

Israel in the Tribulation

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The article says the world is coming to an end. That is a valid assumption. Everything does some time. Nothing lasts forever. How soon the end? In this it says, "Probably in about five billion years." That is the assumption of "the end of the world which is a show that has opened under the great dome of the Hayden Planetarium in New York."

This was put together by a man named Mark Shartran who is the Planetarium astronomer. He says "The most probable estimate is that in five billion years the sun will poop out from old age, expand into a giant star, and engulf Mercury and Venus and send out enough heat to melt lead on earth, which also would melt the spirit of man, cockroach and germ."

Then he says, "There is another alternative to the end of the world. The moon will fall. Don't know this notion. The moon right now is getting farther away." But he says, "For reasons known only to God, Isaac Newton and Orson Wells," that's pretty funny really, "in about 200 billion years the moon will have reached as far as it can go and it will start back very fast. Then watch out." So either the world is going to exist until five billion years when the sun poops out or 200 billion when the rubber band holding the moon reaches its...reaches its limit and it springs back and collides with the earth.

I'll tell you something friends, the Bible has something to say that makes those kind of comments idiocy. The world is not going to come to an end five billion years from now because the sun gets old or 200 billion years from now because the moon comes back and collides. The world is going to come to an end because Jesus Christ is going to return, literally. We believe that. And we've been studying that in our series on prophecy.

This tonight will be really what is the tenth message in our prophetic series. And the title of it is Israel in the tribulation. Now we began our study with a message on why Jesus must return. And we presented evidence for the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth, the same Christ that was here on earth some 1,900 plus years ago.

That message was followed by a discussion of the catching away of the church. And we discussed the fact that when Jesus does come, the first thing he's going to do is take out the church. And then we discussed for at least three different weeks, will the church go through the tribulation. For immediately following the catching away of the church is a period known as the tribulation. And we determined that church goes first and then the tribulation.

And when the church leaves, we discussed what happens. We discussed the rewards of the church or the rewards of believers. Then next, we move back to earth and with the church removed we began to discuss what was going to happen in the tribulation under the subject of terrors of the tribulation. And we saw that Christ is coming to remove the church and reward the church and the judge the world in a time called the tribulation.

Now our progress has led us to discuss the subject of the tribulation and so tonight we're going to looking at one feature of the tribulation. And in weeks to come, we'll look at other features, but the thing we want to concentrate on tonight is the place of Israel in the seven year tribulation.

Scripture is very explicit on the fact that the seven year tribulation will really center around the nation and the people of Israel. This fearful seven year period, when God is going to judge and when Christ is going to take back the earth, is most significantly Israel's time. In fact, it is so called in Jeremiah 30, verse 7 the time of Jacob's trouble.

And we remember that in Deuteronomy Chapter 4, and I'm going to suggest a couple of Scriptures to you so that the review will set your mind in the right frame. Deuteronomy 4:29, "But if from there thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him. If thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God and shalt be obedient unto His voice."

Now here God promises to Israel that God will hear their cry, if in the time of tribulation they turn to Him. This indicates that there will be a future time of tribulation. It says in the latter days for Israel. In Daniel Chapter 9, verse 27 there is a description of the covenant that Israel makes during the time of tribulation called the 70th week and we'll talk about that in a few moments.

In Matthew 24, you have a description of Israel's place in the land during the tribulation. And the promise of Jesus to those disciples listening on Olivet when He spoke what is recorded in Matthew 24 was the fact that Israel would be in the tribulation and they would see the worst of it.

And so the Bible has pointed out very clearly that there is coming a great time of severe judgment and Israel is going to be involved in it. And as we look at the book of Revelation and we'd like you to turn to it for just a moment to the 7th Chapter, but as we look at the book of Revelation, we find that as we study the tribulation features outlined in the book of Revelation, they repeatedly involve Israel.

For example, in Chapter 7, in verse 4, we are introduced to a group of individuals in the tribulation. And it says that there were 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Revelation 7, verse 4. And it goes on to name the tribes. So Israel is seen in the tribulation in Chapter 7. Then if you will, Chapter 11, verse 8. Here again, we find the indication that the headquarters of the whole world

system and the tribulation, the whole false antichrist system is in Jerusalem, verse 8.

And you remember they kill the two witnesses. The world kills these two preachers and they lie in the street, "their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city spiritual Sodom where our Lord was crucified." What city is that? Jerusalem. So Jerusalem then is pinpointed in the tribulation. Then if you go over, interesting, to verse 13. "The same hour was a great earthquake, a tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men," and the word for men means famous men, men of renown, "seven thousand." When Jerusalem gets hit, world leaders get killed, which means that the whole system is going to set up in Jerusalem.

And if you go to Chapter 12, in verse 13 you find again the mention of Israel. Israel is seen under the figure of woman. The woman in Chapter 12 is Israel who gave birth to the child who is Christ, the dragon obviously is Satan. But verse 14 says...well, verse 13 that Satan is going to persecute the woman Israel. And verse 14 "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, she might fly into the wilderness into her place," and so forth.

And so Satan is going to persecute Israel. So Israel appears very, very significantly in various features of the tribulation and those are just some suggestions not exhaustively presented at all. But it's interesting to note this and I only say this by way of a footnote that the vast majority of Christianity, the vast majority of theology has accepted the fact that God is through with Israel. Now if you're going to accept the fact that God is through with Israel, you have two alternatives. One...well you have maybe three.

One, you just plain deny the inspiration of Scripture and say well when the Bible said something was going to happen to Israel, they made a mistake. So that the Bible is wrong if it says Israel's going to be around in the tribulation. They just...that's just an unfortunate mistake. And then you're tampering with inspiration.

The second alternative you have is to spiritualize it all the way. To say that the 144,000 doesn't really mean Jews. It means the best of the Jehovah's witnesses. Or it means the best of whatever happens to be your cult or it means maybe the best of Christians, which some have even said. Or you have a third alternative. You can just that whatever Israel has used after the cross it always means the church.

So you either destroy inspiration or you destroy interpretation and you just spiritualize everything away. Those are people who would spiritualize it all would be the same people who would say that the thousand year kingdom doesn't mean a thousand years and the seven year period doesn't mean seven years and nothing means nothing.

I had a professor like that in college. He went through the book of Revelation and when he got done, nothing meant anything. And he was well versed in the book and along with his view of it knew nothing. The other alternative is that you make the church Israel. And when you do that, you destroy the character of God because you make a liar out of God, who made promises that He did not keep.

Now we do not believe that you need to replace Israel. We believe that God is still dealing with Israel. You say oh but the Bible says that we are the seed of Abraham by faith. But we are in a sense spiritual Israel, of course. Of course we can be spiritual children of Abraham, but that doesn't mean that all other promises to Abraham are void. Do you know there's only one thing that makes you a spiritual seed of Abraham? Do you know what it is? The fact that you came to Jesus Christ.

And when God looks at you He sees you in Christ, right? Now if He sees you in Christ, Christ is of the seed of Abraham, therefore, by virtue of union with Christ you are a spiritual child of Abraham. You are not a physical child of Abraham. And just to assume that because I am spiritually a child of Abraham, that means that all the promises to the national Israel, to the physical seed, are negated is not really a fair approach.

We are only added in a sense to the blessing by faith. And we are by faith the children of Abraham, not by birth. We are in the eyes of God spiritual Israel only in the sense that He sees us in Christ and since Christ is of the seed of Abraham, He sees us in Christ as Abraham's spiritual seed.

But keep in mind that does not invalidate God's promises to the nation Israel. Now we've covered this in detail and we'll cover it even in greater detail because I think when we finish these series, we're going to study the book of Galatians.

Now, we then believe that Israel, when it's talking about Israel in the tribulation, it means Israel. That is it means the Jewish people. It's not talking about the church, although there are some in the church who are Jews and it...and of course, they can't...they won't be in the tribulation anyway, right? Because the rapture's going to take all of them out. And when it talks about Israel in the tribulation, it means Israel.

When it talks about Jerusalem, it means Jerusalem. When it talks about 12,000 from every tribe, it means 12,000 from every tribe. God has a marvelous ability to say what He wants. He's a lot less confused than some people. Now then, assuming that Israel is in the tribulation what and where and how do they fit into it? And I want to just share with you six or however many we can cover areas that indicate Israel's place in the tribulation.

Now remember the church has been taken out and God's going to go back to dealing with Israel. When we finish this study, we'll study the Gentiles in the tribulation and see what's going on with the nations. But for this study, what's happening to the nation Israel? Remember that God had

prophesied for Israel's history, 70 weeks of years, 69 of them have passed. God has one week to go of Israel' history. What is involved in it? First of all, we're going to look at the covenants with Israel. The covenants with Israel, then the collecting of Israel, the chastisement of Israel, the comfort of Israel, the conversion of Israel, and the commission of Israel.

All right, first of all, the covenants with Israel. And this is a most important subject. Now let me say there are two very definite covenants, now when I say covenant, I simply mean pledges from God promises. There are two very definite covenants that demonstrate Israel's place in the tribulation. Number one is the divine covenant. And for that, you must turn to Genesis Chapter 12.

Now if we're going to talk about Israel and the tribulation, we're going to go clear back to the 12th Chapter of Genesis. Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram," before his name was elongated. "The Lord had said to Abram, get thee out of thy country," remember he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans a pagan place, "from thy kindred, from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, I will bless thee, make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee. And in these shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Now here we have what is known as the Abrahamic covenant. God made a promise to Abraham. It was a multiple promise. One, it was personal. Notice the personal nature. Verse 2, "I will make of thee a great nation. I will bless thee. I will make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing." Very personal. A great nation, he would be blessed, his name made great. In fact, it says in verse 3, "that everybody who blessed him would be blessed and everyone who cursed him would be cursed."

And then He went on to say did God that the extension of this would be to all the families of the earth. Secondly, the promise was not only personal, but it was to a nation. There would come from the loins of Abraham a nation. And the same promise would be good for them.

Verse 7 of the same chapter. "And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, unto thy seed will I give this land." So here God extends what was very personal in verse 2 and 3 to something national to the nation that comes out of thy loins. And He says, "I'll give this land." Now what land? Look at verse 14 of Chapter 13.

Over to Chapter 13, verse 14. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after Lot was separated from him," now God's talking to him, "lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward and southward and eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever." For how long? Forever. "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it for I will give it unto thee."

Now here you see is the promise of God to give the land and it was a forever promise. Now go over to Chapter 15 and here's a description of the dimensions of the land. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying unto thy seed have I given this land. From the river of Egypt, the Nile, "to the great river, the river Euphrates." Way over in the fertile crescent to the east. The Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, Rephaims, the Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites." That's the peoples involved in all this land.

Now notice verse 1 of Chapter 17. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine," 99, "the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him I am the Almighty God. Walk before me be thou perfect. I will make my covenant between me and thee and multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face and God talked with him saying as for me behold my covenant is with thee and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful. I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee." Now, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant. To be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land where thou art a sojourner. All the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession."

Now let me pull it all together. God promised then an everlasting possession to Israel. That they would be in the land possessing the land for as long as it existed in the mind of God for eternity. Therefore, I believe this covenant binds God to fulfillment and I believe He must give the land to Israel. Now beloved, they don't have that land. Do they have the land from the Nile to the Euphrates? Of course not.

They will have it, but the Bible also says they will have it in the kingdom. Now the kingdom follows the tribulation. If they're going to be around to get the land and the kingdom, they've got to be around the tribulation. Do you see? So the very first covenant, the Abrahamic covenant indicates that Israel must be in the tribulation.

In fact, that's the time when our Lord recovers the land and gives it to them isn't? That's the time when our Lord takes the title deed to the earth, takes back the earth from the usurper Satan and then gives to Israel the land that promised...was promised to them way back here.

Now you could list all the features of the Abrahamic covenant. I mean it was a fantastic series of promises. God said Abraham's name would be great. He would have great blessing. Whoever blessed him would be blessed. Whoever cursed him would be cursed. Abraham would become a great nation. Abraham would be the father of many nations. Kings would come from his loins. His seed would inherit the land from the Nile to the Euphrates everlastingly. God would be his God forever. God would not forsake Israel. Abraham's seed would conquer their enemies. In his seed all

the families of the earth would be blessed. The covenant was an everlasting covenant, etc., etc., etc.

You say John, why are you saying all this? Because I want you to understand that God is not finished with Israel. He has some everlasting, binding contracts. And all of it is unconditional. Genesis 22, while we're in Genesis, God's not really in the business of making deals with people. Sometimes there are exceptions apparently to that. But for the most part God swears by Himself. And God binds Himself by Himself. God makes covenants with Himself.

Notice verse 16, here's God talking. Genesis 22:16, "And God said, by myself have I sworn, said the Lord. For because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee and multiply, I will multiply thee thy seed as the stars of the heaven, the sand which is on the seashore, thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast obeyed my voice."

Now here you have the promise of God that I have made a bargain with myself. God swore with Himself. Therefore nothing to violate it. Nothing that could be done down the line. Why? Abraham's obedience had sealed the unconditional character of the covenant for all time and cannot be violated. So Scripture tells us that God has a future for Israel. The nation of Israel.

And the reason I stress this, I had the occasion on my vacation to visit another church and just to listen. And a young man was preaching and he was preaching on, I think, Matthew 24. The reason I can't remember is because he didn't really say much about the Chapter, but he made the admission, and we chatted a little bit afterwards, that he really didn't understand the significance of Israel.

And I said well perhaps that explains the difficulty in interpreting Matthew 24. Beloved. If you don't understand God's promises to Israel, one you don't understand how to interpret the Bible. Two, you won't understand God. And that's why I stress this. Can God break a promise? No. God who cannot, what, lie. God cannot change His word. Read Romans 3:4. It's right there. Don't read it now, read it some time.

James 1, what does James say, "In whom is no variableness." A shadow of turning. Well, Jeremiah 31 and verse 31, "Behold the day has come saith the Lord, I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Which covenant they broke. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days said the Lord, I'll put my law in their inward parts, write it in their hearts, be their God and shall be my people."

And he goes into verse 34 and says that, "They shall no more teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest saith the Lord. I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sin no more." And here God

promises to the nation Israel a full forgiveness and a...really the promise is for the salvation that comes in the kingdom.

Over in...well, there's several other verses, but verse 28, "And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down and throw down and destroy and afflict. So will I watch over them to build and plant." You say well, Israel's been going through so much affliction. Israel's been going through so much getting thrown around. But just as surely as God has allowed that, so will He rebuild Israel.

So will He plant again Israel. So will He in the language of Romans 11 graft back in the natural branches to the stock of blessing. Don't you ever think for a minute that God is through in dealing with Israel. He is not through. The Psalmist in Psalm 89, verse 34, "My covenant," listen to this one. "My covenant will I not break. Nor will I alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. Once have sworn by my holiness. I will not lie unto David."

The principle is clear, God when He makes a promise keeps it. He doesn't lie. Now beloved we can't then take all of the references to future glory for Israel and apply them to the church. We can't do that. Israel is to receive its kingdom. Israel is to receive its blessing. And if Israel is going to receive the blessing of the kingdom, Israel's going to have to go through what? The tribulation to get there.

Let me give you another verse. This is an interesting point, Matthew 24. Now this verse is possibly interpreted many ways, but here's one to think about. I'm not dogmatic on this verse interpretation wise, but this is perhaps, at least a viable option. In Matthew 24 is a long and very detailed description of the tribulation.

Verse 34 is a very significant statement in view of that. Listen to what it says. "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." You say well, God may change His mind. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but," what, "my word will never pass away." God is not going to change His mind.

"This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Now if we take this generation, genia, which means race or nation to mean Israel. Then it means that Israel will not pass away until they go through the tribulation. So if that is the interpretation you want to take that proves the point right there. And it's a very possible and very likely interpretation that Israel will not pass away till all the tribulation takes place.

And, in fact, if you go back and look what's going on in the tribulation it's got to be Israel. Why in verse 15, it's describing the abomination of desolation. What's that? The desecration of the temple in Israel. It would mean nothing if Israel wasn't there. Would have no sense at all.

So it seems as though Israel is in view from the place and the importance of the temple itself. And there are other indications along the same lines, but believe me it is convincing enough in Scripture that God is not through with Israel. That He has much yet to do. And that Israel will be again in its land, already they're being led back. Look at verse 16 of Matthew 24. "Then let them who are in Judaea flee to the mountain." And here again is an indication that during the tribulation the children of Israel are going to be dealt with in the land.

Well, God is preserving Israel for the tribulation. Isn't it amazing how he's kept them around? They tell us now that Israel is growing, not just the land, but Jews are multiplying. God is preserving Israel. You know, they're like Jonah. They get swallowed, but never digested. They keep coming up again. They defy all the laws of ethnology. Nations can only tolerate him so long because of their identity and their uniqueness and the fact that God has specially His hand upon them.

Significant verse of Scripture, Numbers 23:9 says this, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Did you hear that? "The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations." God is going to keep Israel separated. In Luke 1:31, this is good. "And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a Son and His name shall be called Jesus. He shall be great. Shall be called the Son the Highest, the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever."

Do you realize that if there's no house of Jacob, that's a ridiculous statement? God is not through with Israel. Don't tell me we're the house of the Jacob. "And of His kingdom there shall be no end." You say, yeah, but what...look what they did at the cross. Yeah, but look what Jesus said on the cross. "Father," what, "forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." And in Acts Chapter 3, Peter turns right around after indicting them and says "And you're the children of the covenant."

That never changed. So the Bible in talking about the divine covenant gives Israel a place in the tribulation. But let me talk about a second covenant. There already has been a divine covenant, but there's going to be a satanic covenant that necessitates Israel's being in the tribulation. Go do Daniel Chapter 9 for just a moment. In Daniel 9:27 we read this. And here is the introduction of the satanic covenant. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." The he here is the prince that shall come. And the one in view here is the one that we commonly think of as the antichrist, the political beast, the false world ruler of the end times. The religious beast is normally seen as the false prophet.

But we see here that there's going to be a covenant with a political leader and this is the one that is commonly called antichrist. And Israel will confirm the covenant for one week. Now here is a satanic covenant. Now if Israel's going to make a covenant during the seven years, they've got to be in the seven years. That's obvious. How some people would ever look at the tribulation without seeing the

nation of Israel is absolutely beyond me. They have to be there.

The exact nature of this covenant between antichrist and Israel demands that they be there. Now we don't know any detail about it. You say well, what brings about the treaty? I don't have any idea. The Bible doesn't say. The Bible doesn't give us a lot of detail about it, but I do know this, that the Jews today are really in their hearts and minds and outwardly struggling over the temple ground aren't they?

There's a real struggle over the ground now occupied by the mosque of Omar. And somehow this world leader is going to grant to Israel the right to carry on their own sacrifices and their own worship right on the temple ground. Now you say well what is his purpose? Well, I don't know, because the Bible doesn't say, but I have a good idea. He is political and he does what is expedient. And the Bible says he honors only the god of forces. So whatever it is he's only in it for what he can get. Believe me a hater of God and a hater of Christ is no lover of Israel.

The antichrist will be anti-Semitic like nobody who ever lived. And just because he makes a covenant with Israel for a week has nothing to do with whether he likes Israel. He hates Israel. He hates Christ. He hates God. But I believe that he does what Israel wants for the sake of expediency. You say what do you mean? I mean that Israel is wealthy. And believe me friends they're getting wealthier every year.

The resources, the key to the Middle East, you know how hot Israel is as a commodity. The oil, the Dead Sea, everything they have to offer. And I believe this political ruler, coming from the west sees expediency in working out a situation with Israel. Now after three and a half years, he has gained sufficient power so that he just takes over.

Look at verse 27. "In the midst of the week," in the midst of the seven years, "he causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, he brings their worship to a grinding halt and for the overspreading of abominations he makes it desolate even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Now perhaps he sees the fact that he's got Israel in his grip. They bought his bill. They were suckered in to making a treaty. And they thought it was expedient. He protects them. He lets them carry on their worship. He maybe delivers over to them the temple ground. And then in the middle of the week, he moves in, he realizes he's gotten his power, he's ready to take the place over. And he just cleans out the worship. And, in fact, he sets himself up to be worshiped.

He says that's all for your worship. Everyone in the world from here on out worships me. You say how do you know he's going to do that? The Bible tells us. 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, in verse 4, he's called the man of sin here and the son of perdition. "He opposes and exalts himself above all

that is called God or that is worshiped so that he as God sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God."

This guy just takes over and says from now on you will worship me, I'm God. And since he's also in control of all the people in white coats, nobody hauls him away. He's the world ruler. He sets himself up as God. And he demands that everybody in the world worship him. Look at Revelation 13, verse 8. It says in Revelation 13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him."

Verse 12, the second beast comes along and causes the earth and them that dwell in it to worship the first beast. And so he takes over the rule of the world. Now the abomination is just this, he comes into the temple and throws out the Jewish sacrifices and the Jewish worship and sets himself up as God. And you notice that I read you from Daniel 9:27 that this goes on until the consummation, until the full end.

In other words, for the last three and a half years he stays there showing everybody that he's God. Now that is what is called the abomination of desolation and that's what Jesus meant when He said to the disciples in Matthew 24, when you see that, do what? Take off. Run. Then the persecution of Israel begins. And do you remember what Daniel 7:25 said? "That for that last three and a half years while he's sitting in the temple, declaring himself God, he will wear out the saints of the most high." Then is the horrible, terrifying persecution of Israel.

That is the time of Jacob's trouble. Now beloved don't you see not only the covenant with Abraham, the divine covenant necessitates Israel being in the land, but the satanic covenant. It's all involved with them. And so we see Israel in the tribulation by way of two covenants. And so we see the covenants with Israel.

The second thing in the tribulation is the collecting of Israel. And I want to share this with you, I'm really excited about just sharing this particular point because I think it's very instructive. The collecting of Israel. You know, we're all excited today as Christians who are pre-millennial and who will see these things in the sense of the Scripture I think clearly. Because we get the feeling that Jesus is coming because of the regathering of Israel, don't we?

We read about the Jews going back and it's exciting. And it's really a miracle. But the government of Israel, did you know, has a special cabinet member? And this special cabinet member is in charge of collecting the Jews from around the world. He is called the minister of absorption. That's right. His name Shim Peres, P-e-r-e-s. That's his name. He is the minister of absorption. He...his job is to determine how to absorb all these migrating Jews coming to the land.

According to Peres, there are 14 million Jews in the world. Israel has gathered more than two million of them. 6.5 million are in the United States and 3.5 million are in Russia. Marcus Childs says "The

bold planning of the minister of absorption Peres envisions a population for Israel of 10 million." That's their projected plan. And their projection is to double in the next ten years. And then again in the next ten years. So they really got a 20 year program to populate 10 million.

Incidentally, every family that comes into Israel cost the government \$34,000.00 just to migrate and settle. And so they're going to be increasingly wealthy. And believe me folks they're coming back. I mentioned to you when I came back from Israel, it looks like one great big giant construction zone. It's unbelievable. And great high-rise apartments to give housing to all these people.

In Jeremiah 31, verse 8, just a couple of verses, don't look it up, jot it down. Jeremiah 31:8, "Behold," God says, "I'll bring them from the north country." He's going to get them back. Watch, "I'll gather them from the farthest parts of the earth and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who travails with child together, a great company shall return," I love this next word, "thither in the land. They shall come with weeping, praying, I'll cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way in which they shall not stumble." I love verse 10, listen. "Hear the word of the Lord O you nations." Listen to this Russia, United States. "Declare it in the coast of far off he who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock."

Do you think God meant what He said? Now you look at Israel today and you see this regathering going on. I get excited. That's Bible coming true. But let me say this, beloved what we're seeing is not the final gathering. It's only the preliminary. This is only the very preliminary. We're just scratching the surface.

Ezekiel 37 gives us further insight and let me take a minute to show you what we need to recognize. Ezekiel sees a valley full of bones and notice that there are very many of them and they are very dry, which means there's a lot of these Jews to be regathered and they've been scattered along time. And verse 4 through 13 describes that they're gathered.

Now notice verse 13, he says, "You'll know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves Oh my people and brought you out of your graves." You say what is that? The graves are the nations. United States, USSR, whatever other nations they may be in. Then when they get back, they're going to be regenerated. Verse 14, "And then I'll put my Spirit in you."

There first will be a physical regathering, then a spiritual regeneration. He changes the symbolism in verse 15 and he says, "Take one stick and write on it for Judah and the children of Israel his companions, take another stick and write on it for Joseph the stick of Ephraim for all the house of Israel and his companions and join them one to another into one stick."

You say what's that? That's the rejoining of the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom into one. God's going to do that in the kingdom. And so there's going to be regathering of Israel. The prophets

have repeatedly indicated this. Verse 19, "Doth saith the Lord God, I'll take the stick of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his fellows and put them with him even with the stick of Judah, make them one stick and they shall be one in my hand."

Verse 22, "I'll make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king to them all and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Now there's the promise of God that there's going to be a joining of those into one nation. Beloved, we haven't even begun to see all of this take place. There is no spiritual regeneration. There is no great sweeping move toward God. There is no planning of the Holy Spirit. And then the prophets, the physical gathering and the spiritual gathering were always connected very closely.

What you're really seeing today is just the preliminary, just the preliminary. Moishe Diane, following Israel's occupation of all Jerusalem following the six day war made a public announcement. His announcement was this, "Jerusalem is ours," watch, "and we will never leave again." You know something he was flat wrong. You say, you don't mean they're going to have to leave again.

You say I thought this was it. Nope, sorry to tell you that. You say well, where do you get that idea? Revelation 12. And I've got another place too. You say, but I thought this was it. Oh you're not seeing it. You're seeing the preliminary to it. You say, you mean, they're going to have to flee again? Revelation 12:13, "The dragon persecutes the woman," that's Israel, "and to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into," what, "the wilderness."

People they're going to have to leave again. "They're going to fly into wilderness into her place and they're going to stay there for a time, times and half a time." What's that? A time would be one, times would be two, and half a time, half, that's three and a half. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. The earth helped the woman. The earth opened her mouth, swallowed up the flood and the dragon was angry and went to make war with the remnant of her seed."

Listen, Israel's going to have to run again. Why? Because the beast is going to come after them. Satan himself is going to move after them. And my friend if that isn't convincing enough, did you forget Matthew 24? "In the midst of the tribulation," watch, "when you see the abomination of desolations take place, when the beast sets his own...sets up himself to be worshiped, immediately," what does He tell them to do, one word, "flee."

Moishe Diane bless his heart is wrong. They're not there to stay. I want you to look at Matthew 24 with me, because I want to show you something really exciting. Now don't go around quoting and saying John MacArthur doesn't think the return is significant. Oh is it significant. They've got to be back here once more so they can leave for a little while. Didn't think about that.

But they're going to leave and they're going to run and they're going to die. Two-thirds of them are going to be killed. Some of them are going getting out, but they're going to have to get out of their land. Let me show you a fantastic thing. Look at verse 31. Well, let's look at verse 30. Well, let's look at verse 29. Might as well get the whole shot right?

"Immediately after the tribulation," when was that again? "After the tribulation, shall the sun be dark and the moon shall not give its light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Now watch friends, "And he shall send His angels with that great sound of the trumpet and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other."

Do you want to know the real regathering the prophets spoke about? That's it. It's the regathering for the kingdom. What we're seeing today is only the preliminary. But when Christ returns and sends His angels, He gathers Israel and brings them in and then they enter into the kingdom. Now, I do believe that many Jews will be saved during the tribulation, but I also believe there's going to be a great sweeping conversion at this time, because it says they in Zechariah, "shall look on him," what, "whom they have pierced."

And I believe there will be Jews being saved during the tribulation. Of course, where else would you get the 144,000 evangelists, 12,000 from every tribe? But I think God's going to do some regathering right at the moment of the kingdom. There are many passages that would lend themselves to support that particular view and let me suggest a couple of them.

Isaiah 43, "Fear not for I am with thee," verse 5, "I will bring thy seed from the east, gather thee from the west. I will say to the north give up and to the south keep not back, bring my sons from far and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Even everyone who is called by my name for I've created him for my glory. I formed him, yea I've made him."

And here's the same indication that parallels the four corners of the earth gathering by the angels. The prophet Jeremiah had something to say about this. Jeremiah Chapter 32, verse 37, "Behold I'll gather them out of all countries to which I've driven them in mine anger and my fury and my wrath. I'll bring them again into this place, cause them to dwell safely."

Now notice beloved, when they're being gathered back to the land now, are they dwelling safely? No, no, but at the gathering that the prophets were talking about, they're coming back for the kingdom. Will there be safety in the kingdom? You better believe it. "And they shall be my people and I will be their God and I'll give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for the good of them and of their children after them. I'll make an everlasting covenant with them."

I really believe that what we're seeing now is just the preliminary. But we're seeing just a little preview, the feature doesn't start until Jesus comes. But let me tell you something they're coming back, not in the sense of that final gathering for the redemption and the kingdom, but they're coming back now for the tribulation. You got it? They're coming back to die. They're coming back to be punished. They're coming back to be chastised.

And that leads us to the third point, the chastisement of Israel. The tribulation is the time of Israel's chastisement. They're being regathered for two reasons. The second reason is the salvation that I mentioned. The first reason is the chastisement.

You know, they've been warned a long time about punishment. I read you Deuteronomy 4:29 and 30 that God warned them clear back there. He warned them in Deuteronomy 28, verses 62-67. He warned them in Jeremiah Chapter 30 verses 5-7 and He warned them in Daniel Chapter 7, verse 1. He's warned them a long time.

He told them in Daniel 7 that there would be such a time that the saints of the Most High would be absolutely worn out by the adversary. In Revelation Chapter 6, the Bible describes them as martyrs of the tribulation under the altar crying that God would avenge their death.

Revelation 12, they're persecuted. Revelation 13, they're persecuted. There's coming chastisement on the whole nation of Israel. God's bringing them back. You see friends, sin has to be dealt with prior to salvation. And the chastisement of the Lord is going to be instrumental in the salvation of Israel. And so the time of the tribulation will be a time of purging. But you know something, even when all of Israel is saved, according to Romans 11, "so all of Israel shall be saved," even among that all there are going to be some rebels that aren't going to be saved.

The all means the nation in general. There'll be a few exceptions. And God is going to judge the severely according to Ezekiel Chapter 20. God's judgment is severe against the rebels. These are fearful words. Listen to them. "As I live saith the Lord," verse 33 of Ezekiel 20, "surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with fury poured out will I rule over you. And I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with fury poured out. I'll bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face." Verse 37, "I'll cause you to pass unto the rod and I'll bring into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me." Pretty clear statement.

God says in the regathering of Israel, there's going to be some purging too. And so there's a sense of double chastisement on Israel. There is the chastisement of the whole nation as they suffer during the tribulation for the centuries of rejection of their Messiah. And then there is the specific and eternal

judgment against the rebels that takes place.

I think our Lord Jesus illustrated this as graphically as ever, ever could be illustrated. In Matthew 25 in the parable of the virgins, "The kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom." These gals are supposed to brighten up the wedding. "Five of them are wise and five are foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them. The wise took oil and the vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried they slumbered and slept. At midnight there was a cry. Behold the bridegroom comes, go and meet him. And the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, fixed them all up and the foolish said to the wise, give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out. And the wise answered saying not so lest there be not enough for us and you, but go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves and while they went to buy the bridegroom came and they were ready...and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins saying Lord, Lord open to us and He answered and said verily I say unto you I don't know you. Watch therefore for you know not, you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh."

Beloved that wasn't spoken to the church. That was spoken to Israel. That was a warning that in Israel at the second coming of the Messiah there would be some believing and some unbelieving. And when Jesus came back He would judge the nation face to face as Ezekiel said and purge out the rebels. "I never knew you." I don't know you.

So Israel's to be chastened. The nation is, as a whole, during just the suffering they'll undergo in the tribulation, even the believing ones. And then specifically the rebels to be chastised. But I hasten to add this, Israel is not only involved in chastening and being collected and covenants, but fourthly, there is in the tribulation what the Bible calls the comfort of Israel.

And I'm just going to read you two verses, because it's a brief point. A comfort of Israel is Isaiah 40, verse 1 and 2. During the tribulation there is going to be terrible, terrible judgment, terrible chastisement.

But following the chastisement comes the comfort of Israel. Isaiah 40, listen to these lovely words. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God. Speak ye tenderly to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin." Why double? "To whom much is given," what, "much is required."

But you see when they have received all of that, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak tenderly to Jerusalem." Following the chastisement of Israel comes the comfort of Israel. Beloved you and I

know something else that's going to be wonderful and that's the conversion of Israel.

Israel's going to be saved in that day. Oh yes, there will be some rebels. There will be some whose lamps are not ready. Messiah will come, they will be judged. But Israel as a nation is going to be saved. Zechariah 12:10, listen, "And I'll pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication and they shall look on me whom they have pierced and mourned for Him as one mourneth for his only son and shall in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first born. In that day, there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem."

And then look at 13:1. "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." What fountain is it? The hymn writer said, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn," where, "from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood, loose all their guilty stains." Yes, there's going to be chastisement for Israel, but there's going to be salvation, conversion. In that day a fountain open to the house of David for sin and for cleansing.

Romans 11, verses 23-29 describes the salvation of Israel. And so I believe that during the tribulation Jews will be saved, but then at the end when Christ comes the whole nation apart from the rebels is going to turn to Him who is their Messiah.

Lastly, and I close with this, the commission of Israel. You say, well, you know, John the Jews that are going to get saved during that tribulation what are they going to be doing? Well, they're going to have a lot to do, believe me. Let me show you the commission of Israel in the tribulation. Revelation 7:3, here's the 144,000. Now what are they going to do? Well, verse 3, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

You say what are they going to do John? They're going to serve the Lord. They're going to serve Him during the tribulation. In what way? I believe in evangelism. I believe they're going to be commissioned to reach the world with the gospel of the kingdom. You say why? Well, just after he lists all of them in verse 8, look at the results in verse 9. "After this I beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues stood before the throne and before the lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands and cried to the loud voice saying salvation to our God sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb."

You say who is that group? That's all of the Gentiles that came to Christ in response to the ministry of those Jews. I believe God's going to set loose 144,000 evangelists. I dare say beloved if we had 144,000 spirit filled evangelists in our world today, we'd turn the place inside out easily in three and a half years.

God's going to mark them out, seal them, protection. That means protection. So they can't be harmed by the system. So they can't be killed. The cream of the crop. I know that the Seventh Day Adventists say the 144,000 pertains to their fellowship and I know that the Jehovah Witnesses say the same thing and I know the strange esoteric cult called the Flying Roll, whatever that is, says it's them, it's 144,000 rolls, flying rolls. Some people say it's the church. It can't be church, we're already in heaven. It's the Jews.

Beloved all this and a lot to say that the tribulation is the time for Israel. The tribulation spotlights Israel, covenants they're collecting, their chastisement, their comfort, those other features that we mentioned. And you know something, you say well, John, what we're seeing today then isn't the final regathering. No, but I'll say something, beloved, it sure is the preliminary to the final.

God's plan is unfolding. Believe me, it's not going to be any five billion years until the sun poops out and explodes. It's not going to be any 200 billion years when we collide with the moon. I don't know when Jesus is coming, but I don't believe it'll be very long. Let's pray.

Father, in thinking about that we would be concerned in our own hearts that we be ready for such a time. We know that the promise of Christ was "behold I come quickly." And the response of John was even so, "Come Lord Jesus," and he could say that because he was ready.

We know you're going to come for your church and then there's going to be the terrible time of tribulation. Father, we know the nation Israel is going to go through that tribulation and though it shall be terrible chastisement, it shall be followed by the great comfort of Israel, their conversion and the glorious kingdom to follow.

Father, we would pray that we would be ready for when Christ comes. And Lord God, we would also ask that you would give us a fresh kind of zeal for Israel. Lord, there may be some of Israel who do not need to go through that tribulation, who could be brought to Jesus Christ were we available and faithful to communicate to them. Give us a heart for Israel, to bring them to their Messiah that they may be a part of His blessed church and not endure the pain of the tribulation. And worse, to die without Him before the tribulation even comes.

Father, thank you for the instruction of the word of God for its motivation, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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