Print PDF Email

A Jewish Remnant Returns to the Land of Israel



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #296 ~

You can't fully understand God's plans for the Jewish people unless you learn about the land God gave to them. It was around 2,050 BC that God first promised this land to Abram, and He kept reminding him and his descendants that it was their land. (Gen. 12:1, 13:14-15, 15:18-21, 17:7-8; Ps. 105:8-11). Finally, around 1,400 BC, under Joshua's leadership, the Jewish people entered this promised land. During their extended stay in this land, God did many great and glorious things for them. But because of all their terrible sin, they only lived there for about 800 years, and then God made them leave – but only for a short time.

God tells us exactly when the Jewish people would come back. Through Jeremiah, God predicts, *"When seventy years have been completed for*

Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope." (Jer. 29:10-11). Then there's Daniel pleading with God, reminding Him of His promise to Jeremiah to bring His people back to their land. (Dan. 9:1-19). Finally, Cyrus, *"in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah"*, issues a decree that the Jews can go back to their land to *"rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel."* Ezra 1:2-4

After being exiled out of their land for exactly 70 years, Jewish people began returning – and it happened in three stages, in 538 BC, 458 BC, and 445 BC. Here are several important things to note about the Jews' return to their land and the years that followed:

* Nearly 2,000,000 Israelites entered their land close to 870 years earlier, but in this first stage there's a remnant of only about 50,000. Yet, God's purposes were destined to be fulfilled.
* Life in the land of Israel was difficult, was very different from what it was like when they were deported 70 years earlier. The city of Jerusalem and its walls were in ruins, and there was no temple, no sacrifices, and no security for the people.

* The Israelites were in their land, but it was controlled by the Persians – thus Israel had no king for she was not a sovereign nation. Nehemiah said, *"We are slaves today, and as to the land which You gave to our fathers to eat of its fruit and bounty, behold, we are slaves in it. Its abundant produce is for the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins... We are in great tribulation"* (Neh. 9:36-37). The Jewish people were poor, were not in charge, and had forfeited God's blessings because of their ancestors' sins.

* For the Jews it was the time of the Gentiles. No divinely appointed king was ruling over them, and this would continue until the 2nd coming of Christ, the return of the King. Luke 21:24, Zech. 14:4,9

* The ethnic and national identity of the Jewish people was truly preserved. They were back in their land, they had their religion and culture, and the priestly lines were still intact. Temple worship and sacrifices could take place with hopes that God's presence and glory would return.

* Haggai the prophet was part of the 1st wave of Jews who came back to their land in 538 BC. He exhorted the people to live godly lives and rebuild the temple, which was then completed in 516 BC. He prophesied of a future temple, future glory, and a future king, whom we know is Christ the King, One who will *"fill this house with glory"* and *"destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations."* Haggai 2:7, 22

* Ezra, a scribe and a priest, led a 2nd wave of Jews to their land in 458 BC. Devoted to teaching God's word, Ezra helped lead a great revival among the Jewish people (Neh. 8-10). By instructing them about God's past dealings with their ancestors (1-2 Chron.), he encouraged the people and gave them hope about the future. *"He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth. Remember His covenant forever… the covenant which He made with Abraham… He confirmed it to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan.'"* 1 Chronicles 16:14-18

* Nehemiah, a strong and godly leader, was instrumental in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem – and he also served as her governor. An excellent summary of God's merciful and patient working with His people is given in Neh. 9. We are again reminded of God's promise to His people about the land – *"You are the Lord God who chose Abram… You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites… to give it to his descendants"* (Neh. 9:7-8). There's no doubt that God wanted His people to remember His everlasting faithfulness and His promise of land.

* Zechariah was a priest and a contemporary of Haggai. *"Zechariah"* actually means *"God remembers"*, and God always remembers His

promises to His people. They had just returned from captivity, and the situation in Israel was bleak. To encourage the people, God commissioned Zechariah to tell the people about their hope, specifically about the coming kingdom age. He gives many references about their glorious future: Zech. 1:16-17; Zech. 2:1-13; Zech. 3:6-10; Zech. 6:1-8; Zech. 8:1-8, 12-13, 20-22; Zech. 9:8-17; Zech. 10:1-12; Zech. 12:7-14; Zech. 13:1-9; Zech. 14:1-21. These verses speak of Israel living in their land during the time when Christ is King over them and the entire world. *"In that day His* (the Lord's) *feet will stand on the Mount of Olives... the Lord shall be King over all the earth."* Zech. 14:4, 9

* Satan strongly opposes the Jewish people from their return to the land up to Christ's 1st coming. Satan's plan is to prevent the Messiah from coming to earth, and so he employs four devilish empires to go after the Jewish people – but Satan is thwarted every time. Dan. 7:1-8 and Rev. 12:1-5 describe these as beast empires, as vicious, animal-like, God-hating kingdoms. These beasts represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the fourth beast becoming a future 10-horned kingdom, one ruled by the Antichrist. The book of Esther speaks of the Medo-Persian empire and her attempt, through Haman, to wipe out the Jewish people – but they failed. Yes, the Jews were in a weakened state during these 530+ years, but God was so loving and strong, and He always protected and preserved His people. His promises to them never failed.

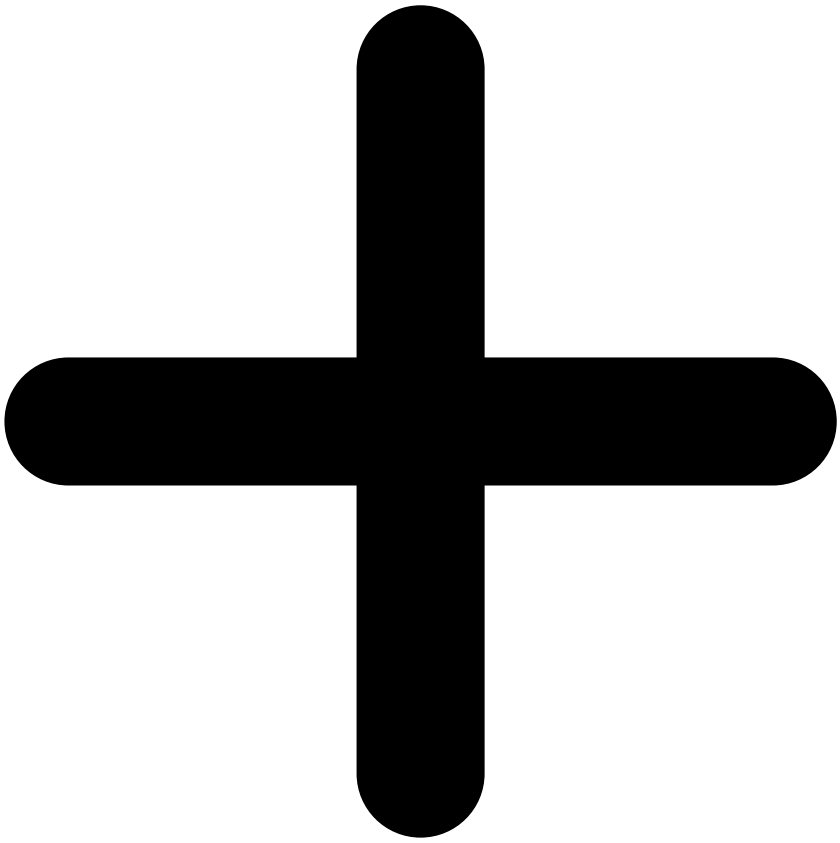
The prophet Malachi had much to say to the Jewish people. Yes, they had a fresh start when they returned to their land, but they had sunk to a depth of sin that was as bad as it had ever been. So Malachi clearly points out the sins of the priests and the people. There was corruption, complacency, divorce, defiled sacrifices, hard-hearts, intermarriage, bad teaching, legalism, withholding of tithes, etc. So God warned them of coming judgment, of *"the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5). Despite this judgment, God has a faithful remnant of Jews, saying to them, *"to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."* Malachi 4:2

The book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, the last time God speaks to His people until Christ's 1st coming. It's around 430 BC, and the land of Israel was under foreign rule; the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants had not been fulfilled; the Jewish people were still being oppressed; the future still looked bleak; and the Messiah had not yet come to Israel. But God never forgot His people and His promises to them – He knew exactly what He was doing and would be doing.

Scholars call these 430 years before the coming of the Messiah, before the birth of Jesus, the intertestamental period. God knew that certain things had to be in place *"before the fullness of the time came,"* before He would send Christ to earth (Gal. 4:4). During this peiod Jewish synagogues were built; rabbis, Pharisees, and Sadducees came to be; the Greek and Latin languages were established; the Greek Septuagint was written; there were the Roman roads; and there was Pax Romana. God was doing detail work, getting everyone and everything in place before sending His Son to earth.

It wouldn't be long before Christ would come, not to Persia or Edom or Italy or Greece or Assyria or Egypt or Ethiopia, but to the land of Israel and the Jewish people. Once in Israel, Christ would live a perfect life, die for our sins, be raised from the dead, and then ascend into heaven. Then at His 2nd coming, it will be said*, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel… My name will be great among the nations" (*Mal. 1:5, 11), and *"All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land."* Malachi 3:12

P.S. I am strongly convinced that we need to understand the long and amazing history of the Jewish people and their land, the land of Israel. I have written four different posts about the Jews and their land, and I encourage you to read them all – #290, #291, #292, and 295. And I am planning on writing two to three more, from the time of Christ up to the present and into the future.





RECENT POSTS

Search

SEARCH

[THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR YOU!]

Please leave this field empty

SUBSCRIBE TO BLOG VIA EMAIL

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Subscribe!

EMAIL ADDRESS: stevehogan@christskingdom.org