from him, but the British defeat of the Ottomans in World War I changed the conversation—decidedly in favor of the Jews.

From the British Mandate to statehood

In 1917, while British forces were wresting the Holy Land away from the Ottomans a year before the end of the war,



British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour's famous Balfour Declaration proclaimed, "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Soon thereafter, Britain was entrusted with governance of the area under a League of Nations mandate in 1920.

Sadly, the declaration's hopeful words would hang impotently in the air for nearly 30 years against the stark contrast of terrible developments across Europe—culminating in the rise of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, his conquest of the continent and his atrocious, systematic ethnic cleansing of the Jews.

The Holocaust claimed more than 6 million Jewish lives and caused inestimable suffering. Against this backdrop and after so much trauma, the newly created United Nations passed a resolution in November 1947 to divide the land of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, with the hotly contested city of Jerusalem designated as a special international city not belonging to any nation.

The Jews had hoped, waited, worked and lobbied for this moment, and set about quickly to organize and establish a government.

Vital preparations

The degree of preparation for this moment in the 52 intervening years between Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* and the founding of the modern state of Israel must not be overlooked. Had the Jews regarded their goal any less seriously and tangibly, their new nation would quickly have met its end at the hands of the larger, stronger Arab countries surrounding them.

Immigration throughout the British Mandate period—often done illegally to bypass limits Britain imposed—supplied the land with a Jewish presence capable of sustaining and defending itself. The Jewish inhabitants formed a fighting force called the *Haganah*, meaning "The Defense," that later served as the organized foundation on which the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was built.

These pioneers faced immense hurdles. Forbidden from manufacturing their own weapons and ammunition, they carried out covert manufacturing operations, often putting their own lives and freedom at risk, preparing for the inevitable necessity for national defense if they did in fact obtain statehood.

Beyond these pragmatic efforts, the cultural unification of the country is largely indebted to a man named Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who revived the Hebrew language and made it complete, adaptable and useful for modern purposes.

It's important to understand that Jews would come from all over the world with diverse native languages, cultural nuances and religious perspectives. The introduction of Modern Hebrew inspired unity and cooperation that gave rise to a distinctive Israeli culture. This pivotal development coupled with the eagerness of the Jews to shed their prior national affiliations in light of their universal persecution facilitated a true cultural melting pot that has continually strengthened the nation.

Immediate conflict with the Arab world

When the 1947 UN resolution passed, the Arabs in and around Palestine mobilized for war, determined to drive the Jews "into the sea," as it was frequently put. This struggle has not ceased since Israel's inception.



Theodore Herzl, Jewish activist.



Lord Arthur James Balfour.



David Ben-Gurion proclaims Israel's independence on May 14, 1948.

Fighting began following the resolution with the 1947-48 Civil War under what was still the British Mandate, with Jewish and Arab communities clashing, the latter with help from foreign Arab forces. The next phase, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, came after the birth of Israel and continued into the next year. Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Iraq sent in expeditionary forces, fortified by troops from other Arab countries, but the Jews emerged victorious.

The outcome lay to rest the question of whether the Jewish state would persist—but it also resulted in the displacement of some 700,000 Arabs from the area of Palestine who fled to the surrounding Arab nations. (Seldom mentioned is the fact that from the late 1940s to 1972 a similar number of Jews fled or were expelled from Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa and resettled in Israel.)

The refugee influx strained the Arab countries under an unusual dilemma: Granting them citizenship and assimilating them would upset their own delicate political balances and also be tantamount to admitting Israel's right to exist. The descendants of this original refugee population have multiplied into a stateless nation of millions who are still fighting—both politically and literally—for the reversal of their exile and establishment of a Palestinian state.

What is amazing to most observers is that Israel, being completely dwarfed in every respect by its enemies, managed to not only survive its first military conflict but also to build a thriving and stable democracy capable of defending itself time and again.

In the ensuing decades, Israel's story would be a cycle of constant provocation and war from its neighbors on every side. The most significant and impactful of these was the



Israeli tanks advancing on the Golan Heights, June 1967.

Much like the miraculous nature of Israel's establishment and survival, the hatred it endures from the world defies rational explanations.



Israeli paratroopers at the Western Wall, Jerusalem, June 7, 1967.

1967 Six-Day War, which clearly distinguished Israel as the dominant military force in the region, a standing it still maintains.

In June of 1967, as Egypt blockaded Israel's Red Sea port of Eilat, Arab leaders announced their determination to wipe out the Jewish state. As armies from Egypt, Jordan and Syria gathered in position for an attack, Israel launched a devastating preemptive strike and

gained a miraculous victory no one could have predicted. Israel not only repelled armies on three fronts simultaneously, but also tripled its land area in the process, seizing the Golan Heights from Syria, the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and—most importantly—Jerusalem and the area known as the West Bank from Jordan.

This resulted in the displacement of another estimated 250,000 Palestinian refugees while at last allowing Jews to freely return to and settle in Jerusalem. For Zionists, Jerusalem was the ultimate prize and the answer to more than 1,900 years of praying, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Trouble at the borders and tenuous peace

But peace in the modern state of Israel has always been short-lived. In 1973, Syria and Egypt launched a surprise attack against Israel on the Day of Atonement, an annual Holy Day of fasting known to the Jews as Yom Kippur, initiating the Yom Kippur War. An additional 100,000 troops from Arab countries were sent to aid the Egyptian and Syrian forces, along with weapons and financial support.

Israel's very survival was at stake. Its forces successfully scrambled to recover lost ground in the first few days and reached a ceasefire within the month after the loss of thousands

of lives on both sides.

The hope of peace materialized on Israel's southern border in 1979 when Israel reached a treaty agreement with Egypt. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula, captured from Egypt 12 years earlier in the Six-Day War, in exchange for free passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal.

In the process, Egypt became the first Arab nation to officially recognize the state of Israel—a move that brought censure from the Arab world, resulting in Egypt's exclusion from the Arab League for 10 years. Moreover, Egypt's president, Anwar Sadat, was assassinated in 1981 by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad in reprisal for the treaty, his general tolerance of the Jewish state and, by extension, his perceived lack of

commitment to the Palestinian movement.

Lebanon, to Israel's immediate north, struggled with its own internal political turmoil that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in the Lebanese Civil

War from 1975 to 1990. During this time, the Lebanon-based Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) carried out raids and attacks against Israel's northern border towns, drawing retaliation campaigns from Israel into Lebanon in 1978 and 1979.

A fully declared war broke out in 1982 to root out the PLO and put an end to its repeated attacks on Israeli civilians. After expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, the terror group Hezbollah became the chief militant anti-Israel organization within Lebanon's borders.

To the east, Jordan eventually came to peace with Israel in 1994, effectively giving up its claim to the West Bank and Jerusalem but advocating that these become part of a separate Palestinian state.

This hotly debated strategy, known as the two-state solution, seeks a mutual agreement to form separate Jewish and Arab states in the land of Israel as envisioned by the 1947 UN Resolution. While many attempts have been made, proposals have been consistently rejected by much of the Arab world that would prefer to see the Jewish state eradicated rather than coexist with it.

The Golan Heights area, situated in Israel's northeast, has long been the sticking point of disagreement between Israel and Syria. Before the 1967 war, Syria, then in possession of the area, repeatedly shelled Israeli settlements in the lowlands below, leading to intermittent skirmishes. Since capturing the Golan Heights in the 1967 war, Israel has built substantial settlements and populated the area.

Just one year ago, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared: "The Golan will always remain in Israel's hands. Israel will never withdraw from the Golan Heights." This settled view of the disputed territory was made possible by the Syrian civil war, which has distracted Syria from the issue for the past seven years while allowing Israel to solidify its claim to the area.

With its immediate neighbors engaged in larger issues of their own, the most vehement and tangible external opposition to Israel's existence today comes from Iran. Though Israel and Iran have not gone to open war against each other, Iran is one of the many Muslim countries that contributed troops and

resources to Israel's enemies over the years. And now the world watches apprehensively as Iran's rhetoric intensifies while its nuclear and missile programs steadily develop.

Threats from outside of Israel have been mitigated somewhat through Israel's technological advancement, a strong alliance with the United States and sheer determination to survive. However, the threat of terrorism from within Israel's own borders has also played a significant role in the nation's development.

Trouble and threats from within

Two territories that Israel captured from Egypt and Jordan in the Six-Day War—Gaza and the West Bank—became entrenched strongholds of Palestinian nationalism. Israeli settlement of these areas has been met with heavy resistance from the majority-Arab population and resulted in international condemnation. With millions of Arabs referred to as Palestinians living within Israel's borders, the internal tension within Israel ranges daily on a scale from "palpable but stable" to "explosive and deadly." (To better understand, see "Who Are the Palestinians?" beginning on page 28.)

The Arabic word *intifada*, which means "uprising," accurately describes the groundswell of these people's protest demonstrations that broke out across Israel from 1987 to 1993. Sparked by frustration with Israeli settlement construction and continued military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, this period came to be known as the First Intifada.

These protests often brought responses from Israeli police and military forces that resulted in violence, and over this six-year period about 1,600 Palestinians and 275 Israelis were killed. While the First Intifada was characterized mainly as a grassroots protest movement that often escalated into violence, the Second Intifada was marked by deliberate attacks against Israeli civilians to take lives and inspire fear.

The Second Intifada raged from 2000 to 2005, with the loss of life of some 3,000 of those on the Palestinian side and 1,000 Israelis. It began when former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount—a provocative gesture used by the leaders of the Palestinian movement, claiming Israel was maneuvering to take control of the Al-Aqsa compound, to foment violence that included a deadly wave of suicide bombings. (To better understand, see "Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Center of Conflict" beginning on page 17.)

Bombings of cafes, public buses and even dance clubs became commonplace, and it left an indelible mark on the country's internal security protocols—resulting in restricted movement within Israel of those designated Palestinians, vehicle search checkpoints, the erection of high walls separating Israeli and Palestinian neighborhoods, and the near ubiquitous presence of police and military personnel in public areas. Whereas Israelis see these measures as necessary and justified—and they did end the deadly wave of suicide bombings—the Arabs see them as demeaning, oppressive and racist.

The end of the psychologically devastating Second Intifada resulted in what may be seen as a small victory for the Palestinian cause: Israel evicted all of its own citizens from

Gaza and demolished the controversial Israeli settlements that had been built there. But rather than producing peace, this withdrawal emboldened Hamas, a radical Palestinian terrorist organization turned political party, to challenge the Palestinian Authority—the administrative body formed out of the PLO to govern the West Bank and Gaza subject to Israeli martial law.

After a brief and bloody clash, Hamas took control of Gaza. In response to repeated rocket and mortar attacks on nearby Israeli settlements, Israel waged two heavy military operations against Gaza in 2008-09 and 2014. In 2006, similar rocket



Hamas rocket damage to a classroom during the 2008-09 Gaza war.



A destroyed building in Gaza during the 2008-09 Gaza war.



During the second *intifada* ("uprising"), a suicide bus bombing in Haifa in 2003 killed 23 Israeli civilians, including seven children.

Rocket and mortar attacks and suicide bombings of cafes, buses and restaurants have left a terrible legacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

activity from Hezbollah in Lebanon ignited yet another war on the northern front that has since remained relatively quiet.

Recent conditions in Israel

My wife and I moved to Tel Aviv in 2015 at the beginning of what has been called the Knife Intifada or the Wave of Terror—a series of lone-wolf Palestinian terrorist attacks throughout Israel. While a number of contributing factors have been suggested and debated for the Wave of Terror, this movement was partly in response to renewed accusations that

Israel planned to seize control of the Temple Mount.

On a number of occasions we ate in restaurants where a dozen people were killed or injured the very next evening, or walked through peaceful city squares where stabbings and car-rammings took place just the day before.

To a degree Israeli culture has become desensitized to, though fed up with, this seemingly endless routine. And generally life carries on as usual in spite of whatever disruptions

The state of Israel's formation and continued existence have been according to God's plan.

these may cause—yet with ever-heavier security present.

Hope for a two-state solution is waning in the public arena, with both Israelis and those on the Palestinian side losing confidence that the growing breach between them can ever be healed. Moreover, the ongoing drama over the Temple Mount remains a central issue, with deliberate provocation from extreme Israeli Zionists periodically fanning the easily ignitable flames. Israeli settlement of the West Bank areas—frequently done in contravention of legal rulings and without permission of the Israeli government—adds yet more fuel.

And while the external threats to Israel's security are seemingly at bay, the international view of the Jewish state has dramatically reversed since the 1947 UN resolution. No other country on earth receives nearly the degree of criticism, outrage, targeted sanctions and boycotts as Israel.

For example, out of all of the humanitarian crises and dictatorial atrocities in the world today, the UN General Assembly in 2016 adopted 20 resolutions against Israel and a total of only six for all other countries combined!

Modern Israel's place in Bible prophecy

Much like the miraculous nature of Israel's establishment and survival, the hatred it endures from the world defies rational explanations. Students of the Bible, however, recognize that this attitude is a fulfillment of the same Bible prophecy that shows how Jerusalem would once again become a focal point of the world's attention: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples . . . I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all the peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it" (Zechariah 12:2-3).

Our visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust museum, was perhaps one of the most impactful and insightful experiences that my wife and I shared while living in the country. After so many centuries of persecution of the Jewish people and its culmination in the Holocaust, it's no wonder that Jews today largely see the state of Israel as a necessary matter of self-preservation—a safe haven for the Jewish people, wherever they may be. It's horrible that Herzl's words were proven to be so true.

While Herzl's vision for a modern Jewish state may be described as prophetic, it's important to realize that Israel's position in the world today is in fact a component and fulfillment of Bible prophecy, confirming the veracity of the Word of God.

That is not to say that Israel has been justified in every military action or has assurance of God's protection and

immunity to any attack, but rather that God has permitted and guided world events according to His larger plan. In fact, that plan shows that very dire circumstances lie ahead for the modern nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

Speaking of the coming devastating and terrible time of the end, Jesus warned that "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near . . . For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-22). The Bible further tells us that "half the city will go into captivity" (Zechariah 14:2).


Many see the return of the Jews to the land in the past century as the fulfillment of God's promises of a second Exodus to bring the Israelites back to their homeland (see, for example, Isaiah 11:11-12). However, we should understand that the Jewish presence in the land of Israel today is not quite yet the dream of ages realized.

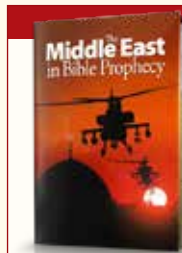
A portion of the Jews resettling the land remains a far cry from the wonderful future God declares in prophetic passages. These include bringing back all the tribes of Israel, not just the Jews, and having them living securely, safe from all enemies. It involves pouring out His Spirit upon them and granting all a deep understanding of His truth, with worship restored at a new Jerusalem temple and the whole world looking to them as an example to follow.

Today, not only are the Israelis in perpetual danger, but the Jewish people are still prevented from freely worshipping God on the Temple Mount as they lament its desecration by Muslim shrines. The plea of "Next year in Jerusalem" is still uttered by millions. Clearly the Israelite return is far from complete.

Of course, it was certainly vital for Jews to have a controlling presence in the Holy Land in order to fulfill particular end-time prophecies, such as those in the book of Daniel that indicate a reinstatement of sacrifices, stating that these will eventually be cut off at a time of invasion and severe tribulation. But again, the very fact that this terrible time is yet ahead shows that the great promises of Israel's restoration to the land in perpetual peace, prosperity and safety have not yet come.

Thankfully, these promises assuredly will be reality. In the meantime, we should observe that the state of Israel's formation 70 years ago and its continued existence have been according to God's plan—and consider that greater developments in this plan lie ahead! We should pray fervently for the wonderful age beyond today—when all of Israel will flourish and be received as a blessing by the whole world.

And as we contemplate the dark times that will precede this awesome future, let us all be on guard, assured by evidence of the clear hand of God in history that He will indeed confirm His Word in the future. 



LEARN MORE

Israel's story is an astounding testimony to God's faithfulness to His promises. But this is only a small part of the remarkable story of the Middle East and God's hand in world affairs. To learn more, download or request our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. BTmagazine.org/booklets



God's Enduring Love for Israel

The 70-year existence of the modern Jewish state is part of a much greater story—that of God's committed love for His people as part of a plan that will culminate in offering salvation to the whole world.

by Darris McNeely

A momentous juncture has been reached for a country and a people whose very existence tells us God and the Bible can be trusted. That country, an ongoing focus of world attention in the Middle East, is the state of Israel—now celebrating its 70th anniversary. Its people are primarily the Jewish people—with 6.5 million Jews living here in their homeland and more than that living abroad, mostly in the United States. The Jewish state and people constitute a sign that God cares and is involved—evidence of the grace of God.

Have you ever wondered if God really cares for the human race? With all the evil and suffering in the world, can we ever really trust the teaching of the Bible about a just, merciful and all-powerful God?

These are honest questions that sometimes come to the minds of sincere people wanting to believe the Bible and trust in God. A look at the world and at history can be sobering, causing us to doubt. And some even read the Bible and wonder why God did some things we read about there.

Let us consider, then, God's enduring love for Israel.

Understanding the world through the backstory of Israel

Jesus Christ told the people of His day they needed to “discern this time” (Luke 12: 56). He said they were able to look at the sky, see a cloud rise out of the west and say, “A shower is coming,” while if the south wind were to blow, they'd say, “There will be hot weather” (verses 54-55). But this same people had trouble discerning exactly who He was, and they could not act on the message of the gospel He taught.

How about you?

Can you discern your time, *our* time, in relation to Bible

prophecy? Can you discern today's world with all the many events shaping our lives? Do we understand why today's world seems increasingly out of control and a place we don't even recognize anymore because of the moral, cultural and social changes around us?

You *can* understand today's world events—and you *need* to. Because your faith in and understanding about God depends on your discernment of this time. Let me show you how by focusing on a part of the world we regularly hear about in the news.

Again, let's look at the state of Israel. This tiny nation in the Middle East plays a significant role in world affairs. The state of Israel is now 70 years old, having been proclaimed on May 14, 1948, by David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, following the Nov. 29, 1947, United Nations Resolution 181 vote calling for partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

During this 70-year period the Jewish state has fought many wars against its Arab neighbors. Its survival is constantly threatened by hostile and unrelenting Islamic terror groups. In time the United Nations came to regularly condemn Israel through resolutions, with member states constantly attacking Israel's policies and actions. Israel lives in a tough Middle East neighborhood, where it's continually forced to defend its existence to survive.

However, in spite of 70 years of hostility Israel has developed a vibrant, prosperous society. Its people make positive life-enhancing contributions to the world in many critical areas, such as technology, medicine, education and humanitarian efforts. So why does Israel struggle against continual danger? Why must it defend itself before the court of world nations? Why the antagonism and hatred?

If we are to understand this paradox of hostility and blessing surrounding Israel, we must look to the Bible for the story.

Scripture gives us the backstory of Israel's origin. Only in the Bible do we find the divine purpose for Israel's existence—both in the ancient world and as a modern nation today.

Covenant relationship arising from God's devoted love

The ancient nation of Israel was made up of the descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob, himself the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham, known as the father of all faithful people who seek after the true Creator God. Now any man with 12 sons makes for an interesting story. Jacob was no exception. His life, as revealed in the book of Genesis, involves all the elements of a good story—betrayal, revenge, children by multiple wives and concubines. It's all there, the good and the bad.

For purposes here the story told about Jacob wrestling all night with a Being who can only be God is perhaps the most important. At daybreak God gives Jacob a new name, Israel, meaning “prevailer with God” or “prince of God.” This name, Israel, is given to the nation that arises from his 12 sons. The man Israel concludes his life in Egypt with his sons and their families after they escape a severe famine. Years pass, and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob come out of slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses in the great Exodus.

God remembers the promise He made to Abraham—a promise that Abraham's descendants would be strangers and servants in a land not theirs. The Egyptian captivity lasted several generations until God delivered the Israelites from slavery and brought them back to the land God promised to their forefathers, the land known today as Israel.

As God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob regarding the land, so He also entered into a covenant relationship with their descendants, the children of Israel who had grown into the nation of Israel. This covenant relationship between God and the people, the terms of which both agreed to, is at the heart of the story of the state of Israel today.

This is not an old story from the ancient mists of time. This is not a myth created by ignorant tribes who somehow wandered into this land and created an epic story to justify their presence. God loved these people. His desire was to give them every opportunity for peace and success—allowing them to grow and prosper. Israel the nation was to become a model for all others to emulate in following His way of life, showing that His laws and judgments can produce a culture blessed with peace and prosperity.

Notice how God said it in Scripture in Deuteronomy 7: “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” (verse 6). The Israelites had an amazing opportunity with God. They were given a special land to serve as a special people.

And note what lay behind God choosing them: “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, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage” (verses 7-8).

God had a deep spiritual love for the nation of Israel. This love, I say again, is at the heart of this story. God promised Abraham his family would grow into a nation and inherit promises lasting for generations, far beyond his day and into

the modern world. Notice what God said next:

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (verse 9)

God is *faithful*. He keeps His agreements for a thousand generations. Here is a key to understanding why the modern state of Israel sits in the same geographical spot as ancient Israel. The Jewish state is a continuation of the people with whom God entered into a covenant relationship so long ago.

There were multiple covenants involved in this relationship, including that with Abraham previously. God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, where the nation agreed to be His people and accept the terms of obedience to His laws, was a marriage agreement—with God as the Husband (compare Jeremiah 31:32). And God made yet another covenant with the Israelites prior to their entry into Canaan in Deuteronomy 29–30 concerning the habitation of the land—with destruction and casting out for disobedience, and yet bringing the people back with repentance in the future.

This is something you don't read about in your history books. But this special covenant relationship and God's promises and prophecies concerning His people and the Promised Land are at the heart of understanding the importance of today's state of Israel after 70 years of survival and the controversies over and within Jerusalem, its capital.

A love story gone wrong—to yet be put right

Let me take you into a passage of the Bible that is profound. It reveals the deep love and passion that God has for Israel. This love started thousands of years ago and continues to this day. And while the love story we find here is between God and one particular people, it's ultimately meant for all peoples and nations. It's also a sign that God is faithful to all His promises for mankind.

This narrative is found in Ezekiel 16, where God speaks through His prophet to Jerusalem, the heartbeat of the nation. “On the day you were born,” God says, “your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water . . . nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field . . .” (verses 3-5).

Recall that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were wanderers with no permanent home. When Abraham's wife Sarah died he had to purchase a burial spot from his neighbors. Jacob took his family into Egypt to find food to survive, and his descendants became slaves making mud bricks for Pharaoh. No one but God was looking out for the children of Israel.

Then God says: “When I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you . . . ‘Live!’ . . . I made you thrive like a plant in the field, and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful” (verses 6-7). “But,” He further said, “you were naked and vulnerable, fragile and exposed” (verse 7, *The Message*).

God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and brought them into the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. After many years as a small confederation of tribes, the fledgling nation grew into a major power under its greatest kings, David and his son Solomon. Israel's location enabled it to act as a stabilizing power preventing such nations as Egypt, Assyria and Media from dominating the region.



God’s transformation of Israel is described in these terms: “I took care of you, dressed you and protected you. I promised you my love and entered a covenant of marriage with you . . . I gave you a fashionable wardrobe of expensive clothing. I adorned you with jewelry . . . emerald rings, sapphire earrings, and a diamond tiara . . . You were absolutely stunning . . . You became world-famous” (verses 8-14, MSG).

But this did not last. Israel did not live up to its part of the agreement. It did not keep the laws of God. The people adopted pagan forms of worship from neighboring nations, and they effectively abandoned God, the true and ultimate source of their wealth, security and standing among the nations.

God describes it as adultery—immoral and unfaithful relations outside the marriage partnership—and even harlotry.

He states: “But you began to trust in your beauty. You used the good name you had and became unfaithful to me. You acted like a prostitute with every man who passed by. You gave yourself to them all!” (verse 15, Easy-to-Read Version).

God said they took all the clothes and fine food He had given—the wealth and the prosperity and status as a powerful nation—and used them in foreign, idolatrous worship: “You acted like a prostitute with those false gods!” (verse 19, ERV).

So depraved was God’s unfaithful bride Israel that, rather than having strangers pay her for sexual relations as a typical prostitute, she paid them (verses 31-34). Every norm was turned inside out!

This graphic passage of Scripture, with its beautiful imagery descending into horror, shows the depth of God’s feeling for the nation He created from nothing and made His own—His model nation to all the other nations. Israel’s story did not end well. God brought other powerful nations like the Assyrians and Babylonians against His people—to destroy and remove them from the land.

Yet through all the unfaithfulness, idolatry and ultimate decline, God always held out a lifeline of hope based on His enduring love for the people who once held such promise.

God said to Israel, “I’ll remember the covenant I made with you when you were young and I’ll make a new covenant with you that will last forever” (verse 60, MSG). Israel would then be forgiven and changed: “You will be so ashamed of the evil things you did that you will not be able to say anything. But I will make you pure, and you will never be ashamed again!” (verse 63, ERV).

This final phase of an everlasting new covenant with Israel has not happened yet. The Church of God, as spiritual Israel, is a forerunner in this new relationship, the fullness of which won’t occur till Jesus Christ returns to earth and sets up the Kingdom of God to last forever. At that time, all of Israel will be brought into this relationship, and Israelites from all over the world will return to the same land. Then, with Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all the earth, all nations will be led to become part of God’s covenant relationship with Israel.

Judah only a part of Israel—yet set forth as clear testimony

Let’s pause to consider a little understood piece of the historical puzzle. The modern Jewish state bears the ancient name of Israel but in actuality represents only a small part of the entire people of Israel whose ancestors lived in the land and to whom so many of the biblical prophecies apply.

As we have seen, in the Bible the nation of Israel refers to the

12 tribes that marched out of Egypt under Moses in the story of the Exodus. These 12 tribes were descended from the 12 sons of the patriarch Jacob whose name was changed to Israel by God.

But here is what you should understand at this point. One of these sons was named Judah. His descendants were Judahites, a name later shortened in passing through other languages into the term *Jews*. King David, who was of the tribe of Judah, came to rule over all 12 tribes—as did his son Solomon.

But after Solomon, the nation was split into two kingdoms—the kingdom of Israel in the north, made up of 10 tribes, and the kingdom of Judah in the south, made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and a large portion of Levi, as well as a few from other tribes who ended up moving to the south. The people of this southern kingdom all came to be known as Judahites or Jews.

What this means is that the Jews, the people of Judah, made up only one part of the larger nation of Israel. So you don’t have to be ethnically Jewish to be an Israelite!

But how did the Jews become so prominent? Why do people usually think of the Israelites today as only the Jews? It’s a good question, and the Bible gives us the answer.

The northern kingdom of Israel existed for about 200 years after Solomon’s death before falling captive to the Assyrian Empire. The northern Israelites were forcibly exiled from the land and scattered. They are known in history as the lost 10 tribes of Israel. But they are not truly lost even though they have largely forgotten their identity.

God had said they would be sifted among the nations as grain without the smallest grain falling to the ground (Amos 9:9). And indeed, through comparing history and prophecy, we are able to identify the nations descended from the northern tribes of Israel today (see our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to learn more).

The southern kingdom of Judah survived longer than Israel, but eventually it too fell—in its case to the Babylonian Empire. Most of the people of the ancient Jewish state were taken to Babylon. Seventy years later, after Persia took over from Babylon, a group of Jews, fulfilling a prophecy of Jeremiah, returned to Jerusalem, with a few more to soon follow, and the city of Jerusalem and its temple were rebuilt.

A partially restored Jewish nation then existed in Jerusalem with its distinctive culture until the time of Jesus and the New Testament Church, when the Roman Empire ruled over the land.

It was about 40 years after rejecting Jesus that the Jewish nation collapsed in A.D. 70 at the hand of the Romans, who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple following a Jewish rebellion. Still another Jewish revolt was put down by the Romans in 135. Many of the Jews were scattered in these Roman actions, joining the Jewish Diaspora (or dispersion among the nations) that existed since Babylonian times. Descendants of the scattered Jews founded today’s state of Israel in 1948.

The existence of the modern state of Israel is necessary to the fulfillment of certain end-time prophecies and also assures mankind of God’s enduring faithfulness. As He remains committed to His people, we can also be confident that His promises to all nations and peoples are sure. In fact, Israel is a key factor in this.

The promise God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob involve both spiritual and physical promises. These promises will be poured out on all the nations—including you and me.

To understand the existence of the state of Israel today is to understand God and His prophetic timeline. The constant opposition of most of the world's nations to Israel today, many with severe hatred, is tangible proof of the removal of God from mankind's knowledge. But God's grace and enduring love transcends this corrupt condition that will come to an end. Your Bible shows us that God's spiritual promises will be given to all. Peace, restoration and eternal life are the hope of all nations!

God's people not cast away—to still be a blessing to all

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul tells the story of ancient Israel's rise and fall and hope of restoration. The Israelites had a deep relationship with God. Their opportunity was to become a nation based on the law of God and His glory. God made special promises to the people of Israel, setting them apart from all other nations, promising protection and prosperity. All of the physical blessings God promised were lesser

ultimately be rejoined to Israel on repentance, as are the gentiles.

He says in verses 11-15 that by those of physical Israelite descent being cut off at this time, salvation is opened to the world. Gentiles thus have a place in God's true spiritual Israel today. Yet it's further explained that God is not finished with the physical descendants of Israel. By their being brought back into God's grace, they will yet serve as the model nation for all peoples they were intended to be. This will happen during the coming reign of Christ on earth. Then all will be given the opportunity to be saved, Israel being used powerfully in "the reconciling of the world" (verse 15). All the tribes of Israel, not just the Jews, will be united.

Then all mankind will seek the Lord. In fact, "in those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zechariah 8:23). All nations will come to Jerusalem and learn of His ways. Jerusalem, the capital of the modern state of Israel, will one day become the capital of the whole world under God (see Jeremiah 3:17).

So *Israel matters*. Not just the Jewish state in the Middle East today. All the tribes matter to God. And all the nations of the world mat-

The existence of the modern state of Israel is necessary to the fulfillment of end-time prophecies and assures mankind of God's enduring faithfulness.

types of greater spiritual blessings to be found in Jesus Christ, a direct descendant of King David.

But ancient Israel failed. As we saw earlier, they split apart, and through a combination of idolatry and Sabbath-breaking they dishonored and disobeyed God—resulting in their captivity and exile. Most of Israel, with the exception of the Jews, forgot who they were. And the Jews have not done as they should.

But Paul's desire and his prayer for Israel, his people, was that they would be saved (Romans 10:1). Even though they did not obey the gospel (verse 16), their rejection is not total or permanent, as Paul makes clear in Romans 11. God has not cast Israel aside. Through Paul, God reveals there is a remnant of Israel among today's nations, and by His grace they will be regathered.

But here is the amazing and little understood truth: Israel's rejection of God works to His glory and purpose! All other nations and peoples, what the Bible calls the gentiles, can have this same relationship with God based on His eternal promises. In God's time, all will have opportunity to know Him. For God loves not just the people of Israel, but the whole world for whom He gave His Son to die (John 3:16).

The apostle Paul says that blindness has come on Israel until the fullness of the gentiles has come in. In a magnificent piece of writing Paul is inspired to show that Israel, all 12 tribes, and the whole world will have the opportunity for salvation. All nations will have the opportunity to receive the full promises of God, both physical and spiritual.

Notice Romans 11:1-2 where Paul asks, "Has God cast away His people?" He then answers: "Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew." God had used physical Israelites such as Paul to form the very foundations of the Christian Church. Jesus Himself was a Jew!


Paul goes on to explain that because of unbelief leading to sin, the original physical Israelites were cut off from being part of spiritual Israel—God's covenant people—but that these are to

God—yet they must all become part of Israel to be saved and live forever as God's family, nation and Kingdom.

In one last burst of inspired enthusiasm Paul exclaims: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

The understanding of the identity and role of Israel is the key to understanding today's world and the march of history toward the Kingdom of God. The understanding of Israel shows us the enduring promises of God's salvation for all the nations. Because He is faithful in His committed love toward Israel, He will be faithful in His promises through Christ to all people—including you and me—with all of us given a part in His covenant nation. This great love story involves God's love for all people. That is the good news of the gospel!

Finally, let me repeat that to understand Israel is to understand God and His prophetic timeline. The state of Israel's existence, in spite of all the odds, is a sign that God controls the destiny of all nations. It is proof that God watches over history and is guiding our world with all its peoples to His ultimate purpose. God watches over the nations. The state of Israel is living proof!

The world at large will continue to plot and rage against Israel and the Jewish people. But they will survive and will complete their God-ordained purpose. Remember this as you watch today's headlines! 



LEARN MORE

How will the amazing Bible prophecies of a transformed world come about? How will the nations finally learn to live in peace and experience the great blessings God has promised? You need to know! Download or request our free study guide *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

BTmagazine.org/booklets

Israel's Amazing Accomplishments

In its short history the state of Israel has become one of the world's greatest scientific and technological innovators. What are some of its achievements, inventions and innovations that are making a significant difference in global society?

by John LaBissoniere

What do you most often hear in the news regarding the Jewish state of Israel? Isn't it typically about violence, contention, controversy and terrorism? But beyond the headlines, how much have you heard about the many amazing accomplishments and innovations that citizens of this tiny yet remarkable country have made in today's world?

Israel is a free, democratic and technologically advanced nation, and its citizens enjoy political, social and economic freedom and opportunity to learn, grow and prosper. Israeli society is highly developed in terms of education, life expectancy, per capita income and other advancement indicators. For example, Israel was ranked 19th out of 188 countries evaluated on the 2016 Human Development Index of the United Nations Human Development Report (placing it just outside the top 10 percent). In comparison, the United States ranked 10th and the United Kingdom 16th.

Also, of the 138 nations assessed on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report for 2016-2017, Israel ranked 24th. The report's subcategories showed Israel had phenomenal strength in innovation (ranked 2nd), venture capital availability (2nd) quality of research institutions (3rd), company spending on research and development (3rd), and university-industry research and development (R&D) collaboration (3rd).

Since 1966, 12 distinguished citizens of Israel have been awarded Nobel Prizes in the fields of chemistry, economics, literature and peace. And consider this remarkable statistic concerning the wider Jewish population around the globe, which makes up less than 0.2 percent of the world's inhabitants: Out of the 892 Nobel Prizes awarded over more than a century, from 1901 through last year, 201 (or 22.5 percent) were awarded to Jews!

Now, in considering contributions from Israeli citizens to the world, let's examine a small fraction of the many

inventions and innovations they have generated over recent years and how those achievements have made significant differences around the globe.

Baby breathing monitor saves infants' lives

Babysense is a non-touch, no-radiation, highly-sensitive baby-breathing monitor designed to detect respiratory cessation (apnea) in babies. Its purpose is to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS and Crib or Cot Death). SIDS is a major cause of death among normally healthy babies up to one year of age. In the United States and Europe alone, the average death toll reaches 5,600 infants annually.

The device was invented in 1991 by Haim Shtalryd, founder and CEO of *Hisense Ltd.* of Le Zion, Israel, and is distributed globally by Babysense USA.

Babysense monitors a baby's breathing and movements continuously through the mattress during sleep. It has an audio and visual alarm, which is activated if the baby stops breathing for more than 20 seconds or if his or her breathing rate slows to fewer than 10 breaths per minute. The alarms give caregivers crucial time to intervene. Babysense monitors are used in hospitals and private homes and have helped protect more than 600,000 infants worldwide from SIDS.



Advanced solar cell ends need to charge or change batteries

Manufacturers of low-power wireless devices and their customers have felt displeased by the need to regularly charge

them or replace their batteries. An Israeli company, 3GSolar Ltd. in Jerusalem, has developed a method of generating power from indirect, indoor lighting using an advanced form of dye solar cell (DSC) technology. DSC is similar to a battery or supercapacitor but performs like the natural process of photosynthesis by converting any light to electricity.

When manufacturers integrate 3GSolar cells into their wireless devices, it eliminates the need for charging or changing batteries. It therefore offers maintenance-free operation for the lifetime of devices such as wireless mice and keyboards, watches, small surveillance cameras, medical implements and more.

3GSolar was founded in 2003 by Dr. Jonathan Goldstein, who serves as company president and chief scientist. Dr. Goldstein is a world expert and consultant in the areas of batteries, fuel cells, electroplating materials and energy conversion. He has been awarded 38 U.S. patents and has published over 30 scientific papers.

Pill-sized video camera helps doctors diagnose disorders

Since 2001 when PillCam™ Capsule Endoscopy received certification for use, millions of patients worldwide have experienced its benefits. By employing this unique, painless technological device, physicians can clearly visualize



a patient's gastrointestinal (GI) tract by use of a small, vitamin-size, swallowed capsule with a disposable video endoscope (camera). By transmitting its images, doctors can monitor and diagnose disorders

of the esophagus, stomach and colon without sedation or invasive endoscopic procedures.

PillCam™ was invented in 1998 by Israeli Dr. Gabi Iddan. At that time he and a colleague, Dr. Gavriel Meron, established Given Imaging Ltd. with corporate headquarters, laboratory and manufacturing facilities in Yokneam, Israel. The launch of PillCam™ technology revolutionized GI diagnostics by creating the entirely new medical diagnostic category of “capsule endoscopy.” PillCam™ became the gold standard for intestinal imaging.

In 2013 the company was purchased for \$860 million by Covidien PLC, an Irish-headquartered global health care products company and manufacturer of medical devices and supplies. Covidien PLC was itself purchased in 2015 by Medtronic PLC, another Irish company, a global leader in medical technology and services.

Computer flash drive transformed data storage and transfer

The computer “flash drive”—also known as a thumb drive, pen drive, jump drive, disk key and memory stick—is a removable data storage and transfer apparatus containing an integrated USB (Universal Serial Bus) interface.

This small, portable storage device is used for connection

Check us out online!

You'll find much more great biblical material on our website, including

Beyond Today Television



Bible Study Guides



Video Bible Study Series



plus video sermons, our 12-part *Beyond Today Bible Study Course* and lots more!

ucg.org/learnmore

to personal computers. It was invented in 1989 by Dov Moran who founded M-Systems Ltd. located in Kfar Saba, Israel. Following development and patenting, the device was



marketed in 1995 as DiskOnChip. M-Systems' first product was launched in September

2000 under the name DiskOnKey. The company was purchased for \$1.5 billion in 2006 by the Israeli-American manufacturer SanDisk.

Since then, countless millions of the tiny drives have been manufactured, and they're commonly found around the world.

Revolutionary treatment for severe acne

Acne is a chronic, inflammatory skin disorder resulting from the action of hormones on the skin's oil glands which leads to the plugging of pores and outbreaks of inflamed blackheads and pimples. Approximately 85 percent of young people between the ages of 12 and 24 experience at least minor acne. Although acne is not usually a serious health danger, it can be distressing for those affected by it. Plus, severe acne can lead to permanent blemishing.

A groundbreaking treatment for this condition was invented by Israeli dermatologist Dr. Yoram Harth in 1998. As a co-founder of CureLight Medical Ltd. of Hefa, Israel, he developed the ClearLight™ acne phototherapy system, which produces high-intensity, narrow-band blue-violet light. This results in the destruction of acne-producing bacteria without damaging surrounding tissue or skin.

In 2002 ClearLight™ was accepted for use in the United States by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of moderate-to-severe inflammatory acne. Of the various methods that have been approved for the treatment of severe acne, phototherapy is the only method proven to be highly effective. Treatments at dermatologist offices are painless, and patients have no disruption of their regular activities.

Agricultural irrigation system helps feed billions

Since Israel is 60 percent desert, its farmers and scientists have worked diligently to make agriculture substantially more efficient. For example, the world's first "drip irrigation" system was invented in the 1960s at Kibbutz Hatzerim near Beersheba

by Israeli engineer Simcha Blass. He sought to design a system that would release water in controlled, slow drips to provide precise crop irrigation.

In 1972 the water technology firm Netafim Ltd. of Tel Aviv hired Rafi Mehudar, an award-winning Israeli inventor, to further develop its drip irrigation technology. Mehudar has since created more than 50 related products and holds more than 400 patents for his technological developments.

When first employed by Netafim, Mehudar began working with its three employees. Today the company employs more than 4,000 people who work in 13 factories in 150 countries, and in doing so they help feed nearly a billion people annually.

In an April 2015 interview with *The Times of Israel*, Mehudar said, "Netafim has sold over 150 billion drip irrigation devices, which cuts down water use by up to 90%, allowing farmers to spend less on water and more efficiently use their resources."

While Netafim's products have been sold all over the globe, their greatest impact has occurred in the developing world, which includes many projects in Africa and Asia. According to Mehudar, "In India alone, the company has over 250,000 customers, most of them smallholder farmers who are eking out a living from their plots, in large part thanks to the fact that they do not have to spend a lot of money on expensive water" (ibid.).

Microprocessor, the computer's amazing "brain"

Intel Corporation is the second-largest semiconductor chip maker in the world. Its 8088 computer microprocessor, the "brain" of the first personal computer, was invented in July 1979 at its Haifa laboratory by Israeli engineers.



When Intel established its facility in Haifa in 1974, it began with only five workers. Today Intel employs 10,000 personnel in five cities in Israel and indirectly supports the employment of 30,000 workers in other businesses throughout the country.

This is just a small sample of the many exciting and encouraging accomplishments in Israel that are contributing to the enrichment of people's lives throughout the world!

Indeed it seems that there is something quite special about the Israelis and the Jewish people overall—these who have played such an important role in the world, being known as the chosen people of God. **BT**

Photos, from left: Ewan-Amos, Konstantin Lanzet, Scott Ashley

How your subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine has been paid

Beyond Today is an international magazine dedicated to proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to revealing the biblical solutions to so many of the problems that plague humanity. It is sent free of charge to all who request it.

Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of

the United Church of God, an International Association, and our extended worldwide family of coworkers and donors who help share this message of hope with others.

We are grateful for the generous tithes and offerings of the members of the Church and other supporters who voluntarily contribute to assist in this effort to proclaim

the true gospel to all nations. While we do not solicit the general public for funds, we welcome contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others.

The United Church of God, in accordance with responsible financial stewardship, is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.



JERUSALEM'S TEMPLE MOUNT: CENTER OF CONFLICT

For centuries Jerusalem has been a center of conflict. What's behind it all? Will it ever cease? Believe it or not, your Bible foretells a joyous and glorious ending!

by Scott Ashley

No place on earth has been as contentious as the land of Israel. And no city on earth has been as contentious as Israel's capital, Jerusalem. And no part of Jerusalem has been as contentious as the Temple Mount, long a center of conflict and controversy.

Why would the Temple Mount, a large hilltop reshaped into a 36-acre stone platform that dominates the Jerusalem landscape, be such a source of conflict?

It depends on whom you ask.

For Christians, the Temple Mount is a vivid reminder of Jesus Christ's ministry and the many incidents recorded in the Gospels that took place at the enormous temple complex constructed by Herod the Great and his successors.

For Muslims, the Temple Mount is *al-Haram ash-Sharif*, "the Noble Sanctuary," the location to which Islam's founder, Muhammad, supposedly flew by night from Mecca on Buraq, the winged steed of the prophets, and from which, accompanied by the angel Gabriel, he ascended to the heavenly throne of Allah.

For Jews, the Temple Mount encompasses the holiest spot on earth—the summit of Mt. Moriah where Abraham was spared from sacrificing Isaac, the spot where King Solomon built the beautiful first temple (destroyed by Babylonian invaders ca. 587 B.C.), the location of the temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel after the Jews' return from exile in Babylon, the site of the magnificent temple of Herod the Great built in the decades before and after

year one of the common era (destroyed by the Roman legions in A.D. 70), and the location of a future temple from which the Messiah will reign over all the earth.

Three religions, with three competing and overlapping claims—that's a recipe for centuries of conflict.

Muslim denial of a Jewish temple or presence in Jerusalem

The Temple Mount has been in the news recently due to Muslim claims about its history. Earlier this year Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, addressed the Palestinian General Council. In a shockingly anti-Semitic two-hour speech largely ignored by Western media, Abbas condemned Israel as "a colonial enterprise that has nothing to do with Jewishness." Of Israel's history, he claimed that "everything has been made up."

Those are curious statements from a man with a Ph.D. in history—until we realize that his Ph.D. was awarded by a Soviet college in Moscow and his doctoral dissertation was a denial of the Holocaust.

This isn't the first time Abbas has made such statements. In previous speeches he has stated that the Jews "claim that 2,000 years ago they had a temple," but "I challenge the assertion that this is so."

He has also argued that Israelis "attempt to change the facts of Jerusalem's landscape in every detail, and replace it with a different landscape whose purpose is to serve delusional myths and the arrogance of power. They imagine that . . . they

can invent a [Jewish] history, establish claims and erase solid religious and historical facts.”

Similar comments have long been echoed by other Arab political and religious leaders and media figures. In an August 2015 Palestinian Authority TV program, a narrator declared to viewers:

“The story of the [Jerusalem] Temple is nothing but a collection of legends and myths for political reasons. [The Jews] have . . . used the myths in the service of their declared goals of occupation and imperialism. In the spirit of the delusions and legends, they try to get rid of the Al-Aqsa [the mosque near the Dome of the Rock] and establish their so-called ‘Temple’—the greatest crime and forgery in history.”

Tayseer Tamimi, the Palestinian Authority’s chief religious official, has made a number of absurd allegations about supposed Jewish attempts to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. Several years ago, in response to Israeli archaeological excavations near the Temple Mount, Tamimi ridiculously charged: “The excavations’ purpose is to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In fact, its foundations have been removed. Chemical acids were injected into the rocks to dissolve them. The soil and the pillars [were moved] so the mosque is hanging in midair. There is an Israeli plan to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to build the Temple.”

Such conspiracy theories and tortured reasoning are all too common in the Arab world. In between denials that Jews were ever in Jerusalem or ever built a temple there, some Palestinian officials have argued that the temple on the Temple Mount was originally built by the Canaanites (who preceded the Israelites’ presence in the land), and in one truly novel idea, some have stated that the temple was



In spite of many Muslim denials of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, Islam’s holy book, the Quran, mentions just such a temple to which Muhammad is said to have traveled.

built by the first man, Adam—with the claim that as the first Muslim he actually built a mosque rather than a temple.

Earlier Muslim writings confirm the Jerusalem temple

When Muslims today try to deny a Jewish temple and Jewish presence in Jerusalem, they are not only rewriting history—they are denying earlier clear Muslim acknowledgments of these facts.

For example, in 1924 the Supreme Moslem Council, the governing body over Muslim affairs in Jerusalem and British-Mandate Palestine, published an English-language tourist guide to the Temple Mount titled *A Brief Guide to al-Haram al-Sharif* (that being the common Muslim name in use then). This guide, as well as later editions published through the 1950s, plainly stated:

“The site is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates

from the earliest times. *Its identity with the site of Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute.* This, too, is the spot, *according to universal belief*, on which *David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings*” (emphasis added throughout).

When Muslims today deny the existence of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, they are even denying their own holy book, the Quran, which in Sura 17:7 refers to “the temple in Jerusalem” (Sahih International version) to which Muhammad miraculously traveled in his night journey.

Later Muslim translators and commentators claim the place he purportedly went to—*Al Masjid al-Aqsa*, meaning “the farthest temple” or “the farthest mosque,” refers to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem rather than the temple. But there’s a major problem with this: The Arabs wouldn’t capture Jerusalem and *build the mosque for almost another century, long after Muhammad’s death!* The only “temple in Jerusalem” the Quran could be referring to is the Jewish temple on the Temple Mount!

Early Muslim writings dating to the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. and an inscription dating to around 1000 A.D. refer to Muslims worshipping at the Dome of the Rock and “Bayt al-Maqdis,” an Arabic transliteration of the biblical Hebrew term “Beit HaMikdash”—literally “House of the Sanctuary,” a common Hebrew name for the Jerusalem temple. The Muslim writings refer to this and the Dome of the Rock as being the same location.

We see from these examples that up until recent times, Muslims freely acknowledged that a Jewish temple existed on the Temple Mount. So why did this change?

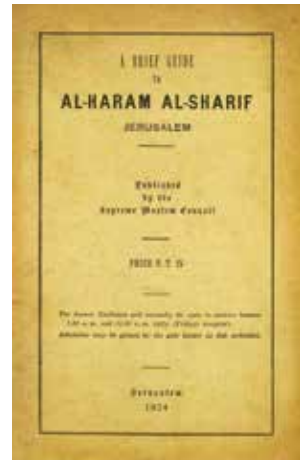
Modern controversy over the Temple Mount

So long as Jerusalem was under Muslim domination and there was no state of Israel to compete with for control, the Temple Mount wasn’t an issue. Muslims simply kept Jews and Christians away from the Temple Mount, and that was that.

But the situation changed 70 years ago with the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel and bloody fighting in Jerusalem in which Jewish areas of the city were overrun by Jordanian troops. As a result, Jewish synagogues were destroyed, Jewish property was confiscated, and Jewish graves were desecrated. Parts of the city became a “no man’s land” where the unwary could be shot by snipers.

This perilous situation continued until 1967, when in the Six-Day War Israeli troops captured the entirety of the city, repelling the Jordanians. The prize was the Temple Mount, which came under the control of the Jewish people for the first time since they had lost it to the Romans in the battle over Jerusalem in A.D. 70, 19 centuries earlier.

But so as not to further inflame Muslim anger against the



This Muslim guide to the Temple Mount, published from 1924 through the 1950s, openly acknowledged that the Temple Mount was the site of the temple built by King Solomon as recorded in the Bible.

tiny and still-fragile Jewish state that could lead to another round of war, Israeli commander Moshe Dayan left control of the Temple Mount to the *Waqf*, the Jordanian Muslim religious authority governing the Temple Mount. But one key condition was that believers of all religions—Muslim, Christian and Jewish—would now have access to the Temple Mount.

This precarious situation has led to more than 50 years of tension and bloodshed.

A heavy stone for all nations

Why did much of the Muslim world react with such fury when U.S. President Donald Trump announced several months ago that America would soon move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

Why did six Arab states, acting on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, convince the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to designate the tomb of Rachel (wife of Isaac and one of Israel’s matriarchs) near Bethlehem and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (burial place of the Hebrew patriarchs and matriarchs Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah, and which lies beneath a gigantic stone structure built by Herod the Great) as *Muslim sites* in October 2015?

Why did that same resolution condemn Israeli archaeological excavations in Jerusalem—and particularly any near the Temple Mount—while ignoring Islamic *actual* destruction of evidence of a Jewish presence and temple on the Temple Mount?

Why do the charters of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas, the primary groups ruling over the West Bank and Gaza, call for the elimination of the state of Israel by force and for Arab takeover of all its lands?

Why, as noted earlier in this article, do Palestinian leaders and representatives deny any Jewish presence or Jewish temple on the Temple Mount or even in Jerusalem?

These are all rooted in the worldview of Islamic scholars and leaders that the world is divided into two spheres—*dar al-Islam*, meaning “the domain of Islam” (where Islam is dominant) and *dar al-harb*, meaning “the domain of war.” According to this worldview, it is considered an abomination for land that was once *dar al-Islam*, part of the land of Islam, to revert to *dar al-harb*, to fall back under control of non-Muslims, whether Christians or Jews.

This is a key reason why Muslims are so determined to bring the territory of Israel back under Muslim domination. Knowledgeable readers may recall that the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded in 1964, *three years before* Israel

captured the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War—so Muslim determination to “liberate” Israeli lands and return them to Arab control long predates Israel’s possession of these areas.

This also explains why Muslim leaders for years have openly boasted of their goal to liberate the land of Israel “*from the sea to the sea*”—from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, which of course means *no more Israel at all*.

Considering these deep-seated hostilities, it’s no wonder that God prophesied of the end time: “And it shall happen in that day that *I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it*” (Zechariah 12:3).

Jerusalem surrounded by armies

Only a few days before His death and resurrection, Jesus gave a remarkable prophecy to His disciples while on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. In addition to foretelling the destruction of the temple and its vast complex of courtyards, colonnades, storage buildings and other structures, He spoke of horrifying events and developments in the time of the end.

“When you see Jerusalem *surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near*,” He warned. “. . . For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-22). He went on to describe many terrifying events, including devastating warfare and disasters of various kinds that would precede His second coming.

And yes, Jerusalem and Israel will be mightily affected by these events. The hatreds, lies and spiritual deceptions built up over centuries will come to a head in an end-time crescendo of death and destruction unlike anything the world has ever seen—to the point that *human extinction* would result without God’s direct intervention (Matthew 24:21-22).

But Jesus ended His prophecy with hope: “*Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near*” (Luke 21:27-28).

Rescue for the world from an unexpected source

The biblical book of Zechariah contains an astounding prophecy of what happens next: “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming . . . For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem . . . *Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations*, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day *His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives*, which faces Jerusalem on the east” (Zechariah 14:1-4).

Centuries ago Muslims became aware of this prophecy and an accompanying one in Malachi 3:1 that “the LORD . . . will suddenly come to His temple.” Determined not to let this happen, they blocked up the gate in the city walls on the side that faces the Mount of Olives and opened a huge Muslim cemetery all along that side of the city walls. Knowing that the Messiah would also be a priest, they would make it impossible for Him to enter the city, because walking through a cemetery would make Him ritually defiled and unable to serve as a priest.

Apparently they underestimated Him, for Zechariah continues and tells us that “*the LORD will be King over all the earth. On that day there will be one LORD—his name alone will be*



Israeli army chief rabbi Shlomo Goren blows a shofar at the Western Wall after Israeli forces captured the Temple Mount from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War. To not further inflame Muslim anger, Israel left the Temple Mount under control of Jordanian religious authorities, setting the stage for ongoing conflict today.

worshiped” (Zechariah 14:9, New Living Translation).

Once He has put down all rebellion and opposition (verses 12-14), “it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem *shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles*” (verse 16).

Micah 4:2-3 goes on to explain how Jerusalem will fulfill its destiny as capital of a world transformed under the righteous rule of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ:

“Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and *let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.*’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*”

Isaiah 11:9 foretells how this troubled city, its name denoting it as one of peace, will finally experience the peace it has longed and hoped for: “*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*”

In a world that finally comes to know the true God, and to understand His way of life and to experience the blessings it brings, peace will at last become the new normal. Blessings will flow to the entire world! (To learn more, download or request our free study guides *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*)

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem

Would you like to be a part of this incredible future? Would you like to share in this astounding future beyond today? You can! God calls you now to surrender your life to Him—through what the Bible calls *repentance*. It means turning from your own way of doing things and turning to God and His ways. It means seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness in your life (Matthew 6:33).

You can start doing that now with what you’re learning in the pages of *Beyond Today!*

In Psalm 122:6, Israel’s King David tells us, “*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*” Whenever I’ve visited Jerusalem I have taken David’s words to heart. I’ve waded through the crowds to the Western Wall, stood before that wall that has witnessed so many years and tears of hope and sorrow, bowed my head and asked God to send His Kingdom soon so that His beloved city may at last experience the lasting peace it has never seen.

“*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*” Remember David’s words. May we all pray for the peace of Jerusalem that will come in the Kingdom of God, and pray that it come soon! **BT**



LEARN MORE

Jerusalem has a long and troubled history—much like the rest of this deeply troubled region. But it will not always be this way. Learn what the roots of its problems are—and the divine solution God has in store—in our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.
BTmagazine.org/booklets

A Brief History

ca. 1005/4 B.C.: Israel’s King David captures the Jebusite city of Jebus, also known as Salem since Abraham’s time, and makes it the capital of his unified kingdom of Israel and Judah (1 Chronicles 11:4-8). It comes to be known by various names, including Jerusalem, Zion and the City of David. David desires to build a temple to God but is told he will not be allowed to because he has been a man of war and that his son Solomon would build it. Late in life David begins gathering material for construction of the temple (1 Chronicles 22:1-16).

God through an angel and a prophet showed David where to erect the altar for the temple—on the threshing floor of Araunah or Ornan the Jebusite atop Mount Moriah, apparently the same place that God had given a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in place of Isaac (see 2 Samuel 24:16-24; 2 Chronicles 3:1; Genesis 22).

ca. 967 B.C.: David’s son and successor Solomon begins construction of the temple, utilizing workmen and materials from Tyre, whose King Hiram had built David’s palace in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:3–3:1).

ca. 960 B.C.: Solomon dedicates the temple, which is then filled with God’s glorious presence (2 Chronicles 5:1-14). But Solomon himself eventually turns to worship of foreign gods, and at his death ca. 931/930 B.C. his kingdom divides into the separate kingdoms of Judah (its territory surrounding and to the south of Jerusalem) and Israel (to the north of Jerusalem).

Over the following centuries the temple would at times be used for its intended purpose of honoring God, but also would fall into neglect, occasionally be repaired and restored, and eventually be transformed into a place of worship for pagan deities—largely depending on whether the kings of Judah reigning in Jerusalem were righteous or wicked.

701 B.C.: About 20 years after the northern kingdom is taken away captive into Assyria, the Assyrian king Sennacherib invades Judah and lays siege to Jerusalem, but the city and King Hezekiah are miraculously delivered. In preparation for Assyrian invasion, Hezekiah ordered construction of a water diversion tunnel to provide a secure water supply for the city—an astounding archaeological proof of the biblical historical record that visitors to Jerusalem can see today.

ca. 700 B.C.: Although not attested in surviving historical records, archaeological evidence shows the Temple Mount was expanded during several periods—most likely during times of Jewish religious revival in the reign of King Hezekiah (ca. 729-686 B.C.) and again during a short-lived period of Jewish independence after 165/4 B.C.

ca. 587 B.C.: The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar invades the kingdom of Judah for the third



This Assyrian record from the reign of Sennacherib records his siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.—but omits the destruction of his army when God miraculously saved the city and King Hezekiah.

of Jerusalem's Temple Mount

time, besieges and burns the city and completely destroys the temple built by Solomon four centuries earlier. The Ark of the Covenant in the temple's Holy of Holies disappears from history. Jerusalem lay in ruins for decades until Jewish exiles begin to return, as described in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Archaeological remains verify the destruction of the city by the Babylonians and the later rebuilding of fortifications as recorded in Nehemiah 2:11–4:23.

ca. 536/5 B.C.: Work begins on a rebuilt temple as described in Ezra 3:8-13. Work ceases, then renews, and the rebuilt temple is dedicated in 515 B.C., as described in Ezra 5:1–6:22.

168/7 B.C.: The Syrian invader Antiochus Epiphanes attempts to eliminate Jewish religion and erects a pagan statue (probably of himself) in the temple, and also desecrates the temple altar by sacrificing swine on it. This is a forerunner of the end-time “abomination of desolation” foretold by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:15.

165/4 B.C.: The Jews cleanse and rededicate the temple and altar. The later Jewish holiday of Hanukkah commemorates circumstances surrounding these events. Sometime in the following years the temple platform is enlarged from the earlier construction by Solomon and Hezekiah.

ca. 20-18 B.C.: Herod the Great, king over Jerusalem and Judea, begins construction of a massive expansion of the Temple Mount and a new temple after completely removing the one built by Zerubbabel. His enormous temple complex is mentioned many times in the Gospels and was still being worked on



In A.D. 70 Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. This 1867 painting depicts the battle on the Temple Mount.

46 years after construction commenced, as noted in John 2:20.

A.D. 67: Around the time the temple complex begun by Herod the Great was finally finished, long-simmering Jewish hostility toward Roman rule broke out into open rebellion and began sweeping through Judea and Galilee, with ultimately devastating results for the Jewish nation.

A.D. 70: Roman legions surround Jerusalem and lay siege to the city, then break through its defenses, demolishing the Antonia Fortress adjacent to the north side of the temple complex. The Temple Mount itself becomes a battleground, and in the fighting the temple is burned and completely destroyed. The Romans destroy every vestige of the temple complex atop the foundation platform, fulfilling Jesus Christ's prophecy that not one stone of the temple buildings would be left standing atop another (Matthew 24:1-2). The enormous foundation platform constructed by Herod remains, lying desolate.

A.D. 132-135: A second Jewish war against Roman rule, known

as the Bar Kokhba revolt, breaks out with devastating results for the Jews of the region. Jerusalem is again destroyed, with Jews now expelled, and the city is rebuilt under the Roman Emperor Hadrian as a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina. During this time Hadrian builds a temple to Jupiter on the abandoned Temple Mount.

ca. A.D. 325: The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, who came to support the dominant but compromised form of the Christian religion, demolishes the temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. Archaeological evidence in the form of mosaic flooring and other architectural details shows that at some point a Byzantine church was built on the Temple Mount.

ca. A.D. 692: Following the Muslim conquest of the Holy Land and capture of Jerusalem, the Dome



The Dome of the Rock was built on the Temple Mount in A.D. 692. This photo shows the interior in 1915.

of the Rock is built on the Temple Mount. This structure, patterned after Byzantine churches and the nearby Church of the Holy Sepulcher, is a shrine rather than a mosque—built over the stone outcropping from which Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to heaven and which a number of archaeologists and other scholars believe marked the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temples.

ca. A.D. 705: The first Al-Aqsa Mosque, just south of the Dome of the Rock, is built on the Temple Mount (and later destroyed by earthquakes and rebuilt in 754, 780 and 1035).

A.D. 1099: Jerusalem is retaken by Crusaders, who convert the Al-Aqsa Mosque into a palace and the Dome of the Rock into a church.

A.D. 1187: The Muslim conqueror Saladin recaptures Jerusalem and restores the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock to their previous functions. Jerusalem remains under Muslim control for the next 730 years until it is taken over by the British during World War I. During this time Jews or Christians are only rarely allowed on the Temple Mount.

A.D. 1948-49: After Israel declares independence on May 15, 1948, several months of war follow during which the Jordanian army captures large portions of Jerusalem. The city is divided into Jewish and Arab sectors. No Jews are allowed on the Temple Mount.

A.D. 1967: During the Six-Day War, Israeli forces capture all of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount—but out of concern over further inflaming the Muslim world, they allow Jordanian religious control of the Temple Mount to continue—although now Jews and Christians will be allowed on the Temple Mount, as Israel pledges free access to all of Jerusalem's holy places. Archaeological excavations soon begin on the southern and western sides of the Temple Mount, and over the next few decades will reveal the city's rich history—including its incontrovertible Jewish presence and character.

Another Temple Mount Battle: Where Was It Located?

We're used to seeing headlines about bloody clashes between Arabs and Israelis over the Temple Mount. But another battle, involving old arguments, is reemerging—being waged over history and archaeology as it relates to where the Jerusalem temples actually existed. What are the facts?

by Scott Ashley

In recent years we've seen denials that any Jewish temples ever existed in Jerusalem or on the Temple Mount (see "Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Center of Conflict," beginning on page 17).

And now another theory is making the rounds, following from similar ideas put forward decades ago, proposing that the Jerusalem temples never existed on the Temple Mount, but instead were located several hundred yards to the south over the Gihon Spring, the original water source for ancient Jerusalem. According to this theory, the area that's been identified as the Temple Mount for the last 2,000 years is actually the site of the Antonia Fortress, originally built by Herod the Great and later used by the Romans.

This theory—which to our knowledge isn't supported by any trained Western archaeologist today—is built on a number of

flawed assumptions and is contradicted by a great deal of biblical, historical and archaeological evidence.

Regrettably, since it ignores or denies clear evidence, it also plays into the hands of those who deny any Jewish presence or Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

In understanding the history of Jerusalem, we need to be aware of the limitations of archaeological evidence. One is simply the fact that Jerusalem is a thriving, growing, active city—and modern houses, businesses, streets and schools lie atop whatever ruins exist from ancient times. This makes it extraordinarily difficult to excavate in and around ancient Jerusalem.

The situation isn't helped by the fact that the city has been fought over dozens of times and destroyed and rebuilt several more times. Nor does it help that the temple constructed by

King Solomon was destroyed by Babylonian invaders ca. 587 B.C., and the ruins were covered and built over by a massive foundation platform atop which was built a later temple.

And like Solomon's temple, the temple of Jesus Christ's day was so thoroughly destroyed in the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that, as Jesus foretold in Matthew 24:2, "not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." He was, in context as shown by Matthew 24:1, Mark 13:1-2 and Luke 21:5, clearly talking about the temple itself and its outer buildings and structures, not the foundation platform on which they were built—a fact misunderstood by many over the years.

When it comes to the scarcity of archaeological remains, it was also common up until very recent times to "recycle" building stones in new structures, making it very difficult if not impossible to locate more than a fraction of the original pieces of ancient buildings.

But in spite of these challenges, there are firm and clear remains that can be seen today that mesh perfectly with historical eyewitness accounts from those who personally saw these structures, or knew those who did.

Space prevents us from addressing all of the evidence concerning the temple's actual location, but we'll examine some of the most important. Interested readers can learn more from the resources listed at the end of this article.

Where does the Bible place the Jerusalem temples?

The Bible and history are clear that Solomon's temple and the later temple built by Zerubbabel were constructed on the same spot (see Ezra 3:3; 5:15; 6:7). Herod the Great later built his great temple, the one that existed in Jesus' day, on the location of Zerubbabel's temple.

And where was this spot? We read in 2 Chronicles 3:1 that "Solomon began to build the house of the LORD [the temple] at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." The account of King David purchasing the threshing floor of Ornan is recorded in 1 Chronicles 21:14-22:1.

A brief overview of the geography of Jerusalem is helpful at this point. The Jebusite city that David captured and chose as



The model of the first-century city at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem is dominated by the magnificent temple complex constructed by Herod the Great. At the rear right corner of the temple platform lies the Antonia Fortress.

his capital, naming it Jerusalem, was a walled city located on a narrow ridge that tapered to a point as it descended in elevation from north to south. As the ridge gained elevation to the north, it widened and somewhat flattened—though it was still highest near the center of the ridge.



This photo shows a Middle East threshing floor still in use in the late 1800s. The woman (sitting) uses a winnowing fan as mentioned in the Bible. The man uses a winnowing fork.

The Jebusite city was well-fortified with strong walls, behind which its defenders felt confident enough to mock David's soldiers, telling them that blind and lame men could prevent an army from entering the city (2 Samuel 5:6-8). The walled city, which would come to be known as "the city of David" following its capture (verse 9), was quite small, covering only about nine acres atop the ridge.

Steep valleys on the east, west and south sides helped make the city virtually impregnable. Archaeological excavations in recent years have uncovered strong defensive towers that protected the city's water source, the Gihon Spring at the base of the ridge that emptied into the Kidron Valley between the ridge and the Mount of Olives to the east.

The temple was built on the site of a threshing floor

As noted above, the temple was built on the site of a threshing floor. What was a threshing floor? It was an open area where wheat and barley would be threshed to crack open the husks to separate the kernels so they could be ground into flour for bread.

The wheat and barley husks were typically cracked open by the hooves of an animal walking on them (Deuteronomy 25:4) or by a weighted sledge pulled by such animals. The mixed grain and husks were then tossed in the air, often with a large flat basket called a winnowing fan, and wind would blow the lighter husks away while the heavier grain fell back into the basket for collection (see Ruth 3:2; Isaiah 41:16; Matthew 3:12). Threshing floors were typically located on hilltops or large open areas where the wind would blow away the husks (chaff, as it's called in the Bible).

The fact that the temple was built on the site of a threshing floor tells us that *it was built outside* the city of David, because locating a threshing floor within city walls would've been self-defeating—the city walls and buildings would've blocked the wind necessary for separating the grain from the husks. Also, one would never locate a threshing floor near a town's water source, as the windblown chaff would blow into the water, unnecessarily polluting it with foul-tasting chaff.

The Bible itself confirms that the location of the threshing floor on which the temple was built was "up"—higher in elevation—from the City of David (2 Samuel 24:18-19). In light of the geography of the ridge on which the city was built, which widened and gained in elevation to the north, this makes the area to the north the *only* area in which a temple could be built—especially since the city was surrounded by

steep valleys on the other three sides. (This is also the only logical location for a threshing floor, as the higher location would be outside the city walls and could take advantage of the wind needed to blow away the chaff.)

The Bible also tells us that after Solomon had finished building the temple and it was to be dedicated, he and the elders of Israel brought the Ark of the Covenant "up . . . from the city of David" to the temple (1 Kings 8:1, emphasis added throughout). The fact that the ark was moved *up from* the City of David means that it was brought "out of the City of David" (King James Version, Green's Literal Translation, English Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version and various others) to the newly constructed temple.

The biblical account mentions eight times in 1 Kings 8 and the parallel account in 2 Chronicles 5 that they brought the ark *up from* the City of David to the temple—proving that the temple was *uphill and out of* David's city—exactly where the Temple Mount is and has been for almost 3,000 years.

We see from these passages that any argument that the temple stood within the area of the original City of David is directly contradicted by plain statements of Scripture. These passages also prove that the temple couldn't have been located directly atop the Gihon Spring, because the Gihon Spring is located *downhill* from the City of David toward the Kidron Valley at an elevation *more than 100 feet below* that of the city.

Archaeological evidence for the Temple Mount being the Temple location: Jewish ritual baths

It's odd to feel a need to argue that the structure recognized for the last 2,000 years as the foundation platform for Herod's Temple is exactly that, since it is in itself *36 acres* of proof. Nonetheless we'll recap some of the archaeological proof that this was indeed the actual temple location.

One of the most striking proofs that the Temple Mount was considered a holy place is the large number of Jewish ritual purification baths, called *mikvot* or *mikva'ot* (plural of *mikveh*), all around the Temple Mount. So far *more than 100* have been found, ranging in size from being able to accommodate one person at a time to dozens or a hundred or more worshippers at once. (Incidentally, this large number of *mikvot* explains how the apostles were able to find sufficient water to baptize 3,000 people in one day on the Feast of Pentecost as described in Acts 2:41.)

During Jesus' time it was common for worshippers going up to the temple to ritually immerse themselves in water so they could enter the temple precincts in a ritually pure state. Incidentally, this practice of ritual washing was carried over to a number of synagogues in Israel where similar *mikvot* have been found dating to this period—and the practice has been continued at



This is one of more than a hundred Jewish purification baths archaeologists have excavated around the Temple Mount, showing separate steps for entering and leaving.

many synagogues elsewhere in the centuries since.

Archaeologist Eilat Mazar describes what was uncovered in the excavations along the southern and western walls of the Temple Mount overseen by her grandfather, noted archaeologist Benjamin Mazar: “Dozens [of] ritual baths dating to the Herodian period were found throughout the excavation site. Rock-cut channels directed water into the baths from the surplus in the colossal cisterns on the Temple Mount . . . Each bath had one entrance with stairs and a low parapet in the center that separated those entering for purification from those leaving after purification” (*The Complete Guide to the Temple Mount Excavations*, 2002, p. 61).

Wherever archaeologists have excavated around the Temple Mount, all over the south and west sides and in what little digging has been done to the north, they have found Jewish ritual baths dating to the first centuries B.C. and A.D. The only area they haven’t found them is on the east side, where a large Muslim cemetery prevents any archaeological exploration.

Recently it was revealed from long-hidden historical records that after a 1927 earthquake in Jerusalem damaged the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, British archaeologist Robert Hamilton discovered and documented the remains of a first-century Jewish *mikveh* underneath its floor—a find kept hidden for almost a century so as not to arouse Muslim anger at such clear evidence of Jewish worship on the Temple Mount.

Of course, all of these dozens of Jewish ritual baths surrounding and atop the Temple Mount make no sense if this was the Antonia Fortress, as those who wish to relocate the temple try to argue. It makes no sense that Jews would’ve been

ritually bathing themselves all around a Roman military fortress—but it makes perfect sense if they were purifying themselves before ascending to the temple to worship.

In stark contrast, in many excavation sites over many years of digging, no

The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes signs warning non-Jews against coming nearer to the temple. This complete version was found in 1871 near the Temple Mount.

such baths—or any evidence of any kind of Jewish worship practice—have been found where some would relocate the temple above the Gihon Spring.

Finds corresponding with Josephus’ temple description

Flavius Josephus (ca. A.D. 37-100) was a prolific first-century Jewish scholar, historian and priest intimately familiar with Jerusalem and the temple and the war in which both were destroyed by the Romans. In his writings he gives many descriptions of the temple that allow us to correlate it with the Temple Mount, but we’ll focus only on a few archaeological finds.

Josephus records that the outer court of the temple complex, known as the Court of the Gentiles (into which gentiles could enter), “was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription, which forbade any foreigner to go in, under pain of death” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, chap. 11, sec. 5). In his work *Wars of the Jews*, he states there were a number of these signs on this wall, “some in Greek, and some in Roman letters, that ‘no foreigner should go within that sanctuary’” (Book 5, chap. 5, sec. 5).

Two of these stone “do not enter” signs, one complete and the other with the ends missing, have been found. The complete one was found in 1871 about 150 feet from the Temple Mount, and the partial one was found in 1935 in an excavation about 200 feet north of the northeast corner of the Temple Mount platform. Both were found reused in other structures, showing how ancient building materials were often scavenged and reused in other ways. The carved Greek inscription on the complete copy, spelling out what Josephus summarized, reads: “No foreigner may enter within the balustrade around the sanctuary and the enclosure. Whoever is caught, on himself shall he put blame for the death which will ensue.”

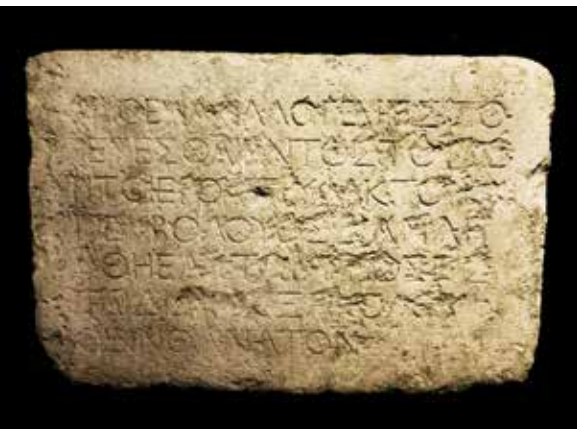
Josephus also describes a part of the temple complex “where it was custom for one of the priests to stand and to give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day” (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 4, chap. 9, sec. 12). For this trumpet blast announcing of the beginning and ending of the Sabbath day to be meaningful, it logically must have taken place at a part of the temple where it could be heard through much of the city.

In 1968, Hebrew University archaeologist Benjamin Mazar found a large carved stone in the rubble of the destruction of the temple complex at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount platform, which in the first century overlooked most of the city. The stone was buried at the bottom of the rubble from some of the temple’s outer buildings, meaning it had likely fallen from the very top of the structures built around the edges of the platform.

Carved in elaborate Hebrew script on the stone were the words, “To the trumpeting place to declare . . .” with the remainder of the inscription broken off and lost. Temple experts believe that the full inscription read, “To the trumpeting place to declare the Sabbath,” and that the stone fell from the spot to which Josephus referred—particularly since the broken stone fit perfectly onto a much larger block of stone that had a niche carved out just the right size for a man to stand in.

Josephus also describes the western side of the temple platform as having four entrance points, one accessed by a bridge crossing the Tyropean Valley to Jerusalem’s wealthy upper city, two that opened to the rest of the city, and a fourth involving “a great number of steps” located “where the road descended down into the valley” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, chap. 11, sec. 5).

Today in the Western Wall one can see remains of these four entrances to the Temple Mount exactly as Josephus explained them. Named after famous Jerusalem archaeologists, they are called, respectively, Wilson’s Arch (the remains of a bridge crossing the Tyropean Valley), Warren’s Gate, Barclay’s Gate, and Robinson’s Arch, which is the remains of a massive staircase that indeed had “a great number of steps” leading down to the first-century “road [that] descended down into the valley”—exactly as Josephus describes.



Josephus further describes an astoundingly impressive colonnade “better than any other under the sun” running along the southern top of the temple platform (ibid.). Benjamin Mazar’s finds from his excavations along the southern wall of the Temple Mount from 1968-1978 again matched the description given by Josephus:

“Numerous fragments of such pilasters [rectangular pillars set into walls] and their capitals, as well as pieces from two stone sundials, together with fragments from other architectural elements including friezes, panels, cornices . . .



The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes a location at the temple from which a priest blew a trumpet announcing the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. This broken stone parapet, found in the rubble of the destroyed temple buildings, was inscribed with a Hebrew inscription reading, “To the trumpeting place to declare . . .”

columned structure that ran along the top of the southern wall of the Temple Mount], were found in abundance among the debris which had accumulated along the area facing the whole length of the South Wall and close to the Western Wall.

“These fragments bear typical Herodian decorations comprising the rich variety of geometric as well as floral patterns characteristic of the artistic repertoire of the period” (*The Mountain of the Lord: Excavating in Jerusalem*, 1975, pp. 121-124).

Josephus also added that the southern side of the temple platform had “gates in the middle.” Today one can visit the Temple Mount and see two sets of gates, known as the Double Gate and Triple Gate, in the middle of the walls—exactly as Josephus places them. (Josephus lists “one large gate” on the east side and doesn’t specify a number for the north side—but these areas today lie underneath a Muslim cemetery and the Muslim portion of the city, and no excavations have been carried out along these walls.)

Regrettably, since the Temple Mount has been in the hands of Muslim authorities, they have allowed no meaningful archaeological exploration in this or the last century. In fact, there is abundant evidence of Muslim authorities *destroying* ancient remains on the Temple Mount, presumably to erase any evidence of a Jewish presence there. So due to the impossibility of any scientific exploration of the Temple Mount anytime soon, other evidence lying beneath its surface that would further confirm this as the temple location must remain a mystery.

Archaeology disproves any temple above the Gihon Spring

In the first century A.D., when some argue that the Jerusa-

lem temple was located on the ridge above the Gihon Spring, what was that area like? From 1995 until his retirement in 2011, University of Haifa professor Ronny Reich, recipient of multiple awards for his outstanding contributions to the field of archaeology, was co-director of excavations in the City of David. In that capacity he oversaw archaeological explorations all around the Gihon Spring, including the steep slopes of the ridge on which the City of David lay. His findings contributed a great deal to our understanding of the history of the area.

So what did he find in this area where some would place the Jerusalem temples? In his 2011 book *Excavating the City of David: Where Jerusalem’s History Began*, Dr. Reich explains what they had to dig through all around the Gihon Spring: “8-9 m[eters] of soil, stone clusters, [pottery] sherds and fragments of finds—all spilled down across the eastern slopes of the City of David . . .” He describes how a similar “thick overlay” covered other nearby sites excavated by previous archaeologists.

What was this “thick overlay” of material? “. . . This was a huge amount of debris, in the realm of hundreds of thousands of cubic meters. It was not long before we realized that we had been dealing all along with *the Jerusalem city dump from the end of the Second Temple period*”—i.e., from the time of Herod’s temple (pp. 219-220).

So rather than this being the site of Herod’s glorious temple where Jesus Christ visited and taught, the area above and around the Gihon Spring was actually *the site of the city dump* in Jesus’ day!

Additional archaeological excavation reports show that during the period of Solomon’s temple, this same slope was covered with agricultural terraces of the same kind seen all around Jerusalem today for growing olive trees—again showing the impossibility of the temple being located here.

In addition to these excavations all around and above the Gihon Spring—including *at least eight* where some would mistakenly relocate the temple—archaeologists have dug through all levels of human occupation in many nearby areas of the City of David, and nothing remotely indicates the Jerusalem temple having been located there, as some imagine. In spite of many decades of digging dating back to 1867—more than 150 years ago—*nothing remotely resembling the remains of a temple have been found.*

There is simply *zero* evidence to support the idea that a temple ever existed above or near the Gihon Spring—and the extensive excavations that have been conducted there conclusively prove the temples of the Bible *never existed there.*

If the clear evidence from the ground weren’t enough, both the Mishnah (a compilation of the Jewish oral law and tradition of temple times, including detailed descriptions of the temple, written down later in the second and third centuries) and Josephus place the size of the temple platform at 500 and 600 cubits, respectively—meaning it was some 900 to 2,000 feet wide, depending on the version of cubit used.

Locating a structure of that size atop the ridge on which the City of David lay is a *physical impossibility*—it would extend over and block large portions of the valleys on either side (including covering the first-century street that ran through the valley on the western side of the ridge). And if placed directly over the Gihon Spring, it would’ve completely dammed up the Kidron Valley (for which again there is zero evidence!).

And we know from archaeology that these areas were inhabited and used for centuries when, according to this proposed

different location for the temple, they would've been buried deep beneath the temple's foundation! Again, the physical evidence shows the impossibility of this idea having any validity.

Why the Temple Mount couldn't be the Antonia Fortress

Those who theorize that the temple was located over the Gihon Spring in the City of David have to come up with an alternative explanation for the identity of what is now identified as the Temple Mount platform. They label it the Antonia Fortress, a military fortification constructed by Herod the Great and named in honor of his friend and supporter Mark



This set of massive staircases more than 160 feet wide led to five gates, long since blocked up, in the southern wall of the Temple Mount. Inset into the steps were Jewish ritual baths. Such steps and gates make no sense if the Temple Mount is the Antonia Fortress, as some contend.

Anthony, one of the generals of Julius Caesar. But there are a number of reasons why this is illogical and inconsistent with known facts. One of the biggest problems with this idea is that Josephus plainly states that the Antonia Fortress adjoined the northwest corner of the temple platform. In *Wars of the Jews*, he writes, "Now as to the tower of Antonia, it was situated at the corner of two cloisters [colonnades] of the court of the temple; of that on the west, and that on the north" (Book 5, chap. 5, sec. 8). He later mentions "the north-west cloister [colonnade of the temple], which was joined to the tower of Antonia" (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, chap. 2, sec. 9).

However, the Gihon Spring, over which they would place the temple, is *some 900 feet to the south of the Temple Mount platform and in no way joins to it*. To resolve this, they have to read into Josephus' account a 600-foot bridge from one location to the other—a bridge for which there is, once again, *zero* archaeological or historical evidence.

There are many other problems with this theory. Of the 55 times Josephus refers to the Antonia Fortress, 44 times he calls it "the tower Antonia" (the other times he refers to it simply as "Antonia"). The Temple Mount platform is a 36-acre *flat level structure* that is in no sense a "tower," as Josephus repeatedly calls the Antonia Fortress.

Another huge problem with identifying the Temple Mount platform as the Antonia Fortress is the large number of gates, entrances, bridges and massive staircases providing entry to the structure—at least 10 entrances that we know of. A fortress by definition is intended to *keep people out*. Who builds a fortress with 10 entry points that must be defended? Obviously no one! A fortress is built with a *minimum* number of entrances, otherwise it defeats its very purpose as a defensive structure.

A further argument concerning these entrances is the fact that some of the southern wall entrances opened into long

passageways that originally allowed worshippers to exit onto the top of the platform near the temple.

Years ago, before these passageways were permanently closed to non-Muslims, photographs and architectural drawings showed them to be adorned with beautiful columns and elegant domes decorated with carved stone vines and geometric designs—with no depictions of people or animals, which were forbidden according to Jewish law.

Such elaborate and enormously expensive decorative stonework wouldn't be found in a military installation, but is very much in keeping with contemporary descriptions of the temple's elegant beauty in every area. Fragments of similar elegant stonework have been found around the Temple Mount amid the rubble of its destruction.

Yet another problem for this theory is the date of construction of the structure. In a 2011 excavation near the southwest corner of the Temple Mount, coins were found under the foundations of the Western Wall dating to A.D. 17-18. This find shows that the structure's massive walls were still under construction in the late teens A.D., decades after construction had started in the 18th year of Herod's reign in 22 B.C. (This discovery also confirms the statement in John 2:20 that at this time, in the late 20s A.D., the temple complex had been under construction for 46 years).

This discovery also proves that the Temple Mount is not the Antonia Fortress, which Herod the Great built and named for his friend and supporter Mark Antony. Herod built and completed the Antonia Fortress in his lifetime, well before his death around 4 B.C. The unearthing of coins dating to A.D. 17-18 under the wall foundations shows the impossibility of this being the Antonia Fortress, which had been completed at least two decades earlier.


The facts are clear

When it comes to the actual location of Jerusalem's temples, the facts are clear. Theories that the temples were constructed above the Gihon Spring are just that—theories—and quite weak and seriously flawed theories at that. They are theories unsupported by any real evidence.

In fact, the only real evidence that exists *directly contradicts* these ideas—which is why no reputable archaeologist that we're aware of supports them. The actual evidence points to what has been accepted for the last 2,000 years—that the temples of Solomon and Herod were built on the Temple Mount exactly where history, tradition and archaeology place them.

Readers interested in learning more may read an interview we conducted with Leen Ritmeyer, perhaps the world's foremost authority on the architecture and archaeology of the Temple Mount, by searching for "Leen Ritmeyer" at ucg.org/learnmore.

Dr. Ritmeyer has been involved in several major excavations in Jerusalem, and his illustrations have appeared in many Bible-related books, atlases and academic journals. At his website ritmeyer.com he regularly comments on significant archaeological finds from biblical times.

He is the author or coauthor of several highly recommended books on Jerusalem, the temple and the Temple Mount, including *Jerusalem—The Temple Mount* (2015), *Jerusalem in the Year 30 A.D.* (2015), *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (2012) and *Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount* (2006). 

Finds Confirm Scripture, Ancient Jewish History

New archaeological finds are constantly showing the Bible to be historically accurate and that the Holy Land is the ancient homeland of the Jewish people and other Israelites. We note a few here of recent date but, with space limitations, can only touch on them briefly. We encourage you to look up these discoveries online to learn more.

Roman defeat of the Jews at Jerusalem

The first of these recent finds concerns the Roman destruction of Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago in A.D. 70, which had been foretold by the prophet Daniel and



Archaeologist Nahshon Szanton holds a ballista stone apparently launched by Roman soldiers during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, found on an excavated first-century street.

Jesus Christ—this being a forerunner of end-time destruction to come.

The Times of Israel reported: “According to the Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA], an account by first century Roman-Jewish historian Josephus on the fall of Jerusalem is being confirmed by objects discovered on an ancient road that used to ascend from the city’s gates and the Pool of Siloam to the Jewish Temple . . . Among other finds, archaeologists dug up stone ballista balls flung by Roman catapults and arrowheads used by Jewish rebels behind barricades as the city fell to the Romans in 70 CE [Common Era]” (Sue Surkes, “Ancient War for Jerusalem Echoes as Stones and Arrowheads Uncovered,” May 25, 2017).

Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem

Next, excavations on the eastern slope of the City of David take us six more centuries earlier to the fall of Judah to the Babylonians around 587 B.C., as described in the biblical books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Jeremiah.

The IAA stated: “Many findings have surfaced, including charred wood, grape seeds, pottery, fish scales and bones, and unique and rare artifacts . . . These findings depict the affluence



This tiny ivory figurine was found in excavated ruins of the destruction of Jerusalem ca. 587 B.C.

and character of Jerusalem, capital of the Judean Kingdom, and are mesmerizing proof of the city’s demise at the hands of the Babylonians” (quoted by Daniel Eisenbud, “Evidence of Babylonian Destruction of Jerusalem Unearthed in City of David,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 26, 2017).

Judah’s absorption of people from the northern kingdom of Israel

The next find takes us a little earlier, concerning clay seal impressions of important people at the time of Judah’s King Hezekiah, whose reign overlaps that of the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria around 722 B.C.

“The sealings, from numerous excavations at the City of David, bear witness to the administrative systems and the civil service of the city in the First Temple period . . . Some of the seals bear biblical names, several of which are still used today, such as Pinchas [Phinehas]. One . . . mentions a man by the name of Achiav ben Menachem” (quoting IAA, Sept. 4, 2017, “Judean Bureaucracy From the First Temple Period,” *Artifax*, Autumn 2017). Both parts of his name were used by northern Israelite kings, Achiav being a form of Achav or Ahab.

According to the IAA excavation directors, “These names are part of the evidence that after the exile of the Tribes of Israel, refugees arrived in Jerusalem from the northern kingdom, and found their way into senior positions in Jerusalem’s administration” (ibid.). Another possibility is that such refugees may have come shortly before the final fall of the northern kingdom, perhaps corresponding to those of the northern tribes who came to Hezekiah’s great Passover (see 2 Chronicles 30:10-11, 18).

Proof of a Jerusalem governor at the time, as Scripture attests

Also dating from about this same time is a seal impression discovered in Jerusalem’s Western Wall plaza in December 2017 bearing the inscription “Belonging to the governor of the city”—effectively an ancient mayor. It was presented to current Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat, who said, “This shows that already 2,700 years ago, Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, was a strong and central city” (quoted by Amanda Borschel-

Dan, “2,700-Year-Old Seal Impression Cements Existence of Biblical Jerusalem Governor,” *The Times of Israel*, Jan. 1, 2018).

The site excavator stated, “The Bible mentions two governors of Jerusalem, and this finding thus reveals that such a position was actually held by someone in the city some 2700 years ago” (ibid). The book of 2 Kings names Joshua as the governor of the city at the time of King Hezekiah, and 2 Chronicles refers to Maaseiah as the governor of the city in the days of King Josiah.



Excavations near Jerusalem’s Western Wall plaza uncovered this ancient clay seal impression bearing the Hebrew inscription “Belonging to the governor of the city.”

A great prophet’s seal and fingerprint?

The big new find, which also dates to the time of Hezekiah, is what appears to be the seal impression of a major biblical figure, the king’s spiritual adviser, the prophet Isaiah, along with a partial fingerprint. It was found in the Ophel excavations on the south side of the Temple Mount. There is some dispute as to the wording on the seal, as part of it is broken off. It definitely bears the name Isaiah (Hebrew *Yeshayahu*), and seems to have part of the word for “prophet.”

Robert Cargill, the new editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, which published the find in its May-June 2018 issue, said of excavator Eilat Mazar: “She didn’t rush to conclusively say she had found the seal of Isaiah . . . In our article she gives the possible alternatives . . . But if you’re asking me, I think she’s got it. You’re looking at the first archaeological reference of the prophet Isaiah outside of the Bible . . . It’s amazing” (quoted by Amanda Borschel-Dan, “In Find of Biblical Proportions, Seal of Prophet Isaiah Said Found in Jerusalem,” *The Times of Israel*, Feb. 22, 2018).

Just scratching the surface

With no room to delve into more, we’ll just note the dating of an ancient mining complex in southern Israel’s Timna Valley to the time of the biblical king Solomon (Michelle Donahue, “Found: Fresh Clues to Mystery of King Solomon’s Mines,” *National Geographic.com*, April 3, 2017) and the discovery of a column capital from Herod’s temple complex (Yori Yalon, “Section of 2nd Temple—Era Column Found at Temple Mount Dig,” *Israel Hayom*, April 4, 2017). Again, do search for these along with the other finds.

As mentioned, new corroboration with Scripture and the connection of the people of Israel and Judah to the Holy Land is turning up all the time. Be sure to stay tuned.

—Tom Robinson



Who Are the Palestinians?

The Israeli Jews are regularly accused of invading and occupying land that is not theirs—the land of Palestine that purportedly belongs to the indigenous Palestinian people. But just who are the Palestinians? Is the land theirs? What is the truth?

by Tom Robinson

To the Arab nations, the birth of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948 is not a cause for celebration but what they call the *Nakba* or “Disaster.” Israel’s declaration of statehood was followed immediately by an invasion by surrounding Arab nations who told non-Jewish, Muslim inhabitants of the land that was then called Palestine, mostly Arabs themselves, to join the struggle or temporarily evacuate while the Israelis were conquered—and to then return to a Jew-free country. And many indeed left.

But events didn’t go as planned. The Israeli Jews defeated the invading Arab forces, and the inhabitants who had left became displaced, most relocating to Arab countries where they were not absorbed into the general populace but lived as refugees. A similar situation occurred nearly 20 years later in the 1967 Six-Day War, resulting in many more fleeing or being expelled and joining the refugees in Arab countries.

The non-Jewish inhabitants of the land, including the many of them who scattered as refugees, came to be known as the Palestinians. Most of these people now live in Jordan and in the territories known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and in lesser numbers in Syria, Lebanon and other countries.

They often portray themselves as indigenous people of the land they say is properly called Palestine, or *Filastin* in Arabic. The claim is made that the Zionist Jews who migrated to the land from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s had no legitimate national claim to the land—land they were supposedly stealing from the long-established ancient Palestinians. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas recently said that Israel is “a colonial enterprise that has nothing to do with Jewishness”—as if the Jews are foreign invaders of “Palestinian” land.

Is that what actually happened 70 years ago and in the decades before and after? To whom does the land actually belong? And just who are the Palestinian people?

Indigenous Canaanites or Arabs from elsewhere?

As history shows, the idea of a “Palestinian” people or nation is an invention. No such ethnically or culturally distinct people of this name has ever existed. It is clear that the Palestinians of today are mostly Arabs, yet from many other areas, along with various other peoples.

Palestinian leaders, however, insist on wild claims. In Mahmoud Abbas’ words: ‘We said to him [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu], when he claimed the Jews have a

historical right dating back to 3000 years B.C.E., we say that the nation of Palestine upon the land of Canaan had a 7,000-year history. This is the truth that must be said: Netanyahu, you are incidental in history. We are the people of history. We are the owners of history’” (quoted by David Bukay, “Founding National Myths: Fabricating Palestinian History,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2012).

The Palestinian Authority leader prior to Abbas, Yasser Arafat, claimed that the Palestinians are descendants of the Jebusites, the Canaanite people of ancient Jerusalem.

Yet consider these words of the Palestinian Hamas interior and national security minister, Fathi Hammad, in March 2012: “Who are the Palestinians? We have many families called al-Masri [the Egyptian], whose roots are Egyptian! They may be from Alexandria, from Cairo, from Dumietta, from the north, from Aswan, from Upper Egypt. *We are Egyptians; we are Arabs. We are Muslims. We are part of you. Egyptians! Personally, half my family is Egyptian—and the other half are Saudis*” (quoted by Pinhas Inbari, “Who Are the Palestinians?” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Aug. 7, 2017, emphasis added throughout). Indeed, Palestinian last names show many other national origins.

Note what they are *not*—a unique people group indigenous



“[The state of Israel is] a colonial enterprise that has nothing to do with Jewishness.”

—Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian National Authority president, in a 2018 speech

to ancient Palestine. In fact, Arafat and his compatriots admitted as much. In a March 31, 1977, interview with the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) executive committee member Zahir Muhsein said:

“The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct ‘Palestinian people’ to oppose Zionism” (quoted by Joseph Farah, “Palestinian People Do Not Exist,” WND.com, July 11, 2002).

In fact, the first article in the 1964 PLO Charter proclaims, “Palestine is an *Arab* homeland bound by strong *Arab* national ties to *the rest of the Arab Countries* and which together *form the great Arab homeland*.”

“Palestinian” a designation for the Jews?

Of course, in terms of the land there is quite a problem in this statement—seeing it as an Arab homeland and not a Jewish homeland. In fact, it should be pointed out that the Palestinians do not consider only the West Bank and Gaza Strip as Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. They regard *the whole of what is called the land of Israel* to be the land of Palestine belonging to the Palestinians, with all of it illegally occupied by the Jewish state.

Ironically the “West Bank” bears this name as denoting territory Jordan annexed and occupied on the west side of the

people Israel (Genesis 12:5-7; 17:8; Exodus 13:5, 11). Thus, by divine decree, even if there were still remnants of the indigenous Canaanites here, the land was given to Abraham and his descendants and was taken from the original inhabitants.

The Israelites formed a nation and kingdom that became divided into two—Israel and Judah. After persistent sin, God allowed the northern tribes of Israel to be deported by the Assyrians and the southern people of Judah, the Jews, to be mostly carried away to Babylon, with a few remaining in the land and some later returning to revive a Jewish state under the rule of the Persians and then continuing under Greek and Roman rule.

The Romans crushed two Jewish revolts, in A.D. 70 and 135, and the Jews became mostly scattered—although a significant population of Jews always remained in the land. (The Jews were expelled from Jerusalem in 135, but a number remained in other communities in the Holy Land.)

One might assume that God’s expulsion of Israel and Judah from the land means their claim on it came to an end. But God gave this land to the descendants of Israel *forever* (see Exodus 32:13). And even when He warned of removing them and ultimately did so, He still spoke of regathering them in their homeland. So according to God, no other people has a

right to this land. And all would do well to remember this!



“Who are the Palestinians? . . . We are Egyptians; we are Arabs . . . Personally, half my family is Egyptian—and the other half are Saudis.”

—Fathi Hammad, Palestinian Hamas interior and national security minister, in a 2012 interview on Egyptian TV

Jordan River after 1948 (rather than being called east Palestine), while the Jews call this territory Judea and Samaria—the very heartland of the ancient Israelite kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Even more ironic is the fact that “*before the State of Israel was born, the term ‘Palestinians’ was used by the Jews to refer to themselves and their organizations. ‘The Palestine Post,’ the Palestine Foundation Fund, Palestine Airways, and the Palestine Symphony Orchestra were all purely Jewish enterprises*” (Daniel Grynglas, “Debunking the Claim That the ‘Palestinians’ Are the Indigenous People of Israel,” *Jerusalem Post* blog, May 12, 2015).

Indeed, “the term Palestine was Western and was regularly used by Jews who immigrated to the country; *the Zionists called themselves Palestinians while the Arabs simply identified themselves as Arabs*. The Zionist institutions—such as the Anglo-Palestine Bank, the *Palestine Post*, and so on—were ‘Palestinian’ whereas the Arab institutions, such as the Arab Higher Committee, were simply ‘Arab’” (Inbari).

But terminology later shifted dramatically. “We first hear of Arabs referred to as ‘Palestinians’ when Egypt’s President Nasser, with help from the Russian KGB, established the ‘Palestine Liberation Organization’ in 1964. *It was only during the 1970s that the newly minted ‘Palestinians’ began to promote their narrative through murder and assassination. The Arabs have justified their attacks as acts of the indigenous people struggling for national liberation*” (Grynglas). But this is utterly contrived—a complete fabrication!

From Canaanite habitation to Jewish dispossession

Let’s briefly examine the history of this land from a biblical perspective. The Bible refers to this ancient land by the name of Canaan (Genesis 11:31; 12:5; 13:12), with Philistines dwelling along the Mediterranean coast before the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, the Israelites, settled there. Yet the God of the Bible, who owns the world and everything in it, stated His intention to give this land to His

History of the term *Palestine*

Where did the name *Palestine* come from? When the Romans crushed the Jewish revolt of 135, they merged the Roman province of Judaea into Syria and called the new province *Syria Palaestina*, presumably to remove its Jewish distinction.

The term *Palestine*, while derived from the ancient Philistines, previously had become a common geographic distinction for the land well before the renaming. It had been used by Greek and Roman writers such as Herodotus, Aristotle, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and others—and even a few times by the first-century Jewish historians Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus.

The area continued to be called *Palaestina* later in the Byzantine period, and forms of this name persisted under the Arab caliphates and Turkish Ottoman Empire, though “Southern Syria” was the common distinction. “After World War I [when the Ottomans fell to the western Allies], the name ‘Palestine’ was applied to the territory that was placed under British Mandate; this area included not only present-day Israel but also present-day Jordan . . . [At that time] *it was common for the international press to label Jews, not Arabs, living in the mandate as Palestinians*” (Jewish Virtual Library, “Israel: Origins of the Name ‘Palestine’”).

Inhabitants from Byzantine through Islamic periods

What was the makeup of the land of Israel after the Romans crushed the Jewish revolts in A.D. 70 and 135? As mentioned, most of the Jews were forcibly removed or fled, yet many others still remained throughout the land. The Romans would encourage others to settle here, particularly after the Empire became officially Christian.

When the Muslim Arabs took control of the Holy Land from the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire in the seventh century, many of them settled in the conquered land, with the

Jews remaining the largest minority. Yet it's been argued that "many of the native population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were forcefully converted to Islam and the country was forcefully *Arabized* . . . [becoming] an Arab-speaking country.

"That does not mean the people living there were 'real Arabs' . . . They were, in fact, descendants of the original Jewish population and of the Greek-speaking population that the Byzantines imported to Christianize the land" (Schlomo Sherman, "The Myth of the So-Called 'Palestinians,'" 1994, reproduced at Daniel Pipes Middle East Forum, comments).

Later the Seljuk Turks and Kurds (under Kurdish leader Saladin) fought the European Crusaders in the Holy Land. Many of these non-Arab Muslims were stationed here, and as a result, "numerous Hebron families . . . are of Kurdish origin. The Kurds also settled in other parts of the country and Transjordan. By now, the Kurds have completely Arabized, and they retain no connection with their origins" (Inbari).

A desolate land through Ottoman times

In the late 1600s, during Ottoman rule, a geographer and language expert named Hadriani Relandi toured the land, surveying about 2,500 places where people lived that were mentioned in the Bible or Mishnah. He recorded his observations in a book published in 1714. What does the book show?

"1. Not one settlement in the Land of Israel *has a name that is of Arabic origin* . . . not one Arabic settlement has an original Arabic name . . .

"2. Most of the land was empty, desolate, and the inhabitants few in number and mostly concentrated in the towns Jerusalem, Acco, Tzfat, Jaffa, Tiberius and Gaza. *Most of the inhabitants were Jews and the rest Christians. There were few Muslims, mostly nomad Bedouins* . . . who arrived in the area as construction and agricultural labor reinforcement, seasonal workers . . .

"3. The book *totally contradicts any post-modern theory claiming a 'Palestinian heritage,' or Palestinian nation*. The book strengthens the connection, relevance, pertinence, kinship of the Land of Israel *to the Jews* and the absolute lack of belonging to the Arabs" (Avi Goldreich, "A Tour of Palestine; the Year Is 1695," Think-Israel.org, Aug. 4, 2007).

The population dwindled as various factors made it increasingly difficult to live here. The ruin of the land had begun with the Roman destruction of Judah, Roman historian Cassius Dio writing at the time that "the whole of Judea became desert" after the destruction of hundreds of towns and villages, yet things became far worse after the Arab conquest and later under Ottoman rule (Joseph Katz, "Palestine, a Land Virtually Laid Waste With Little Population," EretzYisroel.org, 2001).

In the latter period the land "had become nearly desolate. The Turkish government taxed landowners by the number of trees on their land. The forests were decimated in an effort to avoid the tax. Hills and plains were overgrazed by sheep and goats. Large tracts ceased to be cultivated and lost their fertility. Many cities were abandoned. Swamps and deserts encroached upon the battered landscape. The fabled Holy Land had sunk into a sleeping death" (video presentation *The Galilee Experience*, 1997).

Visitors to the land in the 1700s and 1800s commented on its forlorn desolation. The British Consul in Palestine reported in 1857, "The country is in a considerable degree *empty of inhabitants and therefore its greatest need is that of a body of population*" (quoted by Katz).

The most famous to speak of the land's condition was the American author Mark Twain in his book *The Innocents Abroad* after his visit in 1867. Joseph Katz summarizes what Twain found:

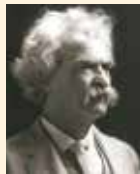
"In one location after another, Twain registered gloom at his findings: 'Stirring scenes . . . occur in the valley [Jezreel] no more. *There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent—not for thirty miles in either direction . . .*' [He further wrote of] '*. . . these unpeopled deserts, these rusty mounds of barrenness . . . that melancholy ruin of Capernaum . . . We reached Tabor safely . . . We never saw a human being on the whole route.*'"

Other peoples joined in a hodgepodge

Even so, there had been an influx of some people earlier in the 1830s with the invasion and temporary occupation of Syria and Palestine by the Egyptian general Ibrahim Pasha. He left behind a number of permanent Egyptian colonies. And with Jewish people returning to the land in the later 1800s, the Ottomans brought in other people to the land as well.

A major step came with the Bosnians. The Balkan country of Bosnia was invaded and by force converted to Islam by the Ottomans in the 1300s. Starting in the late 1600s the Ottomans began to lose European territories. Then "in 1878, at the Congress of Berlin . . . Turkey lost Bosnia to Austria. The result was a stream of Moslem refugees pouring out of Bosnia looking for haven in the Ottoman Empire . . .

"This migration of Moslem refugees marked a very important historic milestone in the history of Palestine. The Ottoman rulers adopted a policy of Moslem colonization . . . In the Carmel region, in the Galilee, in the Plain of Sharon and in Caesarea, lands were distributed to the Moslem refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The refugees were further attracted by 12-year tax exemptions and exemption from military service" (Manfred Lehmann, "Bosnia—Motherland of 'Palestinians'").



"There is not a solitary village . . . for thirty miles in either direction . . . We reached Tabor safely . . . We never saw a human being on the whole route."

—Mark Twain, American writer, describing the desolate emptiness he witnessed during his 1867 tour of the Holy Land

"The same colonization policy . . . was also directed toward Moslem refugees from Russia—particularly from Georgia, the Crimea and the Caucasus, [a diverse people group] called Circassians and Turkmenians—leading to their settling in Abu Gosh, near Jerusalem, and in the Golan Heights. Refugees from Algeria and Egypt were also settled in Jaffa, Gaza, Jericho and the Golan" (ibid.).

All these and other immigrants of widely disparate and mixed heritage formed part of the basis for the later so-called Palestinian people. Among those counted as "indigenous" Palestinians today are peoples actually springing from all over Europe, Russia, South Asia, North Africa, a host of Arab

countries and some Jews—in short, “the greatest human agglomeration drawn together in one small area of the globe” (John of Wurzburg, quoted by Katz, “Palestine Inhabited by a Mixed Population,” EretzYisroel.org).

Some of the European elements were those who came to the Holy Land during the Crusades while others came as slaves during centuries of Islamic slave trade. Yet most of the varied people groups mentioned on this list make up a very small part of today’s Palestinians, the major exception being the Arabs.

Arabs swarm in—the real colonizers

The Jews returning to the land in the late 1800s and early 1900s as part of the Zionist movement and during the time of the British Mandate sparked further immigration from surrounding Arab countries. This migration was so large as to overwhelm and assimilate the earlier non-Jewish immigrants, leading to all being essentially Arabized and regarded as Arab. “The ‘indigenous’ 4.3% comprised many non-Arab nationalities. [But] all of them were swamped by the Arab immigrants and within a few generations largely lost their identity” (Grynglas).

What prompted this large influx of Arabs into the land? “Records show that it was 19th and 20th century Jewish settlement and the resulting employment opportunities that drew successive waves of Arab immigrants to Palestine. ‘The Arab population shows a remarkable increase . . . partly due to the import of Jewish capital into Palestine and other factors associated with the growth of the [Jewish] National Home’ (the Peel Commission Report, 1937).

“[It’s earlier reported that] ‘in the Jewish settlement Rishon l’Tzion [First to Zion] founded in 1882, by the year 1889, the forty Jewish families settled there had attracted more than four hundred Arab families . . . Many other Arab villages had sprouted in the same fashion’ (Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 252 . . .). “British PM Winston Churchill said [of Palestine] in 1939: ‘. . . far from being persecuted, the Arabs have crowded into the country’” (Grynglas).

This large-scale migration into the land continued up to the formation of the Israeli state, when “most Muslims living in Palestine . . . had been living there for fewer than 60 years” (Ezequiel Doiny, “The Muslim Colonists,” Gatestone Institute, Aug. 15, 2014).

Mideast expert Daniel Pipes, in reviewing Joan Peters’ 1984 book *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*, states: “The data unearthed by Joan Peters indicate that Arabs benefited economically so much by the presence of Jewish settlers from Europe that they traveled hundreds of miles to get closer to them. In turn, this explains why the definition of a refugee from Palestine in 1948 is a person who lived there for just two years [*two years!*]: because many Arab residents in 1948 had immigrated so recently.”

Thus, as Daniel Greenfield states, “The ‘Palestinians’ are what they always were: a foreign Islamic Arab colony inside Israel.” And he poignantly answers Mahmoud Abbas’ claim of a Zionist colonial enterprise at the outset of our examination, declaring: “*The ‘Palestinians’ are not the victims of colonialism. They are its perpetrators.*”

Bible prophecy indicts Edom

Now, all of this being said, there does seem to be—in

consideration of what Scripture tells us on the issue—more to the identity of the Palestinian Arabs beyond their just being part of the general mass of Arab people.

The Arabs are not monolithic in their heritage. They consider themselves to be descended mainly from Ishmael, the first son of Abraham and half-brother of Isaac, and this is evidently the case. Yet among the Arabs are also some elements from other early tribes, including that of Jacob’s brother Esau, who was renamed Edom. Esau intermarried with daughters



“Far from being persecuted, the Arabs have crowded into the country.”

—Winston Churchill, British prime minister, describing large-scale Arab immigration in 1939 leading up to the formation of the Israeli state

of Ishmael and the Canaanites. And we should further realize that Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, are not limited to Arab tribes but include various other peoples.

Why focus on Edom here in regard to the Palestinian Arabs? The answer is found in a remarkable prophecy in the book of Obadiah, which concerns what will happen to the Edomites in the end time.

Verse 19 is speaking of territories—stating that those who control particular territories in the Holy Land will come to possess additional territories there. In context, we can see that Israelites in this verse are retaking areas that the Edomites have appropriated as their own.

Fascinatingly, the areas listed as doing the taking here are areas that are today populated by Jews. The areas being taken back are now populated by Palestinians—thus apparently identifying the Palestinians as Edomites, at least in significant measure.


It could be that some of the disparate peoples making up the non-Jewish, non-Arab inhabitants of the Holy Land prior to the more recent Arab influx are also made up of Edomites to some degree (for more details, see our online commentary at bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/Obadiah/).

God further prophesies against Edom in Ezekiel 35–36. He warns in chapter 35 that “Mount Seir,” the land of Edom, because of its inhabitants’ lust for the lands of Israel and Judah, will be judged and made desolate (verses 10-15).

God gives a similar warning in chapter 36, verse 5, and then says He will end the shame His land has borne and bring back the people of Israel to at last make abundant use of it.

Amazingly, through many prophecies we learn that the return of the Jewish people today is only a small foretaste of a far greater return of all Israel to the Promised Land under the coming reign of the Jewish Messiah, the Savior of all peoples, Jesus Christ.

It will shock many to learn that Palestinian Arabs are now occupying much of the land God gave to the rightful occupiers, the people of Israel, forever. Rest assured, He will not allow things to go on as they are indefinitely. All will come to pass just as He promises.

Keep looking to His Word and to the clear facts of history to understand your world. And trust in God’s plan to ultimately set all things right! 

No peace on the horizon for Israel

The prospect of an extended and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the West's all-consuming yet fruitless obsession in geopolitical wrangling. News of peace talks leads to hope anew as Israeli and Palestinian leaders are brought together. Each U.S. president, dreaming of leaving behind this ultimate legacy, leads a new process toward what seems like inevitable failure. Soon U.S. President Donald Trump may spearhead a new round of talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials.

Before they have even begun, however, it looks as though the talks are bound to fail. "Diplomatic sources affirm that the plan itself is much closer to Israel's positions than to the Palestinian positions. A two-state solution would be proposed in a way that [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu could accept . . .

"A senior PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] official close to [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud] Abbas told *Al-Monitor* that Abbas has lost any confidence in Trump as an honest broker, and he will galvanize his Arab partners for a rejection of the plan . . . Bearing the reactions of both sides and the current situation on the ground, there seems to be very little light at the end of the tunnel" (Uri Savir, "Palestinians Set to Reject US Peace Plan," *Al-Monitor*, March 25, 2018).

Palestinian rejection of peace talks, even those that, like the upcoming round, feature a two-state

solution to the problem and introduce Palestinian sovereignty, is not a new phenomenon. Peace talks have fallen apart numerous times since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, often because Palestinian authorities refuse to acknowledge a legitimate Jewish presence in the land.

The truth is that humanity cut off from God cannot know peace (Romans 3:17), and the cycle of continued failed peace talks in the Middle East is proof.

To better understand the roots of this conflict see "Who Are the Palestinians?" beginning on page 28 and our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *Al-Monitor*.)



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, U.S. President Bill Clinton and Yasser Arafat at the Oslo I Accord signing in 1993.

Yemeni civil war could lead to much wider Mideast conflict

One of the most geopolitically important regional conflicts in the world continues to heat up. The civil war in Yemen is drawing outside attention and intervention, with potentially huge consequences for the entire Middle East. Saudi Arabia's conflict with the Houthi separatists in northern Yemen is only intensifying, as Houthis continue to fire missiles over the border into Saudi territory, in addition to fighting the Yemeni government within the country.

"The Houthi movement that controls northern Yemen vowed on Monday [March 26] to fire more missiles into Saudi Arabia unless it stops bombing the country, after one of its missiles caused casualties in the Saudi capital for the first time" (Marwa Rashad, Sarah Dadouch and Abdulrahman al-Ansi, "Barrage of Missiles on Saudi Arabia Ramps Up Yemen War," Reuters, March 26, 2018).

Crucial to remember in the Yemeni civil war is that it's serving as a proxy war for Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shiite Muslim Iran, as the Houthis are notably backed by Iran's theocratic regime led by the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis

It's crucial to remember that the Yemeni civil war is serving as a proxy war between Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shiite Muslim Iran.

accused them of using Iranian-made missiles. Spokesman Colonel Turki al-Malki said the coalition reserved the right to respond to Iran 'at the appropriate time and manner,' under international law and within the framework of the United Nations, to protect Saudi Arabia. The incident threatens to sharply escalate a war that has already unleashed what the United Nations considers the world's most urgent humanitarian crisis" (ibid.).

While Iran and Saudi Arabia are using the fighting in Yemen as a proxy for their ongoing tensions with each other building to hostilities, the possibility of a more direct conflict between the two countries is growing. This could trigger a wider Sunni-Shiite conflict that could engulf and spill beyond the confines of the Middle East. (Source: Reuters.)

Foretaste of a prophesied conspiracy of nations?

In Psalm 83 we read about an event we haven't seen fully happen yet in history. We are told of a broad grouping of Middle Eastern nations coming together in a confederacy to destroy the nation of Israel. The psalmist Asaph lists these nations in verses 6-8. (For more on this prophecy, see our mini-study "Focus on the Middle East," beginning on page 34).

Recently, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which translates articles and broadcasts from different languages in the region, reported on a similar call for combining military forces against the modern state of Israel.

According to the summary of translations of a recent article in a Turkish paper, it was reported that "the article called on the 57 member states of the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] to form a joint 'Army of Islam' to besiege and attack the state of Israel. It notes that such a joint army will greatly exceed the Israeli army in manpower, equipment and budget, and presents statistics to prove this.

"It also advocates establishing joint bases for the army's ground, air and naval forces that will arrive from all over the Muslim world to besiege Israel, while

noting that Pakistan, as the only nuclear country, has 'a special status' among the OIC countries" ("Turkish Newspaper Close to President Erdogan Calls to Form Joint Islamic Army to Fight Israel," March 7, 2018).

The suggestion for this army of 5 million, which would be the world's largest military force and nearly as large as the Israeli population, was "undoubtedly approved with at least a wink and a nod by [Turkish] President Recep Tayyip Erdogan" ("Army of Islam' Would Be World's Biggest Military," WND.com, March 18, 2018).

This isn't the actual forming of a confederation of nations, but it does show that the desire is there among some to bring the resources of all these nations together to rid the world of Israel.

Be comforted when you become aware of news like this. Jesus addressed this topic specifically when he said: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass" (Matthew 24:6, emphasis added). Don't fear, because our God is in charge of history and the events that take place before the return of Christ as King and Savior. (Sources: MEMRI, WND.)

Facebook and privacy

Recently reports have come out that Facebook user data was a strategic part of the recent presidential election in the United States. “The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has confirmed it’s investigating Facebook’s privacy practices in light of the data misuse scandal currently engulfing the company” (Natasha Lomas, “FTC Confirms Probe Into Facebook Data Misuse Scandal,” TechCrunch, March 26, 2018).

Many people may not realize that Facebook, as well as other social media platforms, uses personal data for revenue, while many others are only vaguely aware of this. Millions of users have become comfortable with the fact that personal data has been used for generating targeted advertising. But possible sales of this info for targeted political campaigning probably comes as a surprise to most of us. This news as it relates to the recent election sheds light on the depth to which the data can be used.

We should take note of several things in light of this news. Not everything we see on social media represents the whole truth. We can be targeted in what advertisements come up, but also what news we see. We should consciously seek out all sides of stories from many different sources, not just what we see on Facebook.

Realize also that what you post or respond to can be used against you. When we freely give up information or take those online surveys to see which Disney character we are most like, we are giving up personal information that can be used by advertisers or other information gatherers.

CNBC reports: “This is the problem: We download apps and allow services to collect information about us without a second thought. The good to come out of this Facebook episode is that people get smarter about their online footprint” (Arjun Kharpal, “Facebook’s Data Scandal Should Be a Wake-up Call About Our Online Footprint,” March 27, 2018).

This is a new age of information, and we should be wise about what information we share online. These companies have *their* interests, not yours, at heart. (Sources: TechCrunch, CNBC.)

A new age of tyranny dawns

After Adolph Hitler’s defeat during World War II, the Western nations ostensibly began a crusade against tyranny of all stripes the world over. They fought wars against totalitarian communist regimes in East Asia, kept the Soviet Union in check for nearly half a century, and put various Middle Eastern and Latin American tyrants in crosshairs. Compared to previous centuries, we have lived in something of a golden age of global liberty.

The tide, however, seems to be shifting. Vladimir Putin was recently reelected as Russia’s president, China’s Xi Jinping has been ensconced as president-for-life, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has exerted an increasingly strong grip on his nation every year of his reign, to the dismay of his political opponents and many of the Turkish people.

Why the resurgence of tyranny? One commentator astutely found the answer in the universal human condition: “Another reason tyranny is resurgent has to do with human nature, which we in the West idealize. Not

everyone sees freedom as their top priority, preferring security (a lesson we should have learned in Iraq) . . .

“Tyrants may oppress you. They may lead you into disastrous wars. But they don’t demand that you take personal responsibility, that great burden of democracy. And every tyrant worth his salt provides scapegoats for his people’s failures: It’s never your fault, it’s them. It’s a message demagogues promote even [in America]” (Ralph Peters, “The World Is Descending Into Tyranny,” *New York Post*, March 20, 2018).

Tyranny exists in part because humanity puts its trust in “great” people, and this has been true throughout our history. In ancient Babylon a man named Nebuchadnezzar ruled with an iron fist. He and his empire were a “beast” in the Bible’s terminology. There have been many such “beasts” since, and we haven’t seen the end of tyranny yet. Jesus will supplant every one, however, and offer a true freedom and liberty humanity hasn’t yet known (Revelation 11:15). (Source: *New York Post*.)

Europe becoming less Christian all the time

Europeans are, by and large, no longer religious. Recent polls show most young people in Europe are “non-religious,” with Czechs being the least religious and Poles the most.

Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and the sociology of religion at St Mary’s University in London said: “Religion was ‘moribund’ [at the point of death or in terminal decline] . . . ‘With some notable exceptions, young adults increasingly are not identifying with or practising religion . . . Christianity as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good—or at least for the next 100 years’” (“Christianity as Default Is Gone”: The Rise of a Non-Christian Europe,”

The Guardian, March 20, 2018).

It’s not a surprise. The last few decades of slowly emptying churches in Europe are a witness to this trend. Throughout the region, cathedrals have become a spot for tourism rather than worship.

In the book of 2 Timothy, Paul wrote to the young minister warning about the end days and saying that people will be “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:4-5).

On the other hand, we also read in the Bible about a time when there will be a short-lived revival of religion in Europe. It will be led by a false religious system that will capture the hearts of the citizens there once more. To know more about this great end-time deception that is coming soon, download or request our free study guide *The Final Superpower*. (Source: *The Guardian*.)



An unused church was converted to a bookstore in the Netherlands.

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today’s dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You’re probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. *So are we*. That’s one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. These eye-opening presentations offer you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God’s Word. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!





FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Welcome to the 11th lesson in the “Bible Prophecy and You” series! For many decades the Middle East has held the attention of the world, especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001 in New York and Washington, D.C., and the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

The geographic focus of the Bible is on the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. In the Bible it is called (at different times) Canaan, Israel and Judah, and, in the New Testament, Judea, Samaria and Galilee. The name “Palestine” is not in the Bible but was used by Herodotus and later Greek and Roman writers, evidently deriving from the Philistines who had earlier settled there. The Romans decided to use this former designation after putting down Jewish rebellion and expelling many Jews.

The area of the nation of Israel is tiny, not much larger than the U.S. state of New Jersey and a little smaller than Sicily. Why does it get so much attention in the news? There are many factors—historical, religious, cultural and political. Anti-Semitism continues throughout the world, Iran pursues nuclear weapons, Syria is devastated by civil war, the Israeli-Arab conflict is explosive, and many militant Muslims want to destroy the very existence of the state of Israel! The same people also usually hate America for giving support to Israel.

All of this would be terribly confusing, but because of God’s revelations in the Bible, we can understand the past, present and future of the Middle East. And thankfully, though terrible events will come first, the story will have a happy ending!

A short history of Jerusalem and the Holy Land

The “land of Canaan” is first mentioned in Genesis 11:31. After Abraham had lived there for 24 years, God promised

“all the land of Canaan” to him and his descendants “as an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8).

Then 430 years later, after the Israelites had become enslaved in Egypt, God miraculously delivered them out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Exodus 12:40). God promised “to give them the land of Canaan”—a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 6:4; 3:8).

Under the leadership of Joshua, God enabled the Israelites to conquer the Canaanites and to settle in that land. However, for about 400 years, the Israelites never fully conquered the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Joshua 15:63). It was King David who finally took full control of the city, also known as “Zion,” which came to be known as “the City of David” (2 Samuel 5:6-7).

Israel became a powerful nation under David and Solomon, with Jerusalem as the capital. Solomon built a magnificent temple on Mt. Moriah, the same hilltop where Abraham was to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2; 2 Chronicles 3:1). After Solomon’s death, when the nation split in two, Jerusalem continued to be the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Judah was conquered by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar ca. 587 B.C. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the survivors were taken as captives to Babylon. But in 539 B.C., Babylon was conquered by the Persians, and captives were allowed to return to their homelands. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews who chose to return rebuilt the city and temple, although not to the level of their former glory.

When Judea eventually came under the domination of the Roman Empire in the first century B.C., King Herod enlarged and beautified the temple. Most of Jesus Christ’s ministry was in Galilee and Judea, and many of the important events that took place during His ministry occurred in Jerusalem,



confrontation, Israel allowed Muslims to maintain religious control of the Temple Mount.

Today, there are 57 Islamic nations, including 22 Arab countries. Since many of these surrounding nations are hostile toward Israel, the tiny nation of Israel often sees itself as David facing a giant Goliath.

Today, Jerusalem is considered a holy city in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. God chose Jerusalem to be “the holy city” but, shamefully, for much of its history, it has been more like “Sodom and Egypt” (Revelation 11:2, 8).

Jerusalem means “possession of peace,” its early-used shorter form *Salem* just meaning “peace” (see Genesis 14:18; Psalm 76:2; Hebrews 7:1-2). However, the city has not lived up to that either. Over the course of its history, Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, attacked 52 times, besieged 23 times and captured 44 times.

In the future, after Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, returns to the earth, Jerusalem will become the capital of the entire world (Isaiah 2:1-3). It will truly be a holy city and city of peace! Then after the Millennium, it will be replaced by an even greater city—the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2).

You can read much more fascinating history of the Middle East in our study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

What does the Bible say about the Middle East?

Biblical history, current world news and end-time prophecy are largely focused on the Middle East. The conflicts and potential conflicts there strongly affect the rest of the world and will do so increasingly. It’s critically

important that we understand the Middle East from a biblical perspective.

► Was Jerusalem prophesied to be a focus of much end-time conflict?

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it . . .” (Zechariah 12:2-3).

Jerusalem was foretold to be the center of controversy and conflict in the end time—“a cup of drunkenness” and “a very heavy stone for all peoples.”

► Will Israel be right in the middle of major end-time wars?

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him [the king of the North]; and the king of the North shall come against him [the king of the South] like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [the Holy Land], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon [where Jordan is located today].

“He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the

After Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, returns to earth, Jerusalem will become the capital of the entire world. It will truly be a holy city of peace!

including His crucifixion and resurrection. The beginning of the Church came when Christ’s disciples received the Holy Spirit as they were gathered in Jerusalem to observe the biblical festival of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

When the legions of Rome crushed a Jewish rebellion in A.D. 70, Jerusalem and the temple were once again destroyed. A final quashing of Jewish rebellion by the Romans came in 135. Centuries later, in 638, Muslim Arabs took the city. In 692 Muslims completed the Dome of the Rock, many believing it was built on the site where the temple had previously been. Since then, Jerusalem has changed hands several times. In 1517, the Ottoman Turks seized control and dominated the Middle East for four centuries.

In 1917, during World War I, the British defeated the Ottoman Empire and gained control of the Holy Land, then still referred to as Palestine. Finally, in 1948, after Britain announced it would relinquish control of the area, the United Nations voted to divide the land between the Arabs and the Jews.

As the British withdrew, the modern state of Israel was born. Within hours, armies from five surrounding Arab nations attacked Israel, determined to destroy it. After months of fighting, Israel was the victor. But Israel has had to fight additional all-out defensive wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973 and several other major conflicts since then.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israelis gained control of the Old City—the eastern part of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount. However, to lessen tensions and avoid a major

treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.

“And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and [or in] the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him” (Daniel 11:40-45).

The land of Canaan, later known as Israel and even later as Palestine, has always been a major crossroad and has often been coveted and conquered by competing great powers. There will, “at the time of the end,” be major conflict between the two powers specified here—kings or kingdoms of the North and the South from the perspective of the land of Israel.

Prophecies in Daniel, Revelation and elsewhere make it clear that “the king of the North” will be a European revival of the Roman Empire. But until recent times, it was hard to imagine a coalition of forces to the south that would be strong enough to compete with the European power. However, in the last few decades, we’ve been seeing the growing power of Islamic fundamentalism that could increasingly unite the Muslim world.

► Why were 1948 and 1967 key prophetic turning points in history?

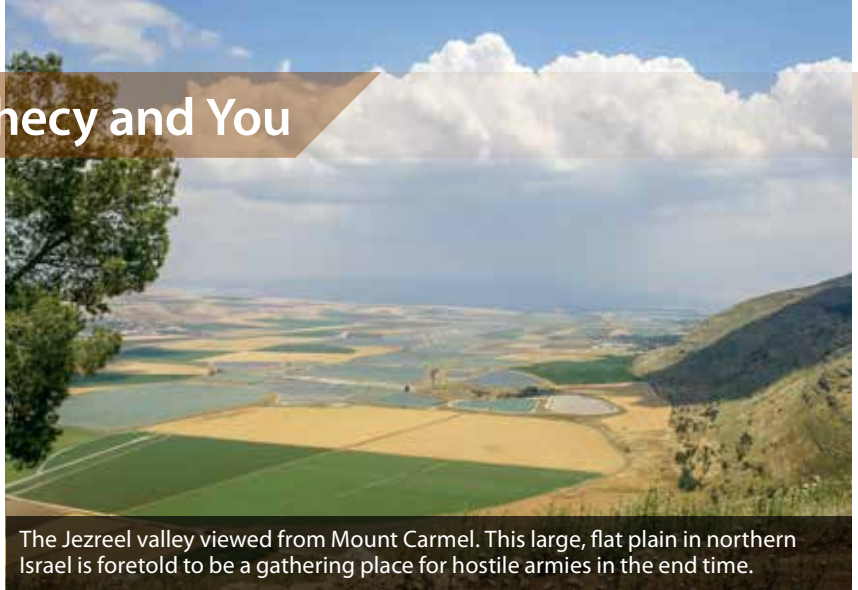
“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains’” (Matthew 24:14-16).

This passage refers to “the holy place,” implying a place for the worship of God. Jesus referred to the prophecy “spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” so He must have been referring to Daniel 12:11, especially since we know that prophecy is for “the time of the end” (verse 9).

In Daniel 12:11, we see that the setting up of “the abomination of desolation” coincides with the time when “the daily sacrifice is taken away.” Therefore, “the holy place” must refer to a Jewish temple and/or altar where animal sacrifices are offered. For Judaism, there is only one city in the world qualified to have a temple or altar—Jerusalem. And the Jews had no control of the Holy Land until 1948, and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem until the Six-Day War of 1967.

Many prophecies are dual, having a former fulfillment and a later, more complete final fulfillment. In fact, Daniel’s prophecy has had two former fulfillments. One was in 168 or 167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple and forbade Jewish sacrifices, referred to in Daniel 11:31. The other was in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple and abolished the Jewish priesthood and sacrifices (Luke 19:43-44).

To understand Daniel 12:11 (a future event), it is vital to understand these past events, as God often steers history to repeat itself. Again, many historic and prophetic details are explained in our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



The Jezreel valley viewed from Mount Carmel. This large, flat plain in northern Israel is foretold to be a gathering place for hostile armies in the end time.

The land of Israel has always been a major crossroad and has often been coveted and conquered by competing great powers.

► What else can we learn by comparing Luke’s parallel account of Jesus’ prophecy?

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles [non-Israelites] until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24).

Jerusalem’s “desolation” happens right after Jerusalem is “surrounded by armies.” There will be spiritual desolation and “great distress” when freedom of religion is taken away. There will be desolation (devastation) of the city when “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles.” And Jerusalem will become largely desolate (empty) of its citizens because many “will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations.”

► Does the Bible tell of an end-time confederation of Arabs and others determined to destroy the nation of Israel and its chief backer, the United States?

“Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate you have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted together against your sheltered ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’

“For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against you: the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot” (Psalm 83:1-8).

Who are these peoples and places today? Note the following

Who's Behind Beyond Today?

about this passage quoted from “Prophecy of an Arab Confederation” in our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*:

“Edom includes the Palestinians and some of the Turks. The *Ishmaelites*, descendants of Ishmael, are many of the Arab peoples throughout the Middle East and North Africa. *Moab* is the area of central Jordan. The *Hagrites* appears to refer to other descendants of Hagar, mother of Ishmael.

“*Gebal* . . . is commonly equated with the Phoenician city of Byblos, modern Jubayl in Lebanon. *Ammon* refers to northern Jordan around Amman, the capital (which gets its name from Ammon). *Amalek* appears to refer to a branch of Edomite Palestinians. *Philistia* is the area around what is today known as the Gaza Strip.

“Anciently *Tyre* was a major city-state in southern Lebanon along the Mediterranean coast. *Assyria* ethnically appears to refer to inhabitants of Central Europe who migrated there many centuries ago, while geographically Assyria is in what is today northern Iraq. *The children of Lot* refers to Moab and Ammon—again, regions of modern-day Jordan.”

The last part here seems to indicate European and Middle Eastern powers at first joined together against Israel before striking against each other in the North-South conflict mentioned earlier.


► Will the great battle commonly called “Armageddon” take place in the Holy Land?

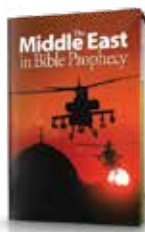
“For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ‘Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.’ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:14-16).

The final battle is actually called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” But before the actual battle, the demonic spirits will have “gathered them [the armies] together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon”—a reference to Megiddo to the northwest of Jerusalem in the northern part of Israel (verse 16).

The actual battle will be at “the Valley of Jehoshaphat,” meaning “God judges” (Joel 3:2, 12). This will ultimately be at Jerusalem. There, God says, “I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem” and “will go forth and fight against those nations” (Zechariah 14:1-3). The armies then planning to fight each other will turn and “make war with the Lamb,” but “the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14). We will cover more about these apocalyptic events in future lessons.

Apply now

To better understand what’s taking place in the Middle East, be sure to read our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Then “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6). Moreover, pray for Jesus Christ to return soon to bring peace to not just Jerusalem but to all nations. In that day, at last, no nation will “learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). 



Who’s behind the *Beyond Today* magazine and television program? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *Beyond Today* free to all who request it. Simply put, *Beyond Today* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God.

And those people have a common goal—to proclaim



the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to obey everything Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).



We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that

have long plagued humankind.

Through the pages of this magazine, on our TV show, and in dozens of helpful study guides (also free), we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God’s purpose as taught by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services nearest you, contact us at the appropriate address on page 39. Visitors are always welcome.

For additional information, visit our website:

ucg.org/learnmore



The Rise and Fall of Empires

People and nations should not ignore history. There is a common denominator throughout history for the rise and fall of each empire: Every time empires exalted themselves or thought themselves invincible and did that which is evil, they soon were brought low. It is a vicious cycle that people ignore. America will be brought low from within its own borders for we have ignored Him who made us great. Now is the time to return to God or pay the consequences. May God Almighty have mercy on America, for we have sinned!

From the Internet

Grateful for Bible study guides and helps

I am grateful to God for the truth I know because of your ministry. In fact, your resources impacted my life so enormously that I started teaching from them, not only within the school where I was teaching but also in my village. Sad to say, I was posted to the remote, jungle part of the country for three years where there is no power. I was cut off from the rest of the world, but during that time my wife and I continued studying the literature you sent us.

Now I am back in town at the same school, and I am hoping to resume the Bible study with my students. I hope to rightly divide the word of truth and be diligent to present myself approved to God, as a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed [2 Timothy 2:15]. You have seriously contributed to the transformation of our lives by providing us with the rich Bible study resources.

Reader in Rwanda

When I first discovered that the word *Elohim*, translated as God in Genesis 1, is in fact a plural word, it set me off in a flurry of research. I am a retired electronics engineer and the details matter to me, like why a plural word should be translated to a singular. I spun my wheels for a while, and finally decided to look at the United Church of God online Bible commentary. Your explanation is the clearest, most complete and concise that I could find anywhere. I have come to expect that from UCG, but it never ceases to amaze me.

From the Internet

Interested readers can find our online Bible commentary at ucg.org/brp.

I really enjoy your teachings and insights on how to live a

Visit *Beyond Today* on Facebook!

Are you on Facebook? If so, visit our *Beyond Today* magazine page. See what other readers are saying. Find links to interesting articles and Web commentaries. Become a *Beyond Today* magazine Facebook fan!

I really enjoy Beyond Today magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

—K.T., Facebook fan



Search Facebook for *Beyond Today* magazine

Christian life. With the help of your website I am now observing the Sabbath. I order everything I can to help me to grow in Christ and learn the things that God wants me to do and who He wants me to be. It has opened my eyes and my heart to so many things. Thank you so much for helping me in my walk with Christ.

From the Internet

Looking for a congregation

My husband and I are looking for a church. We are new Christians. We want a church that does not celebrate pagan holidays and that is filled with the Holy Spirit. We are learning about the Bible and would be interested in being disciples because we need a lot of help understanding. We feel very firmly that we need someone who will help us.

From the Internet

I want to learn how to celebrate the biblical Feast days. There is so much conflicting information out there! Does your church congregation near me celebrate these Holy Days? If so, is there anyone that would be willing to walk me through them or provide a good online source?

From the Internet

We're glad you want to keep God's feast days! Yes, we do observe God's annual feast days at all of our congregations. You can find the closest one to you at ucg.org/congregations, where you can also contact the pastor to get more information. Thanks for reaching out, and we hope to see you soon!

Glad to send donation

I am enclosing a donation. I hope it can help in producing the magazine, as I really enjoy reading it. You make it all so clear. Thanks!

Subscriber in Prince Edward Island, Canada

Please find enclosed my money order as a gift and to help a little in covering costs for my subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine—I love it! I also watch you on TV.

Subscriber in Yukon Territory, Canada

Please speed my subscription. I need it today! I used to get the magazine several years ago when I did not know God's Holy Spirit, but you planted the seed, and now I am hungry for anything about God and the future. I promise to donate to defray publication costs. Thank you for bringing God into my life.

From the Internet

We're glad you have a desire to grow in the knowledge of God. We provide all our resources free of charge following Jesus' command to pro-claim the gospel to the entire world. Of course, we deeply appreciate the support of those who wish to help in sharing this message throughout the world.

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *Beyond Today*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail BTinfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).

BEYOND TODAY

Worldwide Television Airtimes

For the most current airing times, or to download or view new and archived programs online, visit BeyondToday.tv

UNITED STATES NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

WGN America *View on cable:*
Friday 8:30 a.m. ET, 7:30 a.m. CT, 8:30 a.m. MT (except satellite and single-feed cable), 8:30 a.m. PT and 8:30 a.m. in Alaska and Hawaii

To find the WGN America channel locations in your area please visit: wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/ and enter your zip code. You will be shown the providers and channel number(s) on which you can watch WGN America in your area.

BROADCAST TV

Alaska	
Anchorage	ch. 18, Tue 9 p.m.
California	
San Diego	ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Francisco	ch. 29, Sun 6:30 p.m.
Michigan	
Detroit	ch. 38.5, Sun 10 a.m., Fri 3 p.m.
Ohio	
Toledo	ch. 69, Sun 5 p.m.
Oregon	
Gresham/East Portland	ch. 22/23, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee	ch. 23, Sun 6 a.m.; Mon 11:30 p.m., Wed 4:30 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.; Fri 5:30 a.m.; Sat 8:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.
Oregon City	ch. 23, Sun 2:30 p.m.; Thu 10:30

a.m. & 2:30 p.m.; Fri 4:30 a.m.; Sat 3 a.m. & 4 p.m.
Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.

CANADA NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

Vision TV Sun 6 p.m. ET
Hope TV Sun 1 p.m. ET
See local listing for the channel in your area.

AUSTRALIA

9GEM Sun 7:30 a.m. nationwide

NEW ZEALAND

Prime Television
(simulcast on Sky satellite platform) Sun 8:30 a.m.

PHILIPPINES NATIONWIDE BROADCAST TV

GMA News TV Sun 9 a.m.
See local listing for the channel in your area.

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town DSTV
Sun 8:30 a.m. ch. 263 and open ch. 32, 67

ST. LUCIA

Sun 9 a.m. ch. DBS

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

2nd, 4th Sundays CCN TV6 at 9:00 a.m.

BEYOND TODAY

May-June 2018

Volume 23, Number 3
Circulation: 320,000

Beyond Today (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2018 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Publisher: United Church of God, an International Association

Council of Elders: Scott Ashley, Jorge de Campos, Aaron Dean, Dan Dowd, Robert Dick, John Elliott, Mark Mickelson, Rainer Salomaa, Mario Seiglie, Rex Sexton, Don Ward (chairman), Anthony Wasilkoff

Church president: Victor Kubik *Media operation manager:* Peter Eddington

Managing editor: Scott Ashley *Senior writers:* Jerold Aust, John LaBissoniere, Darris McNeely, Steve Myers, Gary Petty, Tom Robinson *Copy editors:* Milan Bizic, Tom Robinson *Art director:* Shaun Venish *Circulation manager:* John LaBissoniere

To request a free subscription, visit our website at BTmagazine.org or contact the office nearest you from the list below. *Beyond Today* is sent free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and others.

Personal contact: The United Church of God has congregations and ministers throughout the United States and many other countries. To contact a minister or to find locations and times of services, contact our office nearest you or visit our website at ucg.org/churches.

Unsolicited materials: Due to staffing limitations, unsolicited materials sent to *Beyond Today* will not be critiqued or returned. By their submission authors agree that submitted materials become the property of the United Church of God, an International Association, to use as it sees fit. This agreement is controlled by California law.

NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

United States: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: BTmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Canada: United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada

Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 Website: ucg.ca

Caribbean islands: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: BTmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Spanish-speaking areas: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: ucg.org/espanol E-mail: info@ucg.org

EUROPE

Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

British Isles: United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England

Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999 Website: goodnews.org.uk

Eastern Europe and Baltic states: Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia

France: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Germany: Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany

Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

Italy: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy

Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573 Website: labuonanotizia.org E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

Scandinavia: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

E-mail: norden@ucg.org

AFRICA

Cameroon: United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Béssengue, Douala, Cameroon

East Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius: United Church of God—East Africa

P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya E-mail: kenya@ucg.org Website: ucgeastafrica.org

Ghana: P.O. Box AF 75, Adenta, Accra, Ghana E-mail: ghana@ucg.org

Malawi: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi Phone: +265 (0) 999 823 523

E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

Nigeria: United Church of God—Nigeria, P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria

Phone: 8033233193 Website: ucgnigeria.org E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

South Africa: United Church of God—Southern Africa, P.O. Box 1181, Tzaneen 0850, South Africa

Phone: +27 79 725 9453 Fax: +27 (0)86 572 7437 Website: south-africa.ucg.org

E-mail: UnitedChurchofGod.SA@gmail.com

Zambia: P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia Phone: (0026)0966925840 E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

Zimbabwe: United Church of God—Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 594, Mutare, Zimbabwe

Phone: +263 773 920 614 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

PACIFIC REGION

Australia and all other South Pacific regions not listed: United Church of God—Australia

GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia Free call: 1800 356 202

Fax: 07 55 202 122 Website: ucg.org.au E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

New Zealand: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand

Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763 Website: ucg.org.nz E-mail: info@ucg.org.nz

Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

ASIA

All except Philippines and Singapore: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH

45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

Philippines: P.O. Box 4774, MCPO, 1287 Makati City, Philippines Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444

Website: ucg.org.ph E-mail: info@ucg.org.ph

Singapore: United Church of God, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia

Website: ucg-singapore.org E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: BTmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.

Canada return address: *Beyond Today*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to:

Beyond Today, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

BEYOND TODAY



Watch the *Beyond Today* TV program!

WGN America (on cable)

Friday 8:30 a.m. ET, 7:30 a.m. CT, 8:30 a.m. MT (except satellite and single-feed cable), 8:30 a.m. PT and 8:30 a.m. in Alaska and Hawaii

To find the WGN America channel locations in your area please visit: wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/ and enter your zip code. You will be shown the providers and channel number(s) on which you can watch WGN America in your area.

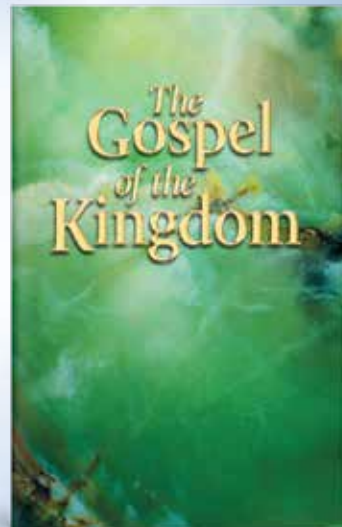
Printed in the U.S.A.
Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236

The gospel is about more than simply the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

So much more!

Understand how the earth-shattering good news message Jesus Christ proclaimed has been all but forgotten for nearly 2,000 years!

Learn straight from Scripture what the gospel—the good news—means for you and every human being who has ever lived!



No Internet access? Contact our office nearest you as listed on page 39.

Request or download your **FREE** copy at BTmagazine.org/booklets

READER UPDATES: Go to ucg.org/btupdate to sign up for e-mail updates including breaking news, important announcements and more from the publishers of *Beyond Today*.