March 1, 2022

Greeting to all and I pray you and your love ones are in good health and spiritually into Gods word. In the past two years or so we have experience a virus not seen in a hundred years and now a possibility of World War III. So, does that mean the End Times is here with us? It could be but scripture tells us to look to Israel and that’s what our topic for this month is about. This article I first came across it back in 1916 when my interest in eschatology was at an infant stage. It is rather long with a lot of information but I hope the article keeps you interested enough to read it in one sitting.

With that said, the **Bible Scripture Letter** topic for March 2022 is “Why the Rebirth of Israel is a Sign of the End”. “The Rebirth of Israel” meaning when the United Nations granted the Jewish nations a country of their own “Israel” in May 14, 1948. Prior to this time, the Jews were scattered throughout the world for over 2000 years (70 AD).

So, let’s get started.

Your Brother in Christ, Tony Gonzalez

**1 Peter 3:15**

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

**Why the Rebirth of Israel is a Sign of the End**

 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.” (**Matt. 24:32-33**)

Many students of prophecy identify the Lesson of the Fig Tree in **Matt. 24** as a reference to Israel. While the fig tree is often used to symbolize Israel, this is not one of those times.

The fig tree is one of the last trees to bud in the spring, so when it begins to get leaves people know that summer is right around the corner. There’ll be no more false starts, no more cold snaps. Summer is now certain and soon. Jesus used this analogy to tell people who’ll be on Earth at the time that when they see the things he described beginning in **Matt. 24:15**, they’ll know that His coming is really near.

Earlier in **Matt. 24** He had told them that wars and rumors of war will be characteristic of the age (**Matt. 24:6**), and that the earthquakes and famines they’ll notice will be like the beginning of birth pangs, mild and infrequent at first but more intense and more frequent as the end approaches (**Matt. 24:7-8**). Then there’ll be increased anti-Semitism, apostasy, false prophets and deception, in the midst of which the Gospel will be preached in all nations (**Matt. 24:9-14**).

But when they see the Abomination of Desolation, a man standing in the Temple telling people he’s God, things will begin to get serious fast and the countdown will begin on the most terrifying period of time in the history of man. This is what He compared to the fig tree getting leaves. When they see that, they know that His return is certain and soon. That’s the lesson of the Fig Tree.

**Now Where Do We Go?**

So then, if the fig tree isn’t symbolic of Israel why are we convinced that the events of 1948 marked the beginning of the end?

First of all, you don’t need the Lesson of the Fig Tree to place Israel in **Matt. 24**. If you read the passage carefully, you’ll see that Jesus gave three crystal clear signs that there would be a generation of Old Covenant believing Jews in Israel **before** the Great Tribulation begins, and they are the ones He was addressing.

The first clue is the Abomination of Desolation, something that hasn’t happened since Jesus gave the warning. It will be seen standing in the Holy Place. (**Matt.24:15**) That’s the Jewish Temple, a building that can only be present when Israel occupies the Promised Land.

The second clue is that the people he’s telling to flee are in Judea, the name by which the Biblical land of Israel was known during the time of the Lord’s visitation. (**Matt. 24:16**)

And the third clue is for them to pray their flight won’t take place on a Sabbath. **Matt. 24:20**) Only observant Jews would be worried about this because they can only walk 1000 paces on the Sabbath, not nearly far enough to even get out of town, let alone into the mountains.

Some people ask how Israel’s re-birth could be the sign that starts the clock running on the end times when there’s no mention of it in **Matt. 24**.  It’s true, in the Olivet Discourse the Lord never came right out and said Israel would cease to exist and then be re-born 2,000 years later.  But there are clear prophecies of just such a thing in the Old Testament.  For example, Moses warned the people at least twice of the terrible things that would happen if they rejected the Lord.  In **Deut. 4:25-27** he said their disobedience would cause the Lord to scatter them among the nations.  Then in **Deut 4:30** He said that in the latter days during a time of tribulation they would return to the Lord and obey Him again.

And starting in **Deut. 28:15** Moses listed the disasters that would come upon them, culminating in verses 63 and 64 when he said they would be up rooted from the land and scattered among the nations, from one end of the Earth to the other.   And once again, he said, even if they had been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, the Lord would bring them back (**Deut. 30:4**), and if they agreed to obey His covenant again He would make them prosperous, and then He would circumcise their hearts (see **Romans 2:28-29**), put their enemies to flight, and delight in them again. **Deut. 30:1-10** is a clear summary of End Times events.  They’ll be brought back into the land, their enemies will be cursed and their covenant will be restored (**Ezekiel 38-39**), their hearts will be circumcised (**Zechariah 12:10**), and their prosperity will be restored (**Isaiah 65:17-25**). This sequence of events is coming to pass today, just as Moses said it would.

So as far back as the wilderness wanderings, the Lord had foretold of Israel’s scattering and subsequent regathering in the latter days.  Because of their disobedience, they would be driven from the land. After an extended period of time He would bring them back.  Their return would be a sign to all the world that the End of the Age is upon us.  We saw above that in the context of the Olivet Discourse Israel is already in the land and back in their (old) covenant relationship with God.  That’s why Jesus didn’t mention the re-birth of the nation among the signs He gave. The first specific end times sign He mentioned is the Abomination of Desolation, something that will happen about 3.5 years before He returns.

**Are There Others?**

There are other places where the Bible promises that the nation Israel will exist in its Biblical lands at the End of the Age as well, such as **Ezekiel 36-37**.

Beginning in chapter 36 Ezekiel shifted from his message of current judgment to one of future hope. He began writing these chapters after he learned that Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians and its desolation had begun. Having earlier prophesied against the mountains of Israel (**Ezekiel 6**) he now began speaking promises to them. Reminding the mountains that he had pronounced judgment against the surrounding nations for trying to possess them, and for plundering and ridiculing the towns that had dwelt upon them, the Lord had Ezekiel say,

” But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown, and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will cause people, my people Israel, to walk upon you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.” (**Ezekiel 36:8-13**)

While this was partially fulfilled after the Babylonian captivity, the people were driven off the land again in the first century AD, so the complete fulfillment had to begin sometime after that. Earlier, Isaiah had prophesied that there would be a second return, and his contemporary Amos said that after that one they would never be uprooted again. So that’s the one we’re looking for.

In that day, the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. (**Isaiah 11:11**)

I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God. (**Amos 9:14-15**)

According to history the second fulfillment officially began in 1948. Why did the Lord finally do this? What had they done to deserve it?

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.” (**Ezekiel 36:22-23**)

Frequently the Lord had His prophets first give a sweeping overview statement to describe a promise and then fill in the details afterward. Such is the case with Ezekiel’s next declaration.

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel!” (**Ezekiel 36:24-32**)

Clearly the complete fulfillment of this promise to Israel is yet future to us. But its magnitude is striking. God promised that Israel would be brought back into its Biblical lands, something we see is already in process. Then the people will be cleansed from all their sins, given a new heart, and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell within them. (Obviously, this hasn’t happened yet, because it can only happen when one is born again.) Then the Kingdom promises will begin coming true and the people will remember their former sinful ways and detest themselves. This is another indication of the indwelling Holy Spirit’s work, convicting them of their sins. This is the same way things happened for you and me. In a general sense, we knew we were sinners in need of a Savior when we first went to the altar, but we didn’t understand the full extent of our depravity until after we were saved and the Holy Spirit began to reveal it to us in depth.

**The Valley of Dry Bones**

Now, let’s look at **Ezekiel 37** where the dramatic rebirth of the nation is foretold in the vision of the valley of dry bones.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “O Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ” (**Ezekiel 37:1-6**)

Picture yourself standing in a large valley whose floor is strewn with bones. They’re scattered around randomly, none of them connected to another, bleached and dry. It looks like they’ve been dumped there some time ago and left, as if whoever did it had no further use for them.

So, I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. (**Ezekiel 37:7-8**)

In what looks like an animator’s dream, the bones slowly begin to rise and join themselves together from the feet up to form skeletons, each bone in its proper place. Tendons appear and begin to snake along the bones attaching themselves to make the bones move. As each one connects you can hear the clicking sounds of the tendons conducting tests, making the bones move on command. Muscle and flesh begin to cover them and finally skin spreads out along limbs and around torsos, enclosing the muscle and flesh and giving the bodies a finished, though lifeless, form.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ ” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. (**Ezekiel 37:9-10**)

The breath that gives them life comes from the four winds, used symbolically to represent a sovereign act of God. This tells us that though they are now living beings, they are not yet possessed of the Spirit of God. That will come later, as we’ll see. The people would first be gathered together in unbelief, a secular nation. This is seen in their status today, brought back after a 2000-year absence by a sovereign act of God, but not yet a covenant people again. This is what God meant when He said it wouldn’t be because they deserved it, but because He promised it.

Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore, prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’ “ (**Ezekiel 37:11-14**)

Notice the Lord has Ezekiel speaking to the whole house of Israel.  There are no lost tribes.  The complete fulfillment of the Dry Bones prophecy requires two more things only God can do. He must put His Spirit in them and He must bring the faithful of their past out of the grave to join them. His Spirit will come when they’re ready to recognize Him as the Messiah they put to death so long ago. Zechariah said this would happen during their final time of trial at the end of the age.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. (**Zechariah 12:10**)

(In the Hebrew language, this verse reveals an astonishing secret. After the phrase They will look on me … it contains two untranslated letters, an aleph and a tau. They are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So, the verse literally reads, “They will look on me, the Aleph and the Tau …”  In **Genesis 1:1** the same two Hebrew letters show up after the phrase In the beginning, God … So it reads In the beginning God, the Aleph and the Tau …  In **Genesis 1** the Father is in view, but in **Zechariah 12** it’s the Son.  Was God planting little clues that He and the Messiah are one? Well, look at **Revelation 1:8**;

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The original language of the Revelation is Greek where the first and last letters of the alphabet are Alpha and Omega. Now let’s read the words of Jesus in **Revelation 22:13;**

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Aleph and Tau, first and last in Hebrew.  Alpha and Omega, first and last in Greek.  Both languages referring to both the Father and the Son.  Someone’s trying to tell us something.)

**Daniel 12:1-2** says that following the Great Tribulation Daniel’s people will come out of their tombs, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. This is the Bible’s first mention of two resurrections, one for the faithful and one for the damned.  Jews who are resurrected to life will dwell in Israel during the Millennium, the final fulfillment of **Ezekiel 37:13**. From **Rev. 20:11-15** we learn that the resurrection of the damned will happen 1000 years later at the Great White Throne judgment.

**When Will This Happen?**

So, it’s clear that the End Times began when Israel became a nation again in 1948.  The testimony of Moses, Isaiah, Amos, Ezekiel and others all confirm this.  But how long will they last?  Remember, the Disciples had asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of your coming and of the End of the Age? (**Matt. 24:3**).  Giving us the timing of their beginning doesn’t fully answer the question.  We have to know the time of their end as well.  The Lord was clear that the sign of the 2nd Coming would appear after the end of the Great Tribulation (**Matt. 24:30**).  Then He said “This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” (**Matt. 24:34**).

There are three possible views of the phrase “this generation”.  Some believe it refers to the generation alive when Jesus spoke.  Their contention is that the Olivet Discourse prophecies were all fulfilled by 70 AD.  I cannot find any way to make this view conform to a literal interpretation of Scripture.  At best, it’s only a partial fulfillment, which means it confirms the fact that there will be a complete fulfillment in the End Times.   Others use a secondary meaning for the Greek word translated generation and say it refers to the Jewish race.  To them the verse says the Jewish people will not disappear from the Earth until all the End Times prophecies are fulfilled.  While linguistically possible this interpretation isn’t really a legitimate sign.  It’s not the existence of the Jewish race that’s important, it’s the existence of the nation Israel.  Without Israel, End Times prophecies simply cannot be fulfilled.  That leaves the third alternative, that Jesus was speaking of the generation alive at the End of the Age.   But even this is not a pertinent sign unless by the phrase “all these things” Jesus was speaking of everything that followed the re-birth of the nation.

Think about this for a moment.  When Jesus said “This generation will certainly not pass away” he was referring to the life time of one generation of people, saying in effect that all the End Times signs would be fulfilled within the lifetime of the people being born when they began.  According to **Psalm 90:10** and **Isaiah 23:15** this means a 70-year period of time. In fact, among some Jews, a man who has reached the age of 83 will customarily celebrate a second bar mitzvah, under the logic that a “normal” lifespan is 70 years, so that an 83-year-old can be considered 13 in a second lifetime. (Jewish boys normally celebrate their first bar mitzvah at age 13.)  This practice has become increasingly common.

From a timing standpoint, the signs Jesus listed in **Matt. 24** can be split into two groups, neither of which fit that criteria.  There are the general signs of **Matt. 24:4-14** that are either characteristic of the entire age or of indeterminate duration (like birth pangs).  And there are the specific signs of **Matt. 24:15-31** that all happen with in 3.5 years. Why would He say all these things would happen within a lifetime when Daniel was already on record giving their duration as 3.5 years (**Daniel 12:7**)?  It doesn’t make sense.

There’s only one End Times sign that meets the criteria and that’s the one that began the End Times, the re-birth of the Nation.  (The reunification of Jerusalem in 1967 can’t be considered for 2 reasons.  First, according to **Zechariah 14:2** it will be divided again, but more importantly the Lord’s prophecy about Jerusalem being trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (**Luke 21:24**) won’t fully come to pass until the 2nd Coming.)

Israel officially became a nation again in 1948.  If that event began a 70-year countdown to the 2nd Coming and the End of the Age, then the increasing number of predictions in the secular world of coming social and economic upheaval, electromagnetic storms and other natural disasters, combined with wars in various places should not come as any surprise to us.

*Source: Grace thru Faith Ministries*