

2. Dispersion and Persecution of Israel and the Church.

What's God Doing with Israel and the Church?

Recap. In our last study, I used the analogy of the River Severn Tidal Bore that can make a wave lasting more than an hour with people surfing it for many miles. I believe it to be a picture of the time we are living in history when we are enduring a full-spectrum spiritual war of deception against humanity. Most people are asleep and deceived as to what is happening. Jesus prophesied this spiritual sleep in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25), whereby those waiting for the Bridegroom had fallen asleep. To counter this spiritual sleep and departure from the faith, God is at work to awaken the Church with a spiritual tidal bore wave that will last, I believe, until Jesus comes.

Our focus is on what God is doing today that will bring such an outpouring of the Spirit. We should not discount the nation of Israel from what God is doing, for He has promised that the Jewish people will not see Him again until they cry out to Him, **“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:38-39)**. I have just returned from leading my third tour of Israel this year (2018), and one of the things that is happening in the land is that Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah are now estimated to be 20,000. God is bringing a stirring in the hearts of Jewish people for their Messiah.

We talked about the purpose of God's heart for Israel was that they would be used of Him to bring good news to the Gentiles. We looked at the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that through them there would be born an Anointed King, One called Messiah, and that He would be the Light of the World. A spirit of elitism had crept into Jewish society before the coming of Jesus, so much so that the prevailing thinking of the time was that only those from the Jewish nation would be saved.

After Paul, the Apostle, was converted to Christ and later visited the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews in the temple listened to Paul with enthusiasm when he shared his testimony until he got to the part where God told him to share it with the Gentiles. They broke out in a riot at such a thought as God wanting to have mercy on the Gentiles (Acts 22:22). Even Peter, the Apostle, had to see a vision three times before He finally realized that God wanted to reach the Gentiles (Acts 10). This hatred and divisive spirit is something that caused the downfall of Israel. Finally, in 70 A.D., God allowed the Roman armies to capture and destroy Jerusalem, and the people of Israel were banished from the land and threatened with death if they returned. As a last insult to the Jews, after another revolt against the Romans in 132 A.D. by Simon Bar Kokhba, the land was called *Palestine*, named after their avowed enemies, the Philistines.

The Jewish Mind Towards Christians

In the year 1977, four months after becoming a Christian, I was invited to Israel. I cried like a baby the first time I saw the walls of the City of Jerusalem; it was such an emotional experience. After arriving, I received a prophetic word that, if I stayed awhile there in the land, God would make me into a man of God. I am still on that journey more than forty years later. Living in Israel was a life-changing experience. I learned how to talk about Jesus with Jewish people and

to avoid words and names that would bring persecution from them. For the most part, Jewish people do not read their prophetic books or the Psalms, and if they do, they are castigated by their Rabbi if they dare to ask questions about the Suffering Servant passages found in Isaiah 53.

Some will get angry if you show them passages in the Old Testament where the Lord instructs His people to worship and to kiss the Son in Psalm 2 or the clear picture of the crucifixion of the Messiah in Psalm 22, or the prophetic passages of the Messiah's arrival in Zechariah 12 and 14. I yearned to reach them, but it blew up in my face after I tried to get an Orthodox Jew to read my Hebrew New Testament. I was hoping to strike up a conversation with him by reading the New Testament in Hebrew as he sat alongside me on a public bus. Thinking that I was a Jew brought about His passionate anger toward me. As a young Christian, I understood that, while I was there, my mission was to help break down the barrier that Satan had erected between Jew and Arab, and Western Evangelical Gentiles. I understood from the New Testament that God wanted to make Jew and Gentile one in Christ:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (v. 14). ...His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (vv. 15-16). ...for through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (v.18) (Ephesians 2:11-22).

The great High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper was about bringing Jew and Gentile into one body. Christ prayed, saying, ²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21). I felt like the Lord showed me that the Jews could not receive their Messiah until the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile was broken down, something I believe God is doing in our time. As I mentioned earlier, Jesus said, “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matthew 23:39). The Father is using Gentiles as well as the Messianic believers in the land to love on Jews and Arabs, seeking to reveal to them the God of Love that we know. I rubbed shoulders with Jewish immigrants as we practiced learning Hebrew together.

It is essential to understand that the Jewish people have been persecuted in the name of Christ throughout the past 2000 years of history. To the Jewish mind, Adolf Hitler was a Christian and was out to wipe out the Jewish people. To this date of writing, there is an existentialist threat upon Israel from the nation of Iran promising to wipe out the nation of Israel with nuclear weapons. The Jewish people fear that, now they have returned to the land that God gave them, Christians want to come to Israel and convert them away from serving the One True God.

They think Christians believe in three Gods, something that is heretical to them as it is to us believers in Jesus. They find it difficult to understand that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. Jewish history has educated them that the religious Crusades murdered many Jewish people on their way to the Holy Land. Since the beginning of the Diaspora, i.e. the dispersion from their land in 70 A.D., there have been many persecutions by people in the name of Christianity, such as the pogroms in Russia illustrated by the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof*, as well as the Nazis in the

Second World War. So, before we can get into talking about what God is doing today, we need to understand the Jewish mind as a result of the dispersion of the Jewish people from their land.

The Rejection of the Messiah and the Diaspora

History tells us there have been two dispersions of Israel. Starting in 586 B.C., they endured seventy years of captivity in Babylon before returning to the land and rebuilding their temple. When Jesus came, the ruling elders rejected Messiah. When Pilate, the governor, made them choose between Barabbas, a murderer, and Jesus, he presented Jesus, saying: “**Here is your King!**” ¹⁵At this, they shouted, ‘**Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!**’ ‘**Shall I crucify your King?**’ Pilate asked. ‘**We have no king but Caesar,**’ replied the chief priests” (John 19:15).

The Lord Jesus had spoken of a time of judgment and dispersion of the Jewish people from their land because of their rejection of Him.

⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation (Luke 19:43-44).

This rejection was not a surprise to God. He foretold through the prophet Isaiah more than five hundred years before Christ came that the Messiah would be rejected, “**He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain**” (Isaiah 53:3). When Pilate tried to release Jesus from the hands of His accusers, they would have none of it (John 18:38-40), and they brought upon themselves a curse as a nation. When given a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, they said:

All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:25).

Since that terrifying curse was spoken and the choice was made to reject the Messiah, the Jewish people have suffered as a people group. It is estimated that around one million Jews died in the Great Revolt against Rome in 70 A.D. Many became slaves to Rome and other cities; they were told not to return to Jerusalem under threat of death. Scattered all over Europe, the Jews were persecuted as God-killers. As they settled, they were frequently robbed and massacred, often for no reason at all, many times to have their things stolen from them. The persecution reached its first peak during the Crusades.

In the First Crusade of 1096, many Jewish communities along the Rhine and Danube rivers of Europe were wiped out. In the Second Crusade of 1147, the Jews in France were subject to frequent massacres. Again in 1251 and 1320, during the Shepherd's Crusades, the Jews were attacked and murdered, many times hundreds at a time. They were not allowed to settle for any amount of time. In 1290, for instance, all English Jews were banished. They were slaughtered, hung, or burned in retaliation due to many Gentiles believing it was the Jews who started the Bubonic plague by poisoning the wells of Europe. Another myth spread was that the Jews were murdering Christian children and using their blood in their Passover celebrations. The Lord had warned them through prophetic words many years previous about this Diaspora:

⁸“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that **I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob.**” declares the LORD. ⁹For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, **but no pebble shall fall to the earth.** ¹⁰All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, “Disaster shall not overtake or meet us” (Amos 9:8-10).

What do you think this prophetic word is saying to the Jewish people?

In 1349, Landgrave Frederic of Thuringia wrote to the council of the city of Nordhausen and told them how he had burned his Jews in honor of God and advised them to do the same. In 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France, and in 1421, thousands of Jews were expelled from Austria. Many fled to Poland where they were granted some rights. By 1351, sixty major and 150 smaller Jewish communities were exterminated, and more than 350 separate massacres had occurred.

The killings came about because of myths and the so-called Christians owing the Jews much money in interest. Money again was what killed the Jews in Strasbourg. The Jews were forced to be baptized into Christianity and to give the so-called Christians all their money, or they were burned alive. Many Jews agreed and were forced to convert. Often, there was no reason for the persecution except that the Jews had become the most hated figures in European society.¹

In the south of Europe, persecution broke out as many Jews were killed at the hands of murderous men motivated by religious extremism in the name of Christ. Thousands upon thousands of Jews were slaughtered for little to no reason through the nineteen hundred years that led to the Final Solution at the hands of the Nazis. Adolf Hitler of Germany in the 1940s murdered more than 6,000,000 Jews. A brief list of the extent of Jewish persecution has been compiled at this link:

<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/HistoryJewishPersecution/>

The Hope of Israel Has Been to Return Home

As they endured the two thousand years of persecution, there was a longing in their hearts toward their homeland, the land of Israel, but how could they ever regain their land? It seemed so impossible a thing. The Lord, though, had spoken of a time where He would bring them back and appear in His glory:

For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory (Psalm 102:16 NIV).
When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory (Psalm 102:16 KJV).

I love the Lord for His kindness and mercy in that He never leaves His people without hope. He Lord spoke through the prophet Hosea:

¹ Taken from: <http://bpjews.tripod.com/>.

⁴For the Israelites **will live many days** without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. ⁵**Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD** their God and David, their king. **They will come trembling to the LORD** and to **his blessings** in the last days (Hosea 3:4-5).

This re-gathering could not be referring to the first dispersion to Babylon, a time that lasted seventy years. This re-gathering to their homeland would be from the west:

⁸How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. ¹⁰They shall go after the Lord; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, **his children shall come trembling from the west**; ¹¹they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and **I will return them to their homes**, declares the Lord (Hosea 11:8-11).

During the years of dispersion, the land itself was barren and could not be farmed. Mark Twain, the famous writer, gave evidence of this in his travels to the Holy Land in 1867. He wrote about the lack of ability for the land to provide for people:

Stirring scenes...occur in the valley of Jezreel no more, (now one of the most fertile places in the Middle East). There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent—not for 30 miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin tents, but not a single permanent habitation. One may ride 10 miles hereabouts and not see 10 human beings.²

The land only began to blossom when the Jewish people began to come back to the land after nearly two thousand years. **“In the days to come, Jacob will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole world with fruit”** (Isaiah 27:6). In fulfillment of the above Scripture, Israel now produces forty different kinds of fruits, including the following: oranges, lemons, grapefruits, melons, avocados, pomegranates, bananas, apples, cherries, tomatoes, peppers, dates, olives and more, which are exported all over the world.³

For those who search the Scriptures, God has given many prophetic promises of a return to the land for the Jewish people. Jewish immigration back to their land began to happen in the early 1900s when God used a Jewish man by the name of Theodor Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah that they would return from exile from every quarter of the globe:

He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth (Isaiah 11:12).

² Mark Twain. *The Innocents Abroad*. London: 1881, p. 349.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_in_Israel

Some might say that these Scriptures spoke of the first Babylonian dispersion, but that first dispersion was only to Babylon, not all nations, but these prophecies speak of a return from all quarters of the compass of Earth.

⁵Do not be afraid, for I am with you; **I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.** ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:5-6).

⁷"So then, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' ⁸but they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then **they will live in their own land**" (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

¹⁴"I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and I will restore your fortunes and **gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you,**" declares the Lord, "and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile" (Jeremiah 29:14).

The trickle of people in the early 1900s became a flood after the murder of six million Jews in the Second World War. Jeremiah the prophet spoke of a time when God would send fishermen and catch them, and if they would resist, He would send hunters and bring them back to the land:

¹⁴"However, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when men will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' ¹⁵but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up **out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.**' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers. ¹⁶"But now **I will send for many fishermen,**" declares the LORD, "and they will catch them. **After that** I will send for many hunters, and **they will hunt them** down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks" (Jeremiah 16:14-16).

This re-gathering of the Jewish people to their land is happening in the days we are living. The prophecy clearly states that there will come a time when an exodus from all nations will be more significant in scope than the exodus from Egypt. The fishermen catching them come first before the hunters. This pressure to leave for Palestine is what happened in Germany when Adolf Hitler took power. Because the Jews occupied a high percentage of the top posts in banking, media, and industry in Germany, Hitler spoke out against the Jews. The international Jewish response was a boycott of German goods, which was a threat to Hitler's power.

He made a secret agreement to try to get the Jews to leave by offering them an easy way to transfer their financial means to Palestine in what is known as the Transfer Agreement, also known as the Haavara Agreement.⁴ Edwin Black wrote an award-winning story of the negotiated arrangement in 1933 between Zionist organizations and the Nazis to transfer some 50,000 Jews, and 100 million US Dollars of their assets, to Jewish Palestine in exchange for stopping the

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haavara_Agreement.

worldwide Jewish-led boycott threatening to topple the Hitler regime in its first year.⁵ I wonder if this was God's way of fishing for them to come home to their land before the hunters were sent.

I interpret that passage to mean that, if the Jewish people will not return to their land by those fishing for them, then He will send for hunters. In this writer's viewpoint, the hunters speak of a harsher course of action with Jewish people being hunted, and I believe Bible-believing Christians will undergo the same kind of persecution yet to come. We will look at that in a later study. God is raising up many fishers of men to speak words of hope and vision and to call those whom He loves to the safety and security of their land.

This increasing pressure on Jews is not without context for us as Christians, for much of these things happening to the people of the sands on the seashore (natural Israel) are at the same time happening to the stars of the heaven, i.e. Spiritual Israel, the body of Messiah (Genesis 22:17). God will use the coming persecution to awaken believers to pray and see a mighty revival, both in Israel and throughout the nations of the world. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

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⁵ http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Transfer_Agreement.html?id=QjVxPwAACAAJ.