

# FULFILLED PROMISES

By

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In spite of the variety of reasons given for U.S. troops in the Middle East, the crisis there is primarily about Israel and not about oil.

People over all the world, including Arabs, are outraged — and justly so — at the Israeli's barbaric treatment of Palestinians and continued aggression against them. This land grab is opposed by the American Council for Judaism and many other American Jews, but it is supported by so-called "Christian Zionists" (a contradiction in terms), who claim that Jews have a right to take this land by force because God gave it to them long ago. For years many prominent televangelists have been misinforming their people on this subject, saying that the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine fulfills God's promise to Abraham and is foretold in Old Testament prophecies.

As we have written several times over the years, this view is used to rally people to the support of a very dangerous political cause and could result in war and massive devastation.

**A GIFT FROM GOD.** Soon after Abraham entered Canaan, God promised: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). However, Abraham never actually owned any of the land until his wife Sarah died, after which he purchased the cave of Machpelah where he buried her. Unlike the Zionists, Abraham did not assume that God's promise gave him the right to steal the land from its current owners, and he wouldn't even take the burial ground as a gift but insisted on paying for it.

It was not until over 400 years later that the descendants of Abraham, the 12 tribes of Israel, were told to take the land. Moses said to them, "Behold, I have set the land (of Canaan) before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them" (Deut. 1:8).

Because of unbelief they failed to obey, and it was forty years later, after the death of Moses, that the promise was repeated to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates..." (Joshua 1:3, 4).

The promise was fulfilled so that, just before Joshua died, he could say, "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein...there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:43-45).

The fulfillment of the promise was confirmed by Nehemiah, who said, "So the children went in and possessed the land" (Neh. 9:7-24). Jeremiah also said that Israel "came in and possessed the land" (Jer. 32:21).

Before Stephen was killed by the Jews, he reminded them that God had fulfilled His promise regarding the land, saying, "They entered on the possession of the nations" (Acts 7:45). Clearly the promise to give this land to Israel was totally fulfilled.

**GOD'S JUDGMENT.** In giving this land to Israel, God was using them as instruments of His judgment upon an extremely corrupt society. Their customs and religious practices, including abortion, infanticide, sorcery and witchcraft, God called "abominations" and "detestable things."

"Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of they heart, does thou go in to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah they God does drive them out from before thee..." (Deut. 9:5ff). They were to destroy all vestiges of the corrupt Canaanite religion, lest they be corrupted with it.

God warned his people that if they became disobedient, he would judge them just as severely and in the same way he had judged the nations before them. "And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you" (Lev. 18:28. The warning is repeated several times. (See Deut. 28:15-68.)

When Israel's tribes became rebellious and idolatrous, God kept his promise to expel them from the land. Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, and Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon beginning in 597 BC. In both cases the people were made to understand that their captivity was the work of Jehovah in judgment against them.

**RETURN TO THE LAND.** Isaiah, who prophesied more than 100 years before the exile of Judah, told of the judgment and also of the restoration of a remnant. Jeremiah, who lived during the Babylonian invasion, prophesied that the exile would last 70 years, and then they would be allowed to return. Ezekiel, who was probably a young man when he was taken to Babylon, also prophesied of a return to their former land.

The fulfillment of these prophecies took place after Cyrus, king of Persia, captured Babylon in 539 BC. The story of the exiles' return to Jerusalem is recorded in II Chronicles and in Ezra, and they speak of this return as a fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah. This was a peaceful return under the authority of the king. There was no fighting or violence of any kind.

Many believe that, according to Old Testament prophets, God is still going to re-gather all of the scattered tribes of Israel back to the land of the original tribes. "Christian Zionists" say that this has been going on since 1948 when, through terrorism and subterfuge, Zionist Jews established present Israel. But this is to ignore some significant facts. 1) There is no Jewish race. Zionism is a political movement, as its founder, Theodor Herzl, boasted. Even the Israeli Knesset cannot agree on "who is a Jew," and most of those called Jews are Ashkenazim and have no blood relationship to Abraham and follow the Talmud, not the Bible. 2) Zionism ignores the way Jesus interpreted the prophets. He takes the expressions from the prophets and applies them to the ingathering of people into the kingdom of God and even warns that many Israelites will be excluded from that kingdom because of their unbelief. 3) The only prophecy Jesus made concerning Jerusalem and its land had to do with its destruction and the destruction of the nation. "Your house is left unto you desolate," He said (Luke 13:35).

**END OF AN AGE.** One day as Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples called attention to the magnificent structure, marveling at the massive stones. Jesus replied, "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down" (Mark 13:2; also Luke 21 and Matthew 24).

Later, as they sat on the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke of the coming destruction of the temple and the nation, using expressions borrowed from the book of Daniel (See

Dan. 9:27; 11:13; 12:11). He explained that Jerusalem was to be surrounded by armies (called “the abomination of desolation”), Christians were to flee to the mountains, and there was to be terrible distress and tribulation. The great leaders (of Israel) were to fall, and foreigners were to trample the city.

Jesus said these were “the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” and a time of “wrath unto this people” (Luke 21:22, 23). These are the same expressions used by Isaiah (13) regarding the fall of Babylon. The fall of Jerusalem was to be seen as an act of divine judgment, as Jesus had repeatedly warned, and a fulfillment of all that was written about Jerusalem.

After His statements about the destruction of the city and the nation, Jesus said, “This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished” (Matt. 24:34). The tribulations began in 67 AD, and the final end of the nation came in 70 AD when the Roman armies completely destroyed the city. Over a million Jews were killed in those three years, and another 97,000 or more were taken into captivity, according to the historian Josephus. Prophecy was fulfilled to the letter.

God kept His promise to give the land to Israel, but He also kept His promises to expel them from it. God kept His promise to return them to the land, but again He kept His promise to destroy the nation because of their unbelief. Prophecy concerning that land was fulfilled in 70 AD.

It is an enormous and tragic error for Christians to legitimize Israeli terrorism and brutality and to support the basis of a horrible war on the false claim that it is fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham. That promise was fulfilled.

The hope of God’s people is not anchored in a piece of land nor in a human government but in Christ, Who will come to judge the world, give immortality to His disciples and plant us in a “new earth wherein dwells righteousness.” (II Peter 3:13).

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