

CHAPTER 4

ISRAEL'S CENTRAL ROLE

Israel is my firstborn son (Exodus 4:22).

Fourteen one-thousandths

Bear this statistic in mind as you read through this chapter and consider the relentless aggressive focus on Israel by the United Nations and the western media. The world's total land mass is 148,940,000 Km². Israel's land mass is 22,145 Km² *which is fourteen one-thousandths of one per cent of the planet's total land mass*. Yet it is within this tiny sliver of planet Earth that *the world at large* is determined to deny to the Israeli people, except on terms that might well be regarded as rendering it a physically un-defendable country, a place of guaranteed safety. But perhaps that is the real point? The world does not want the Jewish people to have a place of safety and security. In reflecting on this we must bear in mind God's promises to a *defined* People group of a *particular* parcel of land

In 2021 the United Nations General assembly passed 14 resolutions singling out the Jewish state. It is notable that out of twenty resolutions specifically criticizing a nation, seventy percent focus on Israel. The political driver behind these efforts is the delegitimization and 'demonization' of Israel. One UN resolution (# A/76/L.14) places the blame solely on Israel for the lack of peace in the Middle East yet makes no mention of terror attacks and human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas or the PIJ (Palestinian Islamic Jihad). The European Union (and sadly Britain, which in its Foreign Office organization has a long history of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism) broadly backed these resolutions, but signally failed to introduce a single resolution on human rights abuses in China, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Turkey, Pakistan, Vietnam, Algeria or a host of other countries. Since 2015 the UN General Assembly has passed 115 resolutions condemning Israel and only 45 against other countries.

Why is the world's ire, hatred and relentless partisan scrutiny so focused on an area of *fourteen one-thousandths of one percent* of the world's surface? Is the real reason spiritual in nature? If so, precisely which spirits are in evidence? Surely Australian writer Kelvin Crombie hits the proverbial nail right on the head when he writes "perhaps the world system just does not want to see that there is a God, as a restored and harmonious Church would be the clearest evidence to the existence of God; or of the God who has a covenant relationship with the nation of Israel"¹.

Whither Israel?

This is a relatively short chapter, not because our subject is unimportant, but because the question of Israel has been comprehensively addressed by so many other able writers, in more detail, and with perhaps more authority than your author hopes to achieve here ². In this chapter we want only to make a few salient points, especially for those readers who may not, hitherto, have considered Israel in the *last days*, or indeed in the *end-time*, scenarios.

We suggest that *the end time* cannot be properly understood in the absence of a clear biblical insight into God's ongoing purposes for His people, Israel. Nor, indeed, can we decipher current events without a clear Israel perspective. Your author strongly recommends that people should not attempt to 'read' every news bulletin and global development solely from the Israel perspective. Such an approach is, we believe, adopted by some of what might fairly be described as *on the 'fringes'* of biblical interpretation. These interpreters have the right general idea, but are apt to interpret the world through a very narrow prophetic lens and draw predictable (and sometimes repetitive) interpretations that may in themselves be questionable; even highly questionable, on occasions. We repeat, however, that a clear Biblical insight into God's persisting activity in, and around, Israel is extraordinarily helpful in these, our present times.

¹ "Israel, Jesus and Covenant", Kelvin Crombie, Heritage Resources Pty Ltd, 2017, page 389

² See further reading section at the back of this book for some worthwhile suggestions to address this question.

There are essentially three predominant perspectives on the question of Israel. The first is **the World's view**. In speaking in this way we are styling 'the World' as all that mass of Mankind at present ill-disposed towards its creator God and resistant to His ultimate purpose expressed through Yeshua His Son – our Messiah. The World's view of Israel is that it is both a nuisance and an aberration. Israel is seen as a danger to 'peace' as a supposedly non-legitimate State, foisted upon the world-community through Europe's collective guilt at Europe's unleashing of the Shoah/Holocaust in the 1940s. The World's view today is essentially hostile to Israel at a political level, and hostile to Jewish people, at a practical level. This view, whilst claiming to be anti-Israel (or 'anti-Zionist'), is normatively anti-Semitic and often does not try to disguise the fact. **The World** will try to 'solve' its Israel problem in its own way and in the light of its own 'wisdom'. For the past 40 years the World has sought a "final settlement" or even a "final solution" to this 'question'. The preferred mechanism has been something called a "two-state solution", but this is presently being amended to a "one-state solution". Yet the outcome for Israeli Jews seems to be much the same

The favoured "solution" to the World's Israel-problem seems to be to corral the Israeli people (and in this they mean Jews, as many Israelis are actually of Arab extraction and live safely and contentedly within Eretz Israel's national borders) into small, solely Jewish-governed areas. These anticipated Jewish areas will not be contiguous, nor defensible in any realistic understanding of that term 'defensible'. We wonder whether the term 'Jewish ghetto' may most aptly describe the World's ambition for Israel's collective security within its own land. A useful proxy for 'the World' in this context might be considered to be The United Nations Organisation (UN) which has been singularly anti-Israel almost since the UN's inception in 1945, even before the rebirth of Israel in 1948. Today the UN acts as both judge and jury in its condemnation of Israel, having issued more 'resolutions' about Israel than about any other country on the planet!

At the time of preparing this book, a "one-state solution" had recently been aired, in the context that several Arab nations had settled upon a form of peace with Israel ('The Abraham Accords') which, in turn, had reduced the so-called *Palestinian question* to one of secondary status. At the same time Syria was in civil war and Egypt was deeply

concerned about terrorist violence within its society. At a practical level, some of the support for a two-state solution had simply evaporated. A one-state solution seemed to entail the political cantonment of Israel and an enhancement of the political rights of Arab Israelis (as opposed, presumably, to Jewish Israelis) as a form of *positive discrimination*. Demographically, the Arab population seems likely to overtake the Jewish population³, so a one-state solution may prove to be a quicker mechanism to undermine the reality of Israel as a Jewish state, than the stalled ‘two-state solution’.

The second predominant worldview on Israel emerges from within those institutions that collectively are referred to as “**the Church**”. In using this term your authors draw a clear distinction between “the church” as a series of Man-made institutions, versus the *spiritual* Body of Messiah Jesus collectively referred to as “church” in the sense of being His *corporate body*, of which Messiah Jesus is the Head. We would style that Christ-focused “church” as being *the true church*, and Jesus Himself surely made that distinction (Matthew 16: 18).

The institutional Church’s collective understanding of Israel, both as a political / geographical entity, as well as a cultural people collectively and globally thought of as “Israel”, can be summarized by the term **Replacement Theology** (or “Fulfillment Theology” which, at a practical level, amounts to the same thing). Via this ‘theology’, the institutional church perceives itself as being *the new Israel*, having assumed responsibility from, and replaced, ‘old Israel’ which it sees as being terminated by, in, and through “the New Covenant”⁴.

‘Replacement Theology’ is sometimes modified into ‘Two Covenant Theology’ in the minds of some church folk⁵ who may be slightly better disposed towards Israel. The idea here is that Jewish people do not need to hear the good news of Yeshua Messiah as they will be

³ Note that population data seems to be as confused and debated as any other question about Israel and ‘the Palestinians’. Received wisdom, however, is that eventually the Arab Israeli population will overtake the Jewish Israeli population *at some point*. At precisely what point is open to debate as this question is highly politicised!

⁴ This idea emerged in the Byzantine era and was inherited by Catholicism, Orthodoxy and (some) Protestants. In its earlier Catholic manifestation, this “Replacement” worldview became a considerable political and social reality in the Dark Ages. It has permeated the institutional churches ever since.

⁵ Often of a more ‘liberal’ persuasion.

‘saved’ (if at all) by adherence to Rabbinic Judaism and their observance of the Torah. By this view Christians are to be ‘saved’ through their altogether easier and more comfortable “New Covenant” of grace, wherein Jesus has already “paid the price” for the penitent sinner. Jews, by contrast, have to ‘earn’ their Salvation through Torah observance. We surely do not need to state that this obtuse view is nowhere supported in Scripture, nor the specific teachings of Jesus.

The third popular view on Israel can best be summarised by the term **Classical Zionism**⁶ which understands that His covenants with Israel are not abrogated by God, nor are they ‘replaced’ by the New Covenant. This view, rather, sees the New Covenant as augmenting the older covenants and being the end-point in God’s covenantal purposes. Classical Zionism is the broad view of the author of *this* book. Classical Zionism takes the text of the Bible in its plainest sense and accordingly sees God’s unconditional prophetic promises to Israel as remaining in force and not ‘fulfilled’ in, or via, some other entity. **Enlargement Theology** is the prism through which we understand God’s over-arching purposes, as opposed to Replacement Theology. Rev Alex Jacob’s seminal work “The Case for Enlargement Theology”⁷ is the clearest exposition of this hermeneutical approach.

All of this has been widely explored in the literature before. Liberal Christians⁸ do not see the Bible as authoritative. Thus, in their own estimation, they possess their ‘get out of gaol free card’, and can ignore Israel as an issue. They “interpret” the Bible using their hermeneutic of eisegesis (reading-in to Scripture what they want or expect to be there) and use that mechanism to eliminate Israel from God’s eternal story.

God’s dealings with Israel

In my 2009 book “Rebel Church”, I made the simple observation that Christians who fail to gain a thoroughly biblical insight into God’s ongoing purposes for Israel will be increasingly perplexed in the years

⁶ e.g. as defined in David Pawson’s book “Defending Christian Zionism”

⁷ See further reading section at the back of this book

⁸ Those holding a low view of Scripture

ahead. Why? As Israel continually pops up in the world’s media and some Church folk state, categorically and with certainty, that Israel has a distinct and continuing role in God’s end-time purposes, so naive or biblically illiterate Christians will be torn between the World’s unswervingly anti-Israel (and pro Palestinian) narrative, whilst the Bible seems prima facie to demonstrate God’s equally unswerving commitment to, and ongoing purposes for, His ancient Covenant People⁹. What to believe? Whom to believe? Something has to give! In this situation it is generally Biblical exegesis that “gives” and many church folk find it impossible to swim against the tide of anti-Israel rhetoric.

The week this chapter was first prepared (mid-May 2021) Israel was again in the media spotlight as a fresh mini ‘intifada’ was underway. Anti-Semitic sentiment throughout Europe (and indeed under a seemingly pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel President Biden in the USA) was at a post-World War Two all-time high. Biblically astute Christians assess all this anti-Israel hatred in the light of what the Bible reveals of an impending false peace and a false peacemaker associated with Israel’s future. Of course some commentators argue that prophecy concerning Israel has all been fulfilled in the past and therefore has no modern relevance. That a Liberal Christian might argue this case is unsurprising, since they do not hold a high view of Scripture and do not base their worldview upon Scripture. When those Christians that are generally biblically astute, Bible-believing and hold a high view of Scripture, argue much the same (‘it’s all in the past’), we should be rather more surprised. Why? Because many key prophecies concerning Israel have never been fulfilled, as this table reminds us:

GOD’S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL / THE HEBREW PEOPLE	BIBLE	SUMMARY COMMENTS AND KEY QUESTIONS
God’s promise of an heir to Abram is immediately followed by the promise of land. This is God’s covenant with Abram.	Gen 15: 7 & 18	Here God promises to Abram’s descendants a specific land – bounded by the river of Egypt to the Euphrates; the existing 10 small tribes in possession are named. Sweep of land from Iraq to Egypt (?).

⁹ We should add that there is widespread lack of understanding amongst church-attending Christians about the nature of the interrelationship of what some call “the old covenant” versus what is generally thought of as “the new covenant”.

Abram becomes Abraham – the father of many nations	Gen 17:4	God promises to be the father of Abraham’s descendants – for males the sign of circumcision is required. For the Church, circumcision no longer required – see Galatians 5: 2.
Through Abraham’s offspring all nations will be blessed	Gen 22: 18	Generally understood to be via Jesus the Messiah and through His true Church – the body of Christ
The Edomites were cursed because they rejoiced at the desolation of the ‘inheritance’ of Israel	Ezek 35: 15	Plainly the inheritance of Israel that was ‘desolate’ was the lands of Israel. Those who rejoice in Israel’s woes seem to be paid back in kind. Is this still true today?
Prophecies against Israel’s neighbours	Ezek chapters 25 thru 30	Israel has always been under attack (why?). Is there a read-across to the woes of the modern enemies (neighbours) of Israel?
Exile followed by home-coming	Ezek 36:8 & 37:14	Prophecies often have a near term and a long term outworking. (Two audiences – the one for whom the prophecy was originally written, and for us – succeeding generations). There were 2 major exiles in OT times – to Assyria and to Babylonia. After a period of punishment the Israelites were allowed by God to return home.
Israel’s geography	Ezek 47: 15 thru 23	This is a more granular description of Israel’s inheritance.
The Psalmist remembers God’s gift of the Holy Lands to Israel	Ps 78: 54	God brought the Israelites to their lands as an inheritance. He drove other tribes out before them. Did God have a “right” to do this?
God revealed His laws to Israel	Ps 147: 19	He has done so for no other nation – they do not know His laws.
I will put Israel in her own land, never more to be uprooted	Amos 9: 15	When was this prophecy fulfilled? If it hasn’t been fulfilled, when will it be? See also Jeremiah 16: 14-15.
Moses is Israel’s accuser – says Jesus	John 5 : 45	God continued to work out His purposes in the Lord Jesus’ time. The Lord Jesus recognized this.
The terms on which Israel may live there	Jer 7: 5	If you change your ways, deal justly, protect aliens, then I will let you live there forever and ever. What does forever and ever mean? Why the emphasis? Is this the same ‘forever and ever’ as in Galatians 1:5?
Loss of lands because of sin	Dan 9: 4 ff	As throughout the OT, Israel’s punishment is directly associated with her sin (e.g. verse 11). This is a consistent message throughout the OT.
Israel is the apple of God’s eye	Zech2: 8	What happens to those who still attack the apple of God’s eye – is this true today?

Can a Nation be born in a day?	Isa 66: 8	Some see this as a prophetic insight into 14 May 1948. Are they wrong to do so?
Jerusalem will be “an immovable rock for all Nations”	Zech 12: 3	When in the past did this happen? What is the meaning of this prophecy if it yet lies in the future? Are we beginning to see this becoming true in our own day?
All nations will rise up against Israel	Zech 14: 2	Has this prophecy been fulfilled (especially verse 4)? If not when will it be?
God’s help to Israel – Israel survives! God remembers His covenant – and will establish an everlasting covenant	Ps 124 Ezek 16: 60	But surely this is still true? But surely this is still true?
God’s promise of peace to Israel	2 Sam 7: 10 Heb 3: 18 – 4: 1	No longer disturbed has this yet been fulfilled? The Jews were unable to ‘enter’ because of their unbelief – but will there come a time when they do believe and may therefore ‘enter their rest’?
God’s plans remain forever	Ps 33: 10 - 11	The Lord thwarts the plans of men (and nations) but His plans stand forever. Can we apply this to the Jews and to Israel?
Deliverance promised	Micah 2: 12 - 13	Is there a near term as well as far term outworking of this?
God promises to bring Israel back	Lev 26: 42 - 45	Is there a near term as well as far term outworking of this? In the light of other evidence, this underlines the all-time aspect of Israel’s connection with the lands.
New covenant foretold	Jer 31: 31 - 34	When will this happen, if it has not <i>already</i> happened?! Note with which Nation this new covenant is “cut”.
God will bear his holy arm before all nations	Isaiah 52: 10	This cannot refer to Cyrus because Israel was redeemed from just one nation – not all nations. So when will this happen? Where does 1948 fit into this?
Future unprecedented peace for Israel?	Isaiah 63: 7	Jer 31:28, 31: 36, 32: 42, 32: 37 – 41, 33: 6 – 8. When did this happen if not in future? Also, Isaiah 19: 23-25.

Notes:

A recurrent theme through the OT is God’s husband-like love for His people Israel, and their continual rebellion against Him. The promise of a *new covenant* is explicit, but this does not negate the older covenant(s). Rather, it enlarges the older covenants. If God’s covenant (contract) with Israel is said to be inherited by others (i.e. the Church) because of its repudiation by Israel, then surely God would have said this explicitly in the NT. If any modern contract was to be assigned from one party to another, a lawyer would express this explicitly – is God less diligent than a modern lawyer?!

The Bible verses tabled above, although random and arguably not set clearly in any context, nevertheless appear to support the view that God’s promises are made and kept for all time. The very fact of Israel’s survival (or rather, the Jewish people’s survival) through 4 millennia of attack suggests that God is indeed true to His promise, *unless you take the view that some other spiritual power has been protecting Israel.*

Why should we believe that Rome's enforced exile of the Israelites (actually the Second-Century Judeans and Galileans) would have an outcome different from that already experienced by Israel after the Assyrian and the Babylonian experiences of exile? The Roman exile was longer and infinitely more painful, because the sin was the greatest of all (rejection of the Messiah). But in the same way we expect the return of the Messiah at the final crisis in world history, should we not also expect a return of the Hebrew people to their inheritance? And should we not expect that those who oppose this claiming of inheritance (i.e. actively oppose modern Israel's right to exist) to be themselves opposed by God, and to suffer the same sort of consequences suffered by Israel's ancient enemies?

God's unhesitating love for Israel is expressed beautifully in Jeremiah chapter 31 and leads straight into the prophecy of a new covenant (Jer 31: 31) understood to be a covenant through the Lord Jesus and with all people – the old Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are enlarged by the new.

If God's "forever" promises to the Jews can be broken by God, then can we have confidence in His NT "forever" promises?

The Jews have certain obligations to 'aliens' in their midst, but by implication those aliens also have obligations to their hosts [e.g. Romans 13:1 and Jeremiah 29:7]. This may go some way to explain the present intractable issues between Israel and the 'Palestinians.' In this regard it should be noted that the use of the name 'Palaestina' (or in full *Syria Palaestina*) by the Romans at the close of the Bar Kokhba revolt (ended AD 136) was part of Roman policy of extinguishing the memory of Jews from their lands (what today we would call ethnic cleansing). 'Palaestina' was derived from ancient *Philistia* – the most intractable of Israel's ancient enemies – the Philistines. Classical scholars have used the name 'Palestine' ever since to describe the biblical lands, but note that 'Palestine' was not a political reality until 1919 when the British used it as a title for the lands ceded to British control by the League of Nations. It is an interesting fact that the name chosen, although scholarly, has certain theological - even spiritual - overtones.

If the OT promises and NT confirmations are taken at face value, then the widespread attempts to undermine modern Israel may also have theological and spiritual overtones.

Covenant theology: the promises of the covenant undergo expansion (via the Church) but they never suffer abrogation. The NT does not *emphasise* a literal restoration of Israel. Why? Partly because the final out-workings of the Jewish War ending in AD70 and the Bar Kochba revolt of AD 132-136 had not yet happened at the time the New Testament was written. So the question had not arisen (?). In any case, the Gentile church began to see itself as being the future of 'Israel'. But an argument from silence – i.e. the NT does emphasize the literal restoration – cannot be conclusive, especially when set against the other clear pointers that the Bible gives us, starting with the old Moses covenant. * see David Pawson "*Israel in the New Testament*". Whilst the NT does not emphasize the literal restoration, it certainly alludes to it in many places, and David Pawson's book is an excellent resource to pursue an in-depth exploration of God's purposes in this regard.

Being honest

In reviewing the above Table and associated Notes, readers are encouraged to ask themselves – and indeed, *to try to answer for themselves* – the general questions that it raises. The prophecies are sufficiently direct and unequivocal for us to 'pose' the questions in the way we have, above. God has given us clarity in His intentions, so we are entitled to ask in each specific prophetic revelation, * has this happened (and if so when)? * if this has not happened are we right to assume that its fulfillment lies in the future (and if not, why not?). And finally, * how does this foretelling speak to us today? These are of

course vitally important questions. It is ultimately dishonest to try to ‘dodge’ or ignore them, as these questions will simply not go away.

As we draw this chapter towards its conclusion, let us summarise. So many excellent Christian writers have explored this subject over so many years, both before - and especially since - the recreation of the State of Israel in 1948, that we can be sure that the broad outline and much of the detail of God’s ongoing purposes is well enough understood today – at least by those prepared to engage spiritually and biblically with God’s revealed purposes. The Bible is clear! If we are unclear it may just be that we do not want to engage honestly with the Bible!

The reason why so much of ‘the church’ is all at ‘sixes and sevens’ about this matter is because ‘the church’ is uncomfortable with the implications and conclusions that must be drawn. Much of the institutional church remains in denial about Israel, and too many church folk are, in any case, woefully disconnected from Scripture. That Israel will be a huge stumbling block to the institutional churches in the closing stages of this age, and by the same token to many individual Christians, is something that your author explored in the book “Rebel Church”. It is hugely ironic that much of the institutional church seems readier to speak and engage with Rabbinic Judaism¹⁰, in various interfaith forums, than with Messianic Judaism – that is with those Jewish people who do follow Yeshua ha Massiasch – Jesus the Messiah. It is almost as though Messianic Jews constitute, for the institutional churches, an embarrassing and inconvenient *elephant in the room*, and to engage with our *professing* and *declared* Jewish brothers and sisters raises too many uncomfortable questions.

Overjoyed

Not so, however, for many individual Christians who do search the Scriptures, in true Berean style. Many, many individual Christians are indeed excited and overjoyed at what God continues to do amongst His chosen peoples, and at the very evident outworking of His prophetically declared purposes.

¹⁰ which remains ill disposed towards the reality of Yeshua

We will conclude with one obvious and (we would argue) undeniable truth. In the book of Zechariah, written during the Babylonian captivity and anticipating a future return to Israel, God gives to His prophet a vision of the future which, in all likelihood, Zechariah himself did not fully understand. Chapters 12 to 14 of Zechariah look far into the future, beyond Israel's contemporary problems in exile, to a certain "day". In these chapters the phrase "on that day" is used some fifteen times, and points towards a future marked by the security of God's People, as a People finally and definitively cleansed by the Lord. Whilst some people of the Replacement/Fulfillment hermeneutic may consider that this is all somehow fulfilled in and through "the church", this is a view that is hard to sustain when confronted with the specific terms of the prophecy itself.

As we have already asked in our Table above, in Zechariah chapter 12 verse 2 God declares "**Look! I will make Jerusalem a cup that causes staggering for the peoples who surround the city**". Today we might ask, precisely who surrounds Jerusalem? Is it "just" the Jordanians, Syrians and Egyptians? Or is it the entire World that surrounds Jerusalem, figuratively in the shape of its United Nations Organisation? The World has decided that Jerusalem as a city must be divided, with half "allowed" to Israel and half given to "the Palestinians". Whether this will happen in practice remains to be seen, but to divide this city is very much the World's agenda. No alternative possibility is today entertained – in particular that Eretz Israel should have the ancient city as its recognized capital.

In Zechariah 13 verse 3 God declares that *on that day* He will "**make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who try to lift it will injure themselves severely when the nations of the world gather against her**". The dividing of Jerusalem may have been allowed by God during Israel's near 1900 year exile from her lands, but it seems that God has decreed that Jerusalem must be reserved for his Chosen People when they return.

And therein lies the rub! They *have* returned, and the time of the Gentiles has run its course (as Jesus said it would¹¹ – see Luke 21:24

¹¹ In Luke 21:24, Jesus speaks of future events including the destruction of Jerusalem and His return. He says that "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (ESV). A similar phrase is found in Romans 11:25, where the Apostle Paul says, "A partial hardening has

(also Romans 11:25)). Yet the World has declared its opposition to Eretz Israel – directly – and therefore to God’s purposes for Jerusalem. We must come back to that term “the World” as we defined it above – all that mass of Mankind ill-disposed to its Creator God and living in opposition to His purposes. It is not only the political machinery of the World that opposes Israel, it is also popularly that mass of Mankind. Every attempt to impose a ‘peace’ upon Israel has foundered, and those politicians and pundits who seek to impose such a ‘peace’ seem to be unseated relatively quickly. Elsewhere God has declared **“those who bless you I will bless; those who curse you I will curse”** (Genesis 12:3). In this God was speaking directly to Abraham, but God’s promise has long been understood to reflect His eternal purposes for Israel. Can today’s multiple and multiplying global woes and uncertainties be explained, at least in part, by the World’s attempt to curse Israel?

Zechariah chapter 14 tells us that the world will rise up against Jerusalem. Whilst some Bible commentators tell us that the fulfillment of this prophecy lies in the past, there are two powerful objections to this idea: (1) when read in the context of the entire prophecy across chapters 12 to 14, it is clear this lies yet in the future as part of the End time scenario. And (2) the world collectively has never in history *combined* to ‘rise up’ against Jerusalem. Taken literally then, this must lie still in the future. Today we can indeed see a time on our political horizons when, through the institution that Men call their “United Nations”, the World will indeed ‘rise up’ in the way prophesied by Zechariah, whether politically, militarily, or both.

Finally we turn to the prophet Joel, who also prophesied in the context of the Babylonian captivity of Israel. Whilst his message is directly to the people in exile, indirectly it is for us, as again we must comment that it has not yet been fulfilled in its entirety: **“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the**

come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (ESV). See David Pawson, “Israel in the New Testament” for a full exploration of this subject.

nations and have divided up my land” (Joel 3:1-2). Many Christians understand this as also referencing a restored Israel that will be opposed by “all the nations”. God will ultimately bring these opposing nations to judgment.

Israel will have a central role in *the end time*. Arguably, Israel has held a central role in *The Last Days* as well, as we have previously defined that term. During ‘the church era’, the institutional churches have themselves never been far removed from outright persecution of Jews¹². And whilst Israel rejects her Messiah, so in consequence the world at large has its time of blessing in being able to receive Israel’s Messiah whilst God’s Covenant is enlarged to encompass all Mankind (see Romans 11; 13, 15, 25(b), and 31). Gentiles are able to respond to God’s call only because Israel has rejected her Messiah. But this window of opportunity for Gentiles must eventually close, as Israel shall be again – finally and collectively – brought into the blessings of the New Covenant era.

Praise God indeed! In the words of the apostle Paul as he contemplated these profound mysteries, **“Oh, the depths of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!”** (Romans 11: 33).

¹² See “Father Forgive Us – A Christian Response to the Church’s Heritage of Jewish Persecution” by Fred Wright 2002, Monarch Press