

## BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

# JERUSALEM, CITY OF THE GREAT KING

*“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Ps. 48:2);*

*“Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD” (122:2-4);*

*“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (87:3).*

Central to the message of salvation in the Bible is God’s chosen race of Israel and the land which He gave to them. It was from this nation and to this land that His only begotten Son came, with the promise, made to his mother, that “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1:32,33).

This ‘throne of David’ was the royal seat of the kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem, which was promised by God to David’s descendants and therefore ultimately to Jesus himself (1 Chron. 17:11,12; 28:5; 29:23). Jerusalem is therefore identified as the future location of the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ over the Kingdom of God; it will assume the role of the capital city of his worldwide régime.

### **The history of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem first appears in history around 1900 B.C. as the hilltop city of *Salem*, associated with the king/priest Melchizedek who there met and blessed Abraham, the forefather of the Israelites (Gen. 14:18-20). Later it is mentioned under the name *Jebusi* (Josh. 18:28), the home of a Canaanite tribe, the Jebusites. It was from the Jebusites that David captured the city, around 1004 B.C., and made it the capital of Israel, also referred to as *Zion*, and *the city of David* (1 Chron. 11:4-7).

During the period of the divided monarchy, Jerusalem continued as the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. It was captured and destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25:1-10) but restored under the Persian Empire (Ezra 1:1-4; Neh. 2:17; 6:15). It remained the principal city during both the Greek and Roman periods, but was again destroyed and the temple burnt by the Romans in A.D. 70.

In subsequent centuries Jerusalem was at various times occupied by Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Crusaders and Turks, eventually coming under British mandate following the First World War. After the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the city was divided between Israel and Jordan until the Six-Day War in 1967, when it was reunited to become the modern capital of Israel.

### **The place for God’s Name**

Jerusalem, the name of which probably means ‘foundation of peace’, has a significance in the Bible far beyond being simply the administrative capital of Israel. Even before the nation entered the land under Joshua, God had appointed a ‘place’ at which Israel would congregate to worship, and which is described as bearing His Name: “. . . when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then

there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to *cause His name to dwell there*" (Deut. 12:10,11). This place, although referred to twenty-one times, is not named in Deuteronomy, but the connection with Abraham and the offering of his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, one of its hills (Gen. 22:1,2,14), clearly identifies Jerusalem as the appointed centre for Israel's worship.

Consequently, when David came to the throne he understood Jerusalem to be 'the place' chosen by God as the nation's capital and the location for the 'house of the LORD', the temple (1 Chron. 21:28; 22:1). David accumulated a large store of materials for the temple's construction, received its plans by revelation, and charged his son Solomon with the task of building (28:2-6,11,12; 29:1-5). When Solomon succeeded to the throne he was faithful to that charge, and over a period of twenty years oversaw the erection of both the temple and the royal palace and judgement hall (2 Chron. 2:1; 3:1; 8:1). God's acceptance of the temple as a fitting symbol of His spiritual presence among His chosen people was marked by a manifestation of Divine glory (7:1) and by words of approval to Solomon in a dream (vv. 12-16).

After the Babylonian exile, the temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem at the urging of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 1:1-4; 5:1,2; 6:14,15). During the Roman period, Herod the Great began the rebuilding of the temple on a grander scale, but this was scarcely finished before the destruction of A.D. 70. This was the temple visited by the Lord Jesus Christ, who twice cleansed its courts by expelling the traders who misused it (Jno. 2:13-17; Mt. 21:12,13) and correctly prophesied of its demise, because of the injustice and violence of its rulers (Mt. 23:34-39; 24:1,2).

### **Present strife, future glory**

Just as the Bible's prophets declare the continuing role of the Jewish people in the purpose of God as His witnesses (Isa. 43:10; Rom. 11:1,2,25-27), so they are emphatic concerning the future position of Jerusalem. Jesus himself foretold not only the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem but also their future reoccupation of it (Lk. 21:24), which was finally fulfilled after the Six-Day War of 1967. The city is yet to be the focus of the conflict among the nations, which will lead to Armageddon and the return of Jesus, and hence an insoluble problem for the world's leaders (Zech. 12:1-3; 14:1-3), as it is becoming at the present time.

However, the future glory of Jerusalem is assured by the words of the same prophets. Its temple is to be rebuilt yet again to act as the centre of worship for the nations (Zech. 14:16; Ezek. 43:4-7), and the Lord Jesus Christ is to make it the seat of his worldwide government, from which God's righteous laws will be administered to bring justice and peace (Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-7). Indeed, those who are the true followers of Jesus by faith share the privilege of honorary citizenship of Jerusalem (Ps. 87:5,6) and can look forward to being witnesses of its coming glory.

*"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Mt. 25:31,32);*

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good" (Ps. 122:6-9).*

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