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In this Article, we shall provide a broad overview of the nation of Israel of the last days, beginning with her rejection of their Messiah, followed by her ultimate destruction by Rome; her political restoration and present existence in this hostile world; and finally, her future resurrection as a theocratic nation in the Millennial Age. We must begin by discussing Israel's rejection of their long-awaited Messiah. The moral law of Moses was impossible for any to keep, thus requiring blood as a ritual atonement for their continual sins of disobedience. Furthermore, Israel's legalistic religious rulers, which consisted of the Scribe, the Pharisee, and the Sadducee, had greatly expanded the dictates of both the moral law and the ceremonial law to the extent that they had become extremely burdensome upon the people. Therefore, when Jesus offered the Kingdom of Heaven to them (cf. Mt. 5:1-48), it was, at first, warmly received by the people; but it was vehemently rejected by the religious ruling class of Israel inasmuch as it challenged their legal authority to interpret the law howsoever they saw fit. Therefore, **"He came unto his own, and his own received him not"** (Jn.1:11).

The rulers' rejection had centered upon the impossibility of reconciling grace, offered by God in Christ, with the law that God had given to the nation through Moses. The Covenant of grace, written in Christ's atoning blood, was an entirely New Covenant. Any mandates of the Old Covenant that would conflict with it needed to be overwritten by the mandates of the new, for God's grace offered in Christ superseded the law of Moses. The New-Covenant doctrine of grace could not be fitted into the Old-Covenant framework of law lest both law and grace would be fatally flawed to the extent that both must utterly fail. Jesus demonstrated the unavoidable peril of attempting to combine grace and law together in the following text: **"No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved"** (Mt.9:16,17). Nevertheless, the Jewish masses followed the dictates of their religious rulers, and in their legalistic state of unbelief they soon crucified Christ, their Messiah. When Christ visibly arose bodily from the dead three days later, their sin of unbelief continued to hold them in its clutches; so much so, that they sought all means to repress or discredit any and all eyewitness accounts of that amazing supernatural event.

Although Christ had been rejected by Israel as a nation, a small elect remnant that had always been present within that nation did acknowledge and readily accepted Jesus as their King and Messiah. Speaking of this precious remnant of Jews, Jesus said, **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field"** (Mt.13:44). The treasure hidden in the field in this verse can be likened unto the believing remnant of Israel, which was the first to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven in its early provisional state on earth, thus initially making up the nucleus of what was later to become the New-Covenant Church. This precious Jewish remnant was soon hidden away – buried within a vast field of Gentiles, which Jesus referred to as a "pearl of great price" (cf. Mt. 13:45,46) that was bought with Jesus' own blood. This great number of redeemed Gentiles would soon dominate the Church. Therefore, it had only been this elect remnant of the Nation of Israel that had effectually received the Word of God in Christ concerning their salvation; the Word of God had had no positive effect at all upon the vast majority of the Jewish population of the nation inasmuch as they had openly rejected it.

The Apostle Paul addressed this apparent disparity of God's Word in not reaching the entire nation by saying, **"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel"** (Ro.9:6). That is to say, not all of those Jews making up the nation of Israel were of the "Israel of God," such that in vast numbers Israel as a nation had vehemently rejected his Son, their Messiah. Although the vast majority of Jews had rejected Him, the Word of God yet strongly prevailed within the remnant. Paul commented on this elect Jewish remnant saying concerning them, **"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace"** (Ro.11:2a,5). Even today, a small remnant of Hebrew believers remains hidden away within our churches.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews strongly warned Hebrew believers remaining in Israel of the necessity to leave the Old Covenant of law and its shadowy practices behind in order to fully embrace the New Covenant of grace and truth in Christ (cf. He. 6:1-3). Those Jews who had trusted Christ and had suddenly found themselves removed from the old dispensation of law and found themselves in this new

dispensation of grace soon discovered that transition to be very difficult in practice inasmuch as Temple-worship kept calling them back (cf. He. 6:4-6). Thus, many Jews who had professed Christ chose to ignore this stern warning and repeatedly put the atoning death of Christ to perpetual shame by continuing to engage in animal sacrifice in the Temple – along with the greater multitude who had fully rejected their Messiah – even as the day of reckoning drew ever near. Israel’s rejection of Christ’ death as the ultimate and final atonement for their sins had made their continued violations of the law unforgivable, for apart from Christ there was no longer any possible atonement for sin (cf. He. 6:6).

As Christ turned to the Church to deliver his offer of a graceful salvation to a fallen world, Israel, having rejected Him, had become a direct obstacle to that great commission (cf. Mt.28:16-20). Consequently, it was necessary that Israel be removed out of the way. Following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, Israel’s violent political resistance had increasingly become a burden to Rome. One generation after the ascension of Christ, Roman armies laid siege to Jerusalem, and in AD 70 they entered the city, totally destroyed the Temple, and laid the entire city to waste. By heeding the clear warning given by Christ forty years before, Christians and even many unbelieving Jews escaped from the city before the siege was fully formed (cf. Lu 21:20-22). A few others also escaped the destruction of the city, but a far greater number were slaughtered as infuriated Roman armies pursued them to death in order to purge the entire land of any trace of what they saw as “bloody Judaism.”

At this point in time, Israel as a nation ceased to exist. Her surviving people had been scattered abroad within the wilderness areas of Gentile nations, where for centuries they have huddled together in small enclaves in many out-of-the-way places in hopes of avoiding further Gentile persecution. Nevertheless, recorded history tells us of the Jews endless wanderings as well as the terrible persecutions that followed after them. Even so, over many centuries of suffering and persecution, Jews as a people, have miraculously survived, and their population has greatly grown within the lands of their exile. So much so that their rapidly increasing numbers were viewed as burdensome to various nations wherein growing antisemitism had resulted in great conflicts and violence against them. Jews escaping those persecutions soon had no place to go.

As a solution to this difficult refugee problem, the United Nations voted to carve out a portion of land located within the region of Palestine, in which Jews could be segregated from the rest of the world and live in peace. This chosen area corresponded to a small portion of their ancient homeland, which notably excluded the city of Jerusalem. The United Nations passed the resolution that formally partitioned a portion of the Palestinian region for a Jewish homeland in 1947. As Jews began to take possession of the land, rioting and violence broke out between Jews and Arabs residing in the partitioned area. Five Arab nations consisting of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq soon invaded in an attempt to annihilate all Jews living in the land. However, Jews proved to be far more resilient than was anticipated, and the war dragged on. Eventually a truce was proposed, in which Israel would lose the Negev and surrender any rights to the city of Jerusalem in exchange for the land of western Galilee. However, both Jews and Arabs rejected this proposal. In hopes of forcing an end to the conflict, an arms embargo was declared in December of 1947, which seriously hindered Israel while the Arab nations continued to obtain arms virtually unrestricted. Israel needed to smuggle in arms mostly obtained through Czechoslovakia. Their meager defense forces only consisted of about 19,000 men, and their airplanes were old and obsolete. However, they were aided by paid mercenaries and individuals, sympathetic to their plight, who flew in their own aircraft to engage in her defense. The war continued on for a year and three months until an armistice agreement was officially signed in 1949 by the Arab countries that had opposed Israel. Nevertheless, clandestine Arab hostility against Israel continued.

In 1967, Israel was again attacked by the Arab nations of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria along with troops contributed by various other nations including Saudi Arabia in another effort to eradicate the nation. The smaller Israeli air force decimated the much larger Egyptian air force on the ground in a surprise preemptive attack. Israeli tanks were old World-war-two Sherman tanks that had been modified to extend the range of their canons and further altered to traverse very deep sandy areas with ease. First Egypt, then Jordan, and finally Syria were rapidly overrun as Israeli forces took possession of the Siani and the Golan Heights. Amazingly, the war was over in six days due in no small part to Arab misinformation and confusion over Israel’s success in prosecuting the war. Israel had finally expanded its territory to nearly three-and-one-half times that which it had before this war. The west bank of the Jordan river, previously annexed by Jordan, was occupied by Israeli forces; although

various religious groups had been granted authority to continue administering their holy sites. Israel had also entered and occupied the old city of Jerusalem during the War. However, following the end of hostilities, Israel agreed to allow an Islamic endowment trust (*Waqf*) to retain authority over the Temple Mount (i.e. the *Haram esh-Sharif*) that contained the great Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as various minarets and other sites considered to be holy by Muslims.

Israel formally established herself as a sovereign political nation in 1948, as she boldly declared her independence. Some evangelical Christians saw this as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel Chapter 37, as the dry bones of Israel that had laid in the dust of antiquity sprang up again out of Gentile nations, where they had been buried, to repopulate their homeland. While this can be considered a type or precursor to this prophecy's fulfillment, Israel then and today is essentially the result of an ethnic Zionist movement that was founded as a modern democracy. It is not in any sense a resurrection of the theocratic nation of old that Ezekiel saw in his prophecy; that fulfillment is to be yet future after many days have passed (cf. Ho. 3:4,5).

In October 1973, Syria and Egypt joined forces to again attack Israel in hopes of regaining much of its lost territories. A surprise two-prong attack was mounted from the north and the south, as Israel was observing the solemn holy day of *Yom Kippur*, the day of atonement. All radio and TV stations had been shut down in recognition of that observance. Initial Israeli losses were heavy, until they were able to mobilize two armored divisions. The Jews awaking to the peril they faced, rapidly turned the Syrian attack into a retreat. Iraqi, Saudi Arabian and Jordanian forces then entered the fray. Before a cease-fire was signed, Israel had driven to within forty miles of Damascus. In the end, Egypt and Syria had regained a negotiated portion of their lost territory, while Israel retained control of the essential high ground of the Golan Heights. Later on Israel relinquished the vast desert of the Siani through a peace treaty with Egypt. Since then, relations with still other Arab nations have improved. Nevertheless, Iran is still bent upon Israel's total eradication through proxy terrorist groups and threatened use of nuclear weapons. Israel has become a strong military power capable of defending itself. Even so, growing Gentile and Arab populations living within Israel threaten to undermine her Jewish identity.

During the future tribulation period (cf. Mt. 24:21,22), the modern nation of Israel will again be under great pressure and persecution within a collapsed world order that has gone anarchically insane. Israel will have previously made a covenant of peace with the Antichrist whom they wrongly believed was their long-awaited Messiah (cf. Jn. 5:43). Their false messiah will have permitted them to rebuild their Temple and to resume the now blasphemous blood offerings of the old sacrificial system. Under the assumed protection of the Antichrist, Israel will have most likely disarmed herself, and will have torn down her walls in expectation of a perpetual peace. When the great world war breaks out (cf. Re.6:4), the Antichrist may have at first appeared to shelter them. Even when he declares himself to be God, Israel may not become overly suspicious, since they believe he is their Messiah sent from God. Suddenly the Antichrist's mask will slip as he forbids any more sacrifices to take place, and then sets up an idol of himself in the Holy of Holies within the Temple. Israel will be appalled to see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not (cf. Da. 9:27; Mt.24:15). Too late, they will recognize the Antichrist as the "man of sin" (cf. 2Th.2:3) who has been motivated by Satan to deceive them. In fear and great anguish Jews will flee out of their land (cf. Mt.24:16-20), and the modern nation of Israel will cease to exist.

While many devout Jews will escape to a hidden wilderness place of safety (cf. Re.12:6) that God has before prepared for them, many Jews will have unwisely remained behind. **"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"** (Mt. 24:9-13). This brief intense time of great tribulation in which murder, rape, hate, and betrayal abounds is referred to in Old-Testament Scripture as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (cf. Je.30:7). Of all the persecutions that the Hebrew people have suffered, including their severe abuse under the Russian Czar and then their later slaughter during the German Holocaust, this time will be far worse for them (Mt.24:21-22). Satan through his Antichrist will attack Israel in all his fury since it was by her that Christ came upon the earth (Re.12:1,2; Ro.9:4,5; cf. Ge.37:9,10).

This current age will finally come to an end with the destruction of religious and commercial Babylon (cf. Re. 17:1-18:24) by Christ and the decimation of all his remaining foes in the great battle of Armageddon (cf.

Re.16:16). In that day, Christ will stand alone victorious and the brightness of his glory will cover the entire earth (cf. Hab. 2:14) dispelling the earlier darkness (cf. Is.60:2). The kingdoms of the earth will have become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ (cf. Re.11:15), as the Millennial Age dawns (cf. Re. 20:1-6).

Although the theocratic nation of Israel was utterly destroyed in AD 70, it must in that day be resurrected in order to fulfill God's promises and purpose for his chosen people. The early believing Jewish remnant had not been discarded, for as we saw earlier it had only been hidden away for a time. In the Millennium, God will exhume them from their graves to live again within a resurrected nation of Israel. In a vision, which we briefly referred to above, the Old-Testament prophet Ezekiel was taken into a valley that was full of very dry bones (cf. Ez.37:1,2). **"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD"** (Ez. 37:3,4). When Ezekiel prophesied as God commanded, the bones came together and sinews and flesh formed and skin covered them, and when he prophesied to the wind, the breath of life entered them and they stood on their feet as a mighty army (cf. Ez. 37:8-10). **"Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel"** (Ez. 37:11,12). In that day, all of the people of Israel, whom God had before known, will gather themselves together in great numbers to return to their homeland. **"After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land *that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them"*** (Ez.38:8). The sons of Israel will come from afar, from the ends of the earth, and her daughters will return with them to be nurtured in their native land (cf. Is. 49:22). Thus, the theocratic nation of Israel will be restored; and under the rule of their Messiah, they will live on earth in peace and prosperity for a thousand years, during which they shall learn of Him.

In Chapter 20 of the Revelation we read, **"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea"** (Re.20:7,8). An analysis of the words "*Gog*" and "*Magog*" can be found in *CRC Book III*, page 617, but in general, *Gog* is used as a symbolic title for a world leader who strongly opposes God, and *Magog* is used to describe his followers. **"And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts *of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords"*** (Ez.38:3,4): What these "hooks" may be is a subject of some debate, but it will most likely be a strong dose of antisemitism that Satan has implanted in their minds. God will then use these "hooks" to draw them into a final battle against the Holy City of Jerusalem – even while Christ is sitting on its throne! At that time, God will personally engage the enemies of Israel: **"And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel"** (Ez.39:2)... **"And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone"** (Ez 38:22). Only one sixth of this great army will survive to carry God's stern warning back to their home nations – just before God unleashes his vengeance upon them as well. **"And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel"** (Ez.39:6,7). God will send a fire down out of Heaven upon all the people of Magog so that they will know with absolute certainty that the God of Israel is Jehovah, the LORD. The heathen that had once polluted his Name will come to know that He is "the LORD, the Holy One who resides in Israel." At this point in time, the Millennial Age on earth will come to an end, and Israel will make her final transition into the eternal Heavenly realm, wherein she shall serve and worship God forever within a new and glorious Jerusalem.