

For Zion's Sake
by David Brickner, Executive Director

Last December the United States government recognized what I believe the scriptures clearly teach: the true capital of Israel is Jerusalem. The United Nations lost no time condemning Israel as well as President Trump's declaration in a vote of 128 for condemnation, nine against and 35 abstentions. I believe that what we are seeing goes well beyond earthly politics. God's Word predicts how the nations will be aligned against Jerusalem in the end times.

What is the significance of Jerusalem? Where does it fit in terms of God's covenants? Most Bible scholars view the reference to Jerusalem in light of corporate solidarity as a representative of Judah and hence the Jewish people. I want to suggest that too little consideration has been given to the idea God has a special covenant with Jerusalem. Usually Jerusalem is subsumed under either the Davidic covenant or the Land covenant. I am suggesting we consider God has made a Covenant with Jerusalem that is unique. This is where God commanded Abraham to bind Isaac for a sacrifice (Genesis 22); it is the place God chose to make his name dwell, (Deuteronomy 10:11) it is there David inspired by this promise from God chose to build the Temple and it is where Solomon carried out those sacred plans and dedicated that temple. During our captivity in Babylon, Jerusalem remained at the center of our longings: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its strength; may my tongue cleave to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not raise up Jerusalem at the very height of my rejoicing." (Psalm 137:5-6) And it was during that captivity God announced through the prophet Ezekiel that He had made a covenant with Jerusalem and would keep it despite her detestable disobedience. Read the entire 16th chapter and see if you don't agree, but notice what God says to Jerusalem in verse 8, and 60: "I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine, says the Lord God." "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you."

Jerusalem is where Jesus walked the streets, touched lives, was crucified, buried and resurrected. Perhaps most of all, it is where He will return one day.

Today Jerusalem is the religious center of Israel and it is where the government of Israel, the judiciary, the prime minister, the Knesset, the parliament all meet.

May 14th marks the date in 1948 that Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, pronounced the words: "We hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel," and we rejoice in celebrating this 70th birthday of the modern state.

May 14th is also the date the United States embassy personnel is making their move to Jerusalem as a validation of that city as Israel's capital. It's no coincidence that the eyes of the world are now turning to Jerusalem, and just as the Scriptures predict will happen in the end times, many nations are turning their back on the people of Israel.

But Jerusalem is at the very heart of God's unfolding plan for history. After all, that is the city where it all began at Shavuot (The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost), known as the birthday of the church (Acts 2-3). This feast will be observed on May 20th.

70 has been a prophetic number in Scripture. 70 elders were appointed by Moses. Israel spent 70 years in captivity in Babylon. The seventy sevens of Daniel 9 were the countdown to the Messiah coming. 70 disciples were sent out by Jesus on a training mission to preach the gospel (Luke 10) and there are more. As the nation of Israel celebrates this 70th anniversary, I am more aware than ever of her place in Scripture as God's prophetic time clock.

As Jews for Jesus relentlessly pursues God's plan for the salvation of the Jewish people, we recognize that Jerusalem is a big part of God's plan. For eighteen years we've been reaching out to every city around the world where more than 25,000 Jewish people live. Jerusalem is the final city and the most comprehensive of all outreaches in this strategy and we really covet your prayers as it is coming very soon!

We are compelled by the words of Isaiah: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace. And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns." (Isaiah 62:1)

Zion is mentioned 150 times in Scripture. The etymology of the word is uncertain (linguists argue it's meaning could be "dry, brook or castle!").

But there is no doubt that biblically speaking, Zion is a place—the city of David, Jerusalem!

Jerusalem is the most contested ground on the planet with over 30 wars fought over her throughout history. Why has Zion always been a center of controversy? Because God has placed His name there and it is therefore ground zero for the spiritual conflict of the ages.

Isaiah assures us that ultimately, God will rejoice over Jerusalem the way a groom rejoices over his bride. What an amazing metaphor! Further, God's promise to restore Jerusalem is not just for her sake, or for His own joy, but for the salvation of the nations. The world will see what God has done for Jerusalem and give praise to God. And just as God raised up Isaiah to speak out this good news, He is raising up people he calls watchmen (v.6) to join in "giving the Lord no rest" until He fulfills all his promises to Zion.

Jerusalem will be vindicated not because of what she does but because of the saving work of God. But that saving work will lead to a Jerusalem that is indeed righteous and holy in God's sight. God's promise to restore Jerusalem is not just for her sake, or for his own joy, but for the salvation of the nations. They will see what God has done for Jerusalem and give praise to God.

Just as God has raised up his prophet to not remain silent but to believe in God's promises and testify to them so he assures us he is raising up others he calls watchmen to do the very same thing. As the prophet and the watchmen proclaim the Lord is proclaiming to the end of the world: Surely your salvation is coming.

These words of Isaiah in verse 11 are echoed and explained further in Zechariah 9:9,

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey."

Zechariah's words were fulfilled on Palm Sunday at the triumphal entry when Yeshua rode into Jerusalem just as the prophet foretold. Isaiah's similar words will all be finally fulfilled at the return of Christ which I know we all hope will be soon and very soon.

But until that day God has called us all to be watchmen for Zion today, and I believe He is inviting you to join us in this through prayer. Together we must not be silent. Together we must not give the Lord rest “till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” (v.7) In Jews for Jesus you may have heard we have made some special plans for a unique effort there later this year:

To be perfectly honest I have not developed a genuine love for the city of Jerusalem. I prefer the beaches of Tel Aviv to the crowded streets of Jerusalem. But I know that the Lord loves her and therefore I must as well. My parents and many of my friends live there and so in that sense my heart is with them but that isn't sufficient. I know I need to grow in this area spiritually. Have you been? How do you feel about her? I remember the first time I visited Jerusalem.

As I have reflected on this I have been finding new ways to identify with and cultivate a love for this place. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt completely abandoned and rejected? Can I identify with Jerusalem as a place that has experienced and is experiencing the brokenness of sin in a manner that in some small way I have experienced in my own life? Jerusalem is a city that is mirrored by the darkest place of my own heart. How about yours? But you see that what God is saying to here to Jerusalem He is also saying to all of us. He loves us. He values us. He wants to welcome and restore us and give us hope for a bright future—not because we deserve it but because that's the kind of God He is. The bad things that happen in Jerusalem and elsewhere point out just why God sent Yeshua to die in in that very city so long ago. He loves and intends to restore us to a life of flourishing now and in the future.

I don't know what is going to happen with our Behold Your God Jerusalem campaign. At this point that is in the Lord's hands. What I do know is that our efforts there are not a conclusion to Behold Your God but a new beginning for Jews for Jesus. All of the strategies we have developed for Jerusalem have potential for us to leverage in other places as appropriate. We are building a permanent presence in Jerusalem as part of our desire to be a part of what God intends to do as He restores Jerusalem. As Isaiah says in verse 10 we need to be a part of his construction crew, clearing the stones that block the path to restoration for our people who will be returning. Commenting on this verse Spurgeon wrote, “All Christians need to clear the road to make room for coming sinners. We must take away all stumbling blocks. We must make the gospel plain and simple and

come to the help of those who find hindrances and impediments in their progress to the Savior. His own person has effectively removed every real stumbling block, so now nothing can keep a sinner from God if that sinner is but ready to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." **CH Spurgeon on Isaiah 62:10**

For all of us who are wall watchers along with God we must not only learn to love her as He does, we must also join in the spiritual preparation required for her to welcome Messiah and those who will come there to worship Him when finally, they look upon Him whom they have pierced. (Zechariah 12:10) Let us all recognize the opportunities to do this kind of clearing out. As Isaiah said earlier,

"Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill brought low;
The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough places smooth;
The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 40:4-5)

Because in the end we know that Jerusalem is not just a city, it's a picture of God's ultimate rule and reign. When John said "Then I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2), he was speaking about a glorious future God has planned, not only for Israel but for people of all nations. Because you love the Word of God and the purposes of God I ask you to join us in praying for the peace of Jerusalem—and for our upcoming outreach there and pray for God to give you the love and commitment of the Psalmist:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget its skill!
If I do not remember you,
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy." (Psalm 137:5-6)