

BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

THE JEWS—GOD'S WITNESSES

*"Therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God" (Isa. 43:12).
"Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I
not make a full end of thee" (Jer. 30:11).*

The Jews, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, have a special place in the purpose of God with mankind. They were recipients of, and custodians of, God's written revelation. Through them God raised up His Son, their Messiah. In their deliverance from Egypt and their subsequent history they have become witnesses to the truth of God's promises to them, and thus witnesses to His existence.

Their role has not ceased with the first coming of Jesus, for their regathering in the twentieth century, in fulfilment of Bible prophecy, is a witness to the nearness of Jesus's second coming, and the focus for the revelation of Divine power to save them from international aggression. This will cause God's Name to be known among all nations, and will establish Jerusalem as the centre of the Kingdom of God.

Gentile believers are given title to the promises made to the fathers of Israel through belief of the gospel (also described as the Hope of Israel) and baptism into Jesus Christ. If faithful they will be part of the "all Israel [that] shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26) when Jesus comes.

- **Beloved for the fathers' sakes**

The children of Israel were selected as the channel of Divine revelation because they were the descendants of the faithful fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not for their moral excellence. They were expected to show a similar faith by believing and obeying God's Law. In this way they would become an example to the surrounding nations, and fulfil their calling as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

(Gen. 12:2; 13:15,16; 22:16-18; Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 7:6-11; Jno. 8:39)

- **A covenant people**

The descendants of Jacob were forged into a distinct nation in Egypt. Their deliverance was a signal act which showed God as a God of judgement, power and graciousness. This event is commemorated annually when Jews keep the Passover to celebrate their redemption from Egypt. At Sinai their calling was confirmed when they agreed to be obedient to God's law. This covenant was renewed with the

generation that actually entered the Land of Promise, Canaan, and is the basis of God's treatment of them, as witnessed by their history: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities".

(Amos 3:2; Gen. 15:13,14; Ex. 1:7; 9:13-16; 12:15,17; 24:7; Deut. 4:23,24; Josh. 24:21-25; Rom. 3:1,2)

- **Scattering and regathering**

Israel were offered prosperity and blessing in return for obedience, but deprivation and cursing if disobedient. Continued disobedience would result in removal from the land and scattering among the nations, where they would be oppressed and become a proverb. Both outcomes have been experienced by the nation. Blessings were abundant in the reigns of David and Solomon and other faithful kings; trouble and captivity came following continued disobedience, culminating in the deportation of the ten tribes to Assyria and the two tribes to Babylon.

Following the national rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, the nation was scattered throughout the world for nearly two millennia, and Jerusalem became subject to Gentile control. Yet their national identity has been preserved, a witness that God keeps His word.

God's promises also allowed for their return and re-establishment as a nation in the Land of Promise. This became a reality in 1948, and the whole of Jerusalem came under Jewish control in 1967. However, the prophets tell us that this situation will be opposed by other nations, resulting in an international attack that will require the nation to be saved by Divine intervention on Jesus's return.

(Deut. 28; Lev. 26; Joel 3:1,2,9-17,20,21; Zech. 14; Lk. 21:20-27)

- **Not cast off**

Some contend that Israel's persistent disobedience, culminating in the murder of their Messiah, means that the nation has been cast off and its place taken by believers in Jesus Christ. Paul specifically refutes this idea. The Jews are still the basis of God's work of salvation, but Gentiles can, by faith, share the promises, which will be fulfilled at the return of Jesus when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26).

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