

The Glorious Restoration of Israel

by John F. Walvoord

The sermon explores the glorious restoration of Israel, including their return to their ancient land, the final judgment of Israel, and the rule of Christ over Israel during the millennial kingdom.

Scripture: Psalm 2:6, Isaiah 2:1, Isaiah 26:14, Isaiah 35:1, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 20:34, Daniel 7:13, Daniel 12:2, Revelation 20:1, Revelation 20:7

Topics: "Israel Restoration", "Millennial Kingdom"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches about the remarkable event of the partial restoration of the nation Israel to their ancient land in the twentieth century, signaling the fulfillment of God's Word concerning the future of His chosen people. The return of Israel and the establishment of the state of Israel are seen as the initial steps leading to Christ's millennial kingdom on earth, following a period of great tribulation. The sermon delves into the final judgment of Israel, the resurrection of the righteous, the rule of Christ over Israel, and the general characteristics of the millennial kingdom, emphasizing the spiritual, social, economic, and physical aspects of Israel during this period.

Transcript

The partial restoration of the nation Israel to their ancient land in the middle of the twentieth century should be recognized by all careful students of the Bible as a most remarkable event. It seems to be a token that God is about to fulfill His Word Concerning the glorious future of His chosen people. As has been pointed out in previous discussion, the return of Israel to their ancient land and the establishment of the state of Israel is the first step in a sequence of events which will culminate in Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. The present return of Israel is the prelude and will be followed by the dark hour of their suffering in the great tribulation. This will in turn be succeeded by the return of Christ, the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, and the exaltation of the people of Israel to a place of prominence and blessing. Scriptures already discussed have brought out these major aspects of Israel's future program. This concluding study will concern itself with the fulfillment of countless prophecies relating to them in relationship to the millennial reign of Christ.

The Final Judgement Of Israel

At the time of the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom, two major aspects of Israel's judgment may be observed. First, the righteous dead of Israel will be raised and will be judged relative to rewards. Second, those in Israel who have survived the great tribulation will be judged, and the righteous

in Israel will enter into the Promised Land and enjoy the blessings of the millennial kingdom.

The resurrection of the righteous of Israel is indicated in Daniel 12:2, 3 in these words: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Scholars have not all agreed on the details indicated by this prophecy. It has been characteristic of some branches of premillenarians to include the resurrection of Israel with the resurrection of the church at the time of the rapture. Those who have followed this interpretation have been somewhat embarrassed by the fact that Daniel 12:1, 2 seems to place the resurrection of Israel after the tribulation instead of before it. This would indicate either that the rapture is posttribulation in that the resurrection follows the tribulation, or that they were wrong in their preliminary judgment that the resurrection of Israel occurred at the time of a pretribulation rapture.

Though disagreement on the interpretation of this passage continues, many careful students of premillennial truth have come to the conclusion that the opinion that Israel's resurrection occurred at the time of the rapture was a hasty one and without proper Scriptural foundation. It seems far more preferable to regard the resurrection of Daniel 12:2 as a literal one following the tribulation, but not to be identified with the pretribulation rapture of the church. If this interpretation be allowed, then the expression "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" can be regarded as a literal and bodily resurrection of righteous Israel from the grave in order that they might participate in the millennial reign of Christ as resurrected beings along with the resurrected and translated church of the New Testament.

A further difficulty is found in the fact that Daniel 12:2 states that some awake to everlasting life and "some to shame and everlasting contempt." Premillenarians are agreed that the resurrection of the wicked does not occur until after the thousand-year reign of Christ. The declaration of the resurrection of the righteous in almost the same breath as the resurrection of the wicked, separated as they are by the thousand-year reign of Christ, is a difficulty for some premillenarians.

A careful study of the passage, however, reveals that most of the difficulty is in the English translation. The Hebrew seems to make quite a sharp contrast between those who are raised to everlasting life and those who are raised to shame and everlasting contempt. A paraphrase would render the passage this way: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, these to everlasting life, and those to shame and everlasting contempt." The passage then becomes a statement that subsequent to the tribulation all the dead will be raised, but in two groups, one group to everlasting life and the other group to everlasting contempt. The fact that these are separated in time is clearly spelled out in Revelation 20, and the fact that this detail is not given here should not be considered a major problem.

It is evident from Daniel 12:3 that the main purpose of this revelation is to deal with the resurrection of the wise. These are declared to "shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." In this statement it is evident that the resurrected saints of the Old Testament, which is primarily the resurrection of Israel but will undoubtedly include the righteous of the Gentiles as well, will be an occasion for recognition of their good works. Rewards will be distributed to them much in the way that rewards were given to the church, that is, those who are righteous will be given places of prominence and privilege in the millennial kingdom of Christ and their righteousness will be displayed for all to see.

A parallel passage to this resurrection of Israel from the dead is found in Isaiah 26:14, 19. Verse 14 says: "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all remembrance of them to perish." In contrast to the wicked whose end is here described as not being included in the resurrection of the righteous, the prospect of Israel is declared in verse 19: "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead." Though perhaps less clear than the Daniel 12 reference, Isaiah 26 confirms the idea of the resurrection of the righteous dead in Israel. It may be concluded that at the beginning of the millennium all of the righteous dead have been raised. The church will be raised at the time of the rapture before the tribulation, and Old Testament saints, including Israel, at the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ. Only the wicked dead remain in the graves awaiting their resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom.

Those in Israel who survive the tribulation and who are on earth at the time of Christ's second coming are declared to be judged in Ezekiel 20:34-38. Ezekiel states: "And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, saith the Lord Jehovah. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah."

As in previous declarations concerning God's work of restoring Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, the judgment of Israel is preceded by their regathering from all the peoples of the earth. They are assembled in the place described as "the wilderness of the peoples" and there God declares that He will enter into judgment upon them. It will be like the judgment of their forefathers at the time of the Exodus when the adult population perished in the forty years of wandering, but the younger generation was permitted to enter into the land. In this judgment of living Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, God says that He will have them pass under the rod and that He will purge out the unrighteous described as "the rebels" and as "them that transgress against me." Though included in the work of regathering, they will not enter into the Promised Land and apparently perish like their gainsaying forefathers in the wilderness.

The clearcut division in Israel of those who are righteous and those who are unrighteous arises from the fact that some are saved by faith in Christ, but others rejected Him and were worshipers of the beast, the world ruler of the great tribulation. According to Revelation 13:8 all those on earth during the great tribulation will worship the world ruler except for those whose names are written in the book of life. It is stated in Revelation 14:9 that those who are worshipers of the beast come under the fearful wrath of God and are cast into everlasting torment forever and ever. A similar conclusion is derived from the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13 where all the tares are burned up and the wheat is gathered into the barn. Israel's purging judgment at the end of the age will therefore not only include the trials of the great tribulation in which two thirds of the nation will perish, but will culminate in the judgment of God following their regathering in which all unbelievers who remain will be purged out. The millennial kingdom, therefore, will begin with the godly remnant of Israel who have put their trust in the Lord and who will desire to follow the leadership of their Messiah and King.

The Rule Of Christ Over Israel

According to the second Psalm, it is the divine purpose of God that His Son will reign over the earth. In spite of the raging of the nations and their rebellion against God, the sovereign purpose of God that His Son will rule is plainly stated in these words: "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:6-9). In this declaration God not only affirms that Christ will reign from Mount Zion, but that all the nations of the world will come under His reign. It will be an absolute government as shown in the expression: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

The rule of the Son of God is described in a similar way in many other passages. In Daniel 7:13, 14 it is written: "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Here the kingdom is described, not simply in its millennial context, but as that which continues after the millennium in the eternal state.

According to Isaiah 2:1-4, Jerusalem will be the center of the millennial government. Beginning in verse 2 Isaiah writes: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and 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 2:2-4). From this passage it is evident that Jerusalem is to be the capitol of the world, that from Zion the law will go forth, and all nations will be under the sway of this righteous government. The result will be that "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 2:4).

One of the interesting aspects of the millennial government is the fact that resurrected David will apparently be a prince under Christ in administering the millennial kingdom in so far as it relates to Israel. According to Ezekiel, David will act as a shepherd over the people of Israel: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it" (Ezekiel 34:23,24). Some have interpreted this mention of David as a reference to Christ. However, there is no good reason for not taking it in its ordinary literal sense inasmuch as David will certainly be raised from the dead and will be on the scene. What would be more natural than to assign him a responsible place in the government of Christ in relation to the people of Israel? The concept that David will rule under Christ is found not only here, but also in Jeremiah 30:9; 33:15-17; Ezekiel 37:24, 25; Hosea 3:5; and oblique references in Isaiah 55: 3, 4 and Amos 9:11.

The government of Christ will obviously be, one of righteousness and justice. In the comprehensive view of the kingdom afforded in the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1-10, the character of Christ's rule is revealed. In verses 3 to 5 the following description is given: "And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with

righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins." The millennial kingdom will therefore be a time of justice for all, and any who dare to rebel against the king will be subject to immediate divine judgment. For the first time since Adam the entire earth will be under the immediate control and direction of God with resulting blessing in every aspect of human life.

General Characteristics Of The Millennial Kingdom

Students of prophecies relating to the millennial kingdom are embarrassed by the wealth of materials which is afforded. Passage after passage describes in glowing character the righteousness of the kingdom, the universal peace which will characterize the world, and the fact that there will be universal knowledge of the Lord. Peacefulness will not only extend to relationships of men, but even the natural world will be affected. Beasts that are naturally ferocious and enemies of other beasts will live together harmoniously. As depicted in Isaiah 11:6-9, it will be a time of universal knowledge of the Lord. According to Isaiah 11:9; "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." According to the provisions of the new covenant outlined by Jeremiah 31:33, 34, God will write the law in the hearts of Israel and all will know the Lord. Jeremiah expresses this in these words: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." It should be quite obvious that this is not a situation which exists today and in no literal sense are these millennial prophecies being fulfilled now. This could only be possible under the peculiar circumstances of the universal reign of Christ, the purging out of unbelievers at the beginning of the millennium, and the constant proclamation of the truth regarding Christ.

Many other passages confirm these conclusions. Isaiah 9:6, 7 affirms that Christ is the Prince of Peace who will reign on the throne of David and establish justice and righteousness. Isaiah 16:5 reveals that Christ will sit in the tent of David ministering perfect justice. Isaiah 24:23 states that Jehovah of hosts will reign in Mount Zion. Isaiah 32:1 predicts that a king will administer absolute righteousness. Isaiah 40:1-11 is a classic passage predicting the coming of the King, climaxing its revelation in verses 10 and 11: "Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young."

The ministry of Christ as King will not only be one of absolute justice, but one of great beneficence, as is brought out in Isaiah 42:3, 4. According to Isaiah 52:7-15, the introduction to the great Messianic chapter, Isaiah 53, the King will come to Zion. The kingdom which shall never be destroyed will be set up by God, according to Daniel 2:44, and Christ's kingdom is declared to be everlasting in Daniel 7:27. The prophecy of Micah 4:1-8 is similar to that found in Isaiah 2. Micah 5:2-5 predicts the birth of Christ in Bethlehem as One who is to be ruler in Israel and who shall "be great unto the ends of the earth." The familiar prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, quoted as fulfilled in Matthew 21:5, pictures the King in His first coming, but anticipates that "his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10).

The concluding prediction of Zechariah 14:16, 17 gives us an insight into the character of the millennial reign of Christ. Zechariah writes: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that

came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain." It is evident from this Scripture that Christ actively rules, requires the nations of the world to conform to His rule, and observe the religious rites which characterize the millennial kingdom. Taking the whole picture as provided by the prophets, the millennial kingdom depicts a world situation of righteousness, peace, and knowledge of the Lord which is quite foreign to the present age, but which will be subject to literal fulfillment when Christ actually reigns on earth.

Israel's Spiritual Life In The Millennium

The very fact that Christ will be bodily and gloriously present in the earth during the millennial kingdom and that Satan will be bound and inactive (Revelation 20:1-3) provides a context of spiritual life on the part of Israel which is most favorable. As has been previously pointed out, everyone will have the basic facts about the Lord (Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:33, 34). The millennial government will assure that there will be peace among nations and righteousness in the administration of justice in relation to the individual (Isaiah 2:4; 11:3-5). The resulting world situation will be a joyous one in sharp contrast to the dark hour of Israel's suffering in the tribulation and her bitter experiences of centuries of wandering. Isaiah speaks of the joy of the Lord in that day in these words: "And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:1-3). Joy and gladness will be as common as sighings and sadness were in Israel's earlier experience.

The millennial period for both Israel and the Gentiles will also be a time of special ministry of the Holy Spirit. In this period, according to Isaiah 32:15, the Spirit will be poured out from on high. A similar prophecy is found in Isaiah 44:3: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Ezekiel predicts: "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). In Ezekiel 39:29 a further similar statement is found: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah." The presence of Christ, the evident power of the Holy Spirit, and the context of the knowledge of the Lord and peace, righteousness, and joy will provide a basis for spiritual life in the millennium far more favorable than any preceding dispensation.

A number of Scriptures also describe the temple worship which will characterize the millennial kingdom. According to Ezekiel, a magnificent temple will be built, and a system of priesthood and memorial sacrifices will be set up. Scholars have not all agreed as to the interpretation of this difficult portion of Ezekiel. Some have felt it impossible to have a system of animal sacrifices subsequent to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross in the light of New Testament passages stating that the sacrifice of Christ makes other sacrifices unnecessary. Though varied explanations have been given for Ezekiel 40-48 which unfolds these details, no satisfactory explanation has been made other than that it is a description of millennial worship. In any case, it is clear that the sacrifices are not expiatory, but merely memorials of the one complete sacrifice of Christ. If in the wisdom and sovereign pleasure of God the detailed system of sacrifices in the Old Testament were a suitable foreshadowing of that which would be accomplished by the death of His Son, and if a memorial of Christ's death is to be enacted, it would seem not unfitting that

some sort of a sacrificial system would be used. While problems remain, it seems clear that Israel will have an ordered worship with Jerusalem once again the center of their religious as well as political life. A new order of priesthood would be required somewhat different than the Aaronic order, and rituals will be observed similar to the Mosaic order but differing in many aspects. In any case, a spiritual life of wonderful depth and reality far beyond anything Israel had known in her entire history will characterize her experience in the millennial kingdom. There will be complete fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29 and blessings unmeasured will extend throughout the entire kingdom period.

Social, Economic, And Physical Aspects Of Israel In The Kingdom

The combination of righteous government and abundant spiritual life will issue in many practical results in the millennial kingdom, and Israel will enjoy a period of physical as well as spiritual prosperity. Universal justice and peace will provide a proper basis for economic development without the curse of military expenditures, injustice, or inequities. Evidence seems to point to the fact that at the beginning of the millennium all adults who are permitted to enter the kingdom will be saved. The probability is that as children grow to maturity and a new generation is born a majority of those on the earth will experience real salvation, a situation far different than any previous period since the early days of man on earth. The curse inflicted upon the earth as a result of Adam's sin seems to be lifted, at least in part, during the millennial kingdom. Isaiah records the happy situation in Isaiah 35:1, 2: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God." As a result, the earth will bring forth in abundance and desert places formerly unproductive will have rich vegetation. There will be rainfall in areas where before there was drought (Isaiah 30:23; 35:7). Not only crops but cattle will prosper (Isaiah 30:23, 24).

There will be general prosperity in all aspects of economic development. Jeremiah speaks of this in Jeremiah 31:12: "And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow unto the goodness of Jehovah, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Ezekiel speaks of causing evil beasts to depart out of the land, permitting them to sleep safely in the woods at night (Ezekiel 34:25). Increased rainfall is mentioned and abundant yielding of fruit trees (Ezekiel 34:26, 27). A similar picture is given in the prophecies of Joel 2:21-27. Joel writes of rich pastures, trees bearing fruit, and the vine yielding its strength, of rain coming down in abundance, of floors being full of wheat, of vats overflowing with wine, and Israel enjoying plenty of all the good things of the land. Amos gives a similar picture in the closing two verses of his book: "And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God" (Amos 9:14, 15).

Israel's experience in the millennium will also be one of physical health and freedom from disease. Isaiah 35:5, 6 seems to speak of this: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." In Isaiah 33:24 it is predicted: "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." A similar description of healing is given in Isaiah 29:18.

It would seem clear from prophecy that most of the earth's population will perish in the great tribulation and subsequent judgments and that the millennial kingdom begins with a comparatively small number of people. According to Jeremiah 30:19, 20, however, the earth's population will mushroom during the millennium and from those who have survived the tribulation who are still in their natural bodies, a multiplied offspring will come. According to Jeremiah 30:19,20 God declares: "And I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me; and I will punish all that oppress them."

The Conclusion Of The Millennial Kingdom

This selective study of the many Scriptures bearing upon the future restoration of Israel in the millennial kingdom of Christ constitutes a convincing demonstration of the glories of this period. Nothing comparable to this has ever been experienced in the history of man. It would seem that in the closing dispensation prior to the eternal state God is erecting the most favorable possible circumstances to which man could be subjected. When Satan is loosed again according to Revelation 20:7-9, how sad is the record that many born in the ideal circumstances of the millennium are revealed to have only outward profession and not real faith and submission to Christ. Once again judgment must fall upon those who have spurned every possible help in bringing them into proper relationship to their Lord and Saviour. The glorious millennial reign will be the capstone of Israel's history. Though the evidence seems to indicate that Israel will continue as a people into eternity, the millennium will be the final chapter of their history in the present earth. To this consummation the world is rapidly moving and the predicted sequence of events will unfold in proper succession once the present age has come to its close with the rapture of the church.

Israel's Restoration In Relation To The Hope Of The Church

In the present world scene there are many indications pointing to the conclusion that the end of the age may soon be upon us. These prophecies relating to Israel's coming day of suffering and ultimate restoration may be destined for fulfillment in the present generation. Never before in the history of the world has there been a confluence of major evidences of preparation for the end.

Today, to the north of the nation Israel is the armed might of Russia. Never before has it seemed more likely that the prediction will be fulfilled given by Ezekiel (chapters 38 and 39) of an invasion from the north. To the east is the rising might of Red China, with the growing force of nationalism in India as well as the revival of Japan. Never before has it seemed more likely that there should be a tremendous military host coming from Asia, crossing the Euphrates river, and moving down on the scene of battle in the Middle East as predicted in Revelation 9:16.

The formation of the United Nations and the universal recognition of some form of world government as an alternative to war seem to be paving the way for the acceptance of the world ruler of Revelation 13 which will characterize the great tribulation. Never before have more people been persuaded that a world government is the only way to world peace.

The rising might of communism, embracing as it has a large portion of the world, and its spectacular rise which is without parallel in the history of the world, also has its prophetic portent. Though communism as such does not seem to enter into the prophetic picture of the end, its basic philosophy of materialistic atheism seems to be precisely the character of the false religion of the great tribulation (Daniel 11:36-38). Millions of youths in communistic lands are being systematically taught to trust only military might and to give blind allegiance to a human leader in place of worship of and service to the omnipotent God. Just

such a point of view and just such blind devotion will be required by the world ruler who will honor only the god of military might and disregard all other deities.

The modern movement toward a world church embodied in the ecumenical program seems also a preparation for acceptance by the world of a world church in the earlier phases of the tribulation period. The wicked woman of Revelation 17, the epitome of apostate ecclesiasticism, seems to be the representation of this ultimate ecclesiastical organization after every true Christian is removed by the rapture. The apostasy and unbelief which exists in our day seems to be the forerunner of the utter blasphemy which will characterize the worship of the beast in Revelation 13.

One of the most dramatic evidences that the end of the age is approaching is the fact that Israel has re-established her position as a nation in her ancient land. Israel today is in the proper place to enter into the covenant anticipated in Daniel 9:27 which will begin the last seven-year period leading up to the second coming of Christ. Even the modern city of Jerusalem built by Israel is occupying the precise area predicted in Jeremiah 31:38-40 and constitutes a fulfillment of this prophecy given twenty-five hundred years ago and never before fulfilled. Jeremiah states that when Jerusalem is built in the area described, as it has been in our generation, it will be a sign of the final chapter in the history of Jerusalem, in preparation for the millennial kingdom of our Lord.

The study of the history and prophecy of Israel is not a mere academic exercise on the part of the theologian or Bible student, but provides an unparalleled perspective of the majestic dealings of God with this prophetic nation. In it is revealed the faithfulness of God to the people whom He sovereignly chose, the effective outworking of God's wise purpose for them in spite of failure, delay, and indifference to God's will. The fact that in our day there is again movement and development in relation to this ancient nation is a sign that the stage is being set for the final world drama. Certainly as Israel's promises are being fulfilled before our eyes other aspects of prophecy such as the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the translation of living saints become a real and an imminent possibility. The hope of Israel is also the hope of the church. With John the Apostle all faithful students of the prophetic Word can say: "Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

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