

even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (vv. 22-25).

As we see from the verses above, Israel's future is secure; when the Lord Jesus returns she will finally be "justified" and will receive "glory" from

the Son of God, their once-rejected Messiah but now eternal King. The question is, however, Will we enjoy the same blessing? God's instruction is very clear: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved". This is the command and invitation to God's Kingdom; but what will we do with it? We make the answer now.

The witness of fulfilled Bible prophecy

4. He that scattered Israel shall gather him

Nicholas White

The land and people of Israel are a living witness to the Creator. He has spoken of them through His prophets. Bible readers have listened carefully to His Word and thrilled to see its fulfilment in the return of the nation. In this article we investigate some of the early expectations and review the events that followed.

"THERE IS, THEN, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The pre-advantual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him.

"They will emigrate thither as agriculturists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power . . .

"I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews . . . they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what, under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt".¹

These words were written in 1849. Upon what were such confident predictions based?

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Drying up the Turkish Empire

Rivers in Scripture are used as a symbol for nations and their effect on other nations (for example, Assyria—Isa. 8:7,8; Egypt—Jer. 46:8). Revelation 9:14 pictures the growth of the River Euphrates and thus the growing power of the nation in which it rises:

Turkey. For centuries there was no possibility of Israel going back to their land because the Turkish Empire, a Muslim power, would not let them anywhere near Jerusalem. In Revelation 16:12, by contrast, we find the same river being "dried up", clearly referring to its demise. The inevitability of Turkey's decline was recognised by Bible students when the empire was at its height.

Jews to return to Israel

A plain reading of the prophets leaves no room for doubt that Israel would have to be restored to the Land. In Isaiah 11:11,12, for example, Jews are to be gathered to Israel "the second time". The first time was from Babylon; this time they would return from "the four corners of the earth".

Beyond this, however, it was expected that some Jews would return to the Land before the Lord Jesus appeared: ". . . there must be a resettlement of the land by the Jews to a *limited extent* before the battle of Armageddon; for it is the prosperity of the Jewish Colony that whets the avarice of the Autocrat, and stimulates him to invade the country, that he may spoil them of their goods, cattle, and liberty [Ezek. xxxviii. 9,11,12]" (*original italics*).²

1. J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, The Christadelphian, 1983, p. 441.

Britain's role in the Land

On Isaiah 18 Brother Thomas writes: "Now, the geography of this passage points to the Lion-power of Tarshish as to 'the land shadowing with wings'. . . But the British power is still further indicated by the insular position of its seat of government; for the 'sending of fleet messengers by the sea' implies that the shadowing power is an island-state".³

"Agriculturists and traders"

In A.D. 135 the Roman Emperor Hadrian had forbidden the Jews to live around Jerusalem. In 1856 the Sultan of Turkey formally rescinded this decree, allowing Jews to return to the Land specifically as farmers and husbandmen and establish colonies in the Jerusalem area.⁴ The door had opened a crack. Over the next twenty years, a number of Jews did start to return.

"In the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth"

In 1894 Captain Alfred Dreyfuss was on trial. He was a Jewish officer in the French army, accused of being a German spy. Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian-born Jew, was a journalist reporting on the case. Struck by the obvious anti-Jewish feeling, he concluded Jews could not assume they were safe in any country.⁵ Jews should seek a return to Israel as their own country. He wrote what would become a famous paragraph:

"The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one, the restoration of the Jewish State. The earth resounds with the outcries against the Jews, and their outcries have awakened the slumbering idea".⁶

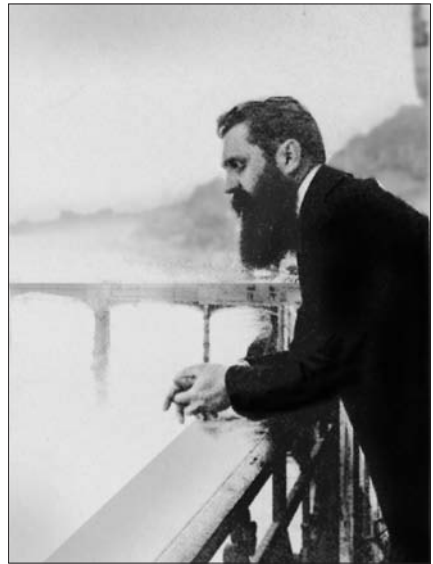
In April 1897 Brother Roberts commented on the significance of Herzl's scheme:

"If in the disintegration of Turkey, the way should be cleared for the Herzl scheme for a Jewish republic, this would be a great epochal turning point in Israel's fortunes. The scheme is ready, and the Turkish power is dying. . .".⁷

Herzl followed up his book with the First Zionist Congress in Basle in August 1897. Here, he claimed, "we bring to the Jewish people an organisation it did not possess before".⁸

"Purely political principles"

For Herzl, the most important requirement was a place the Jews could escape to from persecution and poverty, and he had determined to accept the first place that was offered him. This was not Chaim Weizmann's perspective.



Theodor Herzl

Born in Russia in 1872, Chaim Weizmann became a leading member of his local Zionist organisation. At a Jewish Conference in 1902 he had already joined in a proposal to found a Jewish University, specifically "only in Palestine".⁹ When, in 1903, the British Government offered the Zionist movement part of Uganda as a homeland, Herzl accepted it. It became apparent to Herzl that the movement was irreconcilably split between these two views. He died the following year, having crystallised the idea of a Jewish Homeland and garnered support for this amongst Jewry and beyond.

But others were to carry on the work, with an emphasis on Palestine as the destination. Weizmann studied chemistry, and in 1904, the same year as Herzl's death, he succeeded in gaining a post at Manchester University. At the time of the General Election in 1906, Arthur Balfour was prime minister. He lost the election, but during the election campaign had a discussion with Weizmann, who had become involved with the Zionist movement in Manchester. Balfour

2. John Thomas, *Herald of the Kingdom*, Vol. 2, No. 6, June 1852, p. 137.
3. John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, *op.cit.*, p. 443.
4. John V. Collyer, *Israel: Land and People of Destiny*, The Christadelphian, 1988, p. 102.
5. Martin Gilbert, *The Story of Israel*, Black Swan, 2008, p. 6.
6. As quoted by John V. Collyer, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
7. *Christadelphian*, Vol. 34, No. 394, April 1897, p. 154.
8. Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, Black Swan, 2008, p. 14.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

wanted to know why only Palestine would be an acceptable homeland for the Jews. Weizmann said, "Supposing I was to offer you Paris instead of London, would you take it?". Balfour replied, "But Dr. Weizmann, we have London". "That is true", retorted Weizmann, "but we had Jerusalem when London was a marsh!" It seems this discussion sowed a seed in Balfour's mind that was later to bear fruit.¹⁰

"The efficient protection of the British power"

With the coming of the First World War the brethren thought they might see the coming of yet greater things. "Armageddon is preceded by a colonisation of Palestine by Jews of sufficient importance to provoke the desires of the King of the North 'to take a spoil'. . . we look for such a Protectorate as the outcome of the present war".¹¹

By 1916, Weizmann had come up with a method to produce acetone, needed to produce cordite, an explosive. Weizmann was introduced to Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, and was commissioned to produce thirty thousand tonnes of acetone for the war effort. Weizmann's high-profile position, being on speaking terms with such figures as Churchill, Lloyd George and again with Balfour, allowed him the opportunity to lobby for the Zionist cause. So when Balfour became Foreign Secretary he was in an ideal position to take up the cause in which he had become personally interested. Extensive discussions had taken place between Weizmann, Lord Rothschild (considered leader of the Jewish community in Britain) and others.

The Balfour Declaration marked an historic turning point, keenly awaited by Christadelphian Bible readers: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object". Since the days of Brother Thomas, brethren and sisters had been waiting to see Britain's involvement in Israel's return to their Land. And now here it was, in front of their very eyes. In December 1917 Brother Charles Ladson wrote in the *Christadelphian*: "There would be few ecclesias where, on the Sunday morning following the Declaration, the theme would not be joyfully enlarged upon, and the whole service in prayers, hymns, and anthems, be warmly touched with the emotion generated by such a vindication of our faith".¹² It was the culmination of years of lobbying by Zionist thinkers, from the first

moves by Herzl in 1896 to Weizmann from 1906 onwards.

"The power of the Turkish empire will be dried up or overturned"

Yet hardly was the magazine published than yet more remarkable news was being made in Jerusalem itself. As a result of Turkey's involvement in the war, General Allenby was commissioned by Lloyd George to liberate Jerusalem from Turkey by Christmas 1917. Allenby marched into Jerusalem on 11 December 1917.

These were indeed significant times. In November, Christadelphians had witnessed the British Government officially backing the idea of Palestine as a homeland for the Jews. Only a few weeks later, Jerusalem itself was freed from the Turkish domination of centuries by British hands.

10. "The Balfour Declaration and the ways of providence", Simon Collard, *The Testimony*, Dec. 2007, Vol. 77, p. 406.
11. *Christadelphian*, Vol. 51, No. 605, Nov. 1914, p. 509.
12. *Christadelphian*, Vol. 54, No. 642, Dec. 1917, p. 561.



Source: Wikimedia Commons/American Colony, Jerusalem

The Ottoman surrender of Jerusalem. The original hand-written caption to this photograph read: "The Mayor of Jerusalem, Hussein Effendi El Hussein, meeting with Sergts. Sedwick and Hurcomb of the 2/19th Battalion, London Regiment, under the White Flag of Surrender Dec. 9th at 8 a.m."

These were two of the main planks of the prophetic programme Brother Thomas had foreseen.

Britain administered the region under military rule until the San Remo Peace Conference of 1920. Here the League of Nations appointed Britain as the Mandatory Power for Palestine. This now included the whole of the land occupied by Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. A number of important Jewish organisations were founded in the succeeding years, including the Hebrew University (1925), the Jewish Agency for Palestine, an elected Jewish assembly and a trade union organisation, the National Federation of Jewish Labour (the Histadrut).

“All these curses shall come upon thee . . .”

The four years after the end of the First World War saw a wave of Jewish immigration in which 35,000 Jews settled in Palestine. Arab opposition intensified during this period, with riots against Jewish immigration in 1920. A branch of Histadrut was established in March 1921 as the ‘Haganah’ (Defence).

Continued Jewish immigration led to more Arab riots in 1936, demanding the British authorities put an end to Jewish immigration. Three years later, four months before the outbreak of the Second World War, the British Government published a policy document, the 1939 Palestine White Paper. It proposed limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 over the next five years. Jews would be no more than a third of Palestine’s population, a minority in their own country. They would not be able to escape the horrors of the Nazis’ ‘Final Solution’. Amongst the Jews, the proposal became known as the ‘Black Paper’.

Jewish persecution during the Second World War is well documented. The curses of Deuteronomy 28 had indeed come to pass: “and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say,

Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see” (vv. 66,67). By the end of the war over six million Jews had perished in the gas chambers, by torture and by starvation.

The conflict between Jews in Palestine and the British Mandate authorities intensified after the war. On 22 July 1946, part of the underground Jewish resistance, the Irgun, blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91 people. While the official Jewish Agency condemned such acts of terrorism, it continued to demand its own Jewish State in the Land of Palestine. On 15 February 1947, the British Government announced it would return the Palestine Mandate to the United Nations, paving the way for the UN Partition Plan and ultimately the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948.*

“A partial and primary restoration of Jews”

In this brief survey of events that led to the founding of the State of Israel we have considered the ancient words of the Hebrew prophets. We thought about how these words were understood and the events for which our brethren and sisters looked. And we have seen these expectations wonderfully fulfilled. The nation of Israel and its re-emergence on the world stage remains an outstanding sign to our generation. It is evidence to our world of God’s hand at work.

Yet it is only the beginning; it is “partial and primary”. There remains a yet greater return, not only in numbers, but more so in heart. And in the salvation of Israel lies our salvation, we who look for the fulfilment of these things. The day is near; are we preparing for it?

* The following article, “One nation upon the mountains of Israel”, by Brother Stephen Green takes up the story, and carries it forward through subsequent years.

“The mood of the new nation was expressed very clearly by Ben Gurion in these words: ‘Always we shall demand of the world what is justly ours. But morning and evening, day in and day out, we must remind ourselves that our existence, our freedom and our future, are in our own hands. Our own exertions, our own capacity, our own will, they are the key.’ What a contrast is this view of the situation with the assurance that ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him’ (Jeremiah 31:10) and ‘I will take you from the nations . . . and bring you into your own land’ (Ezekiel 36:24). From the time when the people of Israel demanded to be like the nations and have a king, to the present secular State of Israel, the Jews have not accepted the divine call to be the people of God, a nation based upon a faith like that of Abraham . . .”

John V. Collyer, *Israel: Land and People of Destiny*, The Christadelphian, 1988, p. 128