

ISRAEL AND THE END TIMES

1. Introduction

- a. Israel is clear testimony of God's sovereign hand at work in the world. The survival of the Jewish people as a nation in their own right is almost defied by every turn of history. Antisemitism, in one form or another has been a constant theme throughout history ever since God chose Abraham and conferred his covenantal blessings upon him.
 - i In 722BC Israel was conquered by Sennacherib and the people taken into captivity in Assyria, never to return to their land again.
 - ii In 586BC Judah was captured by Nebuchadnezzar and taken into exile in Babylon, and only a small remnant returned to the land to rebuild the nation after 70 years in Babylon.
 - iii The nation survived a plot at the hands of Haman in 475BC through the faith and bravery of Esther.
 - iv In 70AD they were brutally massacred and expelled from their homeland by the Romans, being dispersed among many nations of the world.
 - v Through the centuries of the Diaspora they faced expulsions, pogroms, ghettos, inquisitions, and attempts at genocidal extermination culminating the Holocaust of WW2.
 - vi Even today in their own land of Israel they are under constant threat from nations and political alliances, such as Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah, whose primary goal is to wipe Israel off the map.
- b. See the Wikipedia "Timeline of Antisemitism" – all the major anti-Semitic events worldwide from the 6th century BC down to the present day.
 - i Note the increase in the frequency of these events. 8 in the 1st century AD; 40 in the 12th century; 202 in the 20th century; and in the last couple of years there have been over 50 recorded events.
- c. The survival of the Jewish people is a miracle of God. The return of the Jewish people to dwell in the promised land is a miracle of God. The victories of Jewish armies against overwhelming odds in successive battles in 1948, and 1967, and 1973 are miracles of God.
 - i Success in Israeli industry (esp. medicine, technology), the strength of the IDF, agricultural abundance, are testimony to God's watchful care.
- d. Why is there so much hatred for this nation, so much contention over this tiny land in the Middle East? For centuries it lay desolate and neglected, no-one really cared about it. Why so much controversy over Jerusalem? Why is this nation so close to God's heart? How are we to understand Israel's role in God's purposes in the end times?
 - i Before we see the part Israel plays in the end times we need to look at a bit of background first, because it sets the stage for the events of the end times.

2. The Choosing of Israel

Genesis 3:14-15 *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

- a. God's plan for the restoration of all of creation and the salvation for mankind involves bringing forth an offspring – the second Adam – that would undo the works of the serpent, the Devil. All of history prior

- to the incarnation of Jesus is ultimately about God bringing His promised seed into the world to set things right.
- b. Verse 15 is the context for the conflict between God’s plan and Satan’s delusion that he can overcome what God has decreed. Satan’s strategy was to confuse, disrupt, distract, and ultimately destroy the seed-bearing line.
 - i Everything in our bible is predicated upon verse 15. The outworking of that enmity is the subject of the biblical narrative. Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar, the father of lies. Lies, half-truths and deception are his most-often used tools of trade, and he can be very persuasive.
 - ii He is a murderer, not just in his own ability to kill, he is also able to sow seeds of murder in the hearts and minds of those who will listen to his lies. His hatred of God is his motivation for the destruction of all that God has created and has purposed to bless.
 - iii Satan’s strategy is always reactive in response to what he sees God doing. In the Old Testament his strategy was focused on preventing the promised seed from being born. In the New he changes his tactics to do all he can to prevent Jesus from coming back to carry out the sentence passed on him at the cross.
 - iv The people who have been chosen to be the carriers of the promised seed have been hated, despised, rejected and persecuted – it’s because there is an adversary, who is doing everything within his power to escape the declared judgment of God.
 - c. There are three attributes of God that will help us to see why Israel is such an important subject, and why Israel is so important to him.
 - d. Firstly, **God is a personal being who relates**. Genesis 1:1 tells us that God is relational. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” – the word for God – Elohim – is a plural word. There is more than one person in the divine courts of heaven.
 - i There is relationship within the very nature of God. In one sense he is his own community.
 - ii Community relationship is at the heart of who God is, not just among the persons of the Godhead but extending to all that he has created in his image. Relationship with the image-bearers is central to who God is and everything he does.
 - iii God says to Israel “You are my special treasure” (Exodus 19:5), he is expressing his relational heart, his desire for intimate relationship with his children.
 - e. Then secondly, **God is an emotional being who feels**. This came across clearly in the last session looking at the Bridal relationship, and how God betrothed himself to Israel.
 - i God woos his people and dotes on them like a lover doting on his beloved. When they ignore him, or chase after other lovers, he feels spurned like a jilted lover.
 - ii In his book “The Pleasures of God”, John Piper says: *“Who can comprehend that God continually burns with hot anger at the rebellion of the wicked, and grieves over the unholy speech of his people, yet takes pleasure in them daily and ceaselessly makes merry over the penitent prodigals who come home?”*
 - f. Thirdly, **God is a volitional being who chooses**. God pursues his purposes through clear choices. God’s choices are an expression of his will. God’s will is both made known and carried out through the choices that he makes.

- i We see many of God’s choices in scripture. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:27 where Paul says *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”*
- ii The choices that God makes are always free, sovereign and immutable. Free – he is not under the influence of anyone or anything outside of himself. Sovereign – he has the power and ability to carry out his purposes. Immutable – there can be no change in his mind, change would indicate lack of wisdom in planning or lack of power in executing his will.
- g. When God chooses Israel he does so on the basis of his sovereign will, a choice that will best carry forward his purposes in the redemptive plan for mankind.
- h. Why did God choose Israel in the first place? Isaiah shows us that choosing of Israel in its context:

Isaiah 41:8-10 *But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; ¹⁰fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

- i. God chose Israel because he first chose a man – Abram. He chose Abraham because Abraham believed God. God rewarded Abram for his faith. God was looking for a man that he could trust who would initiate his plan that would reach far into the future.
- j. God’s choosing passed from a man, to a family, to a nation. On the way, God made more choices: he chose Isaac over Ishmael.
 - i It was a choosing for a redemptive purpose. Ishmael was still part of the family and still had a promise; he just did not have Isaac’s promise.
 - ii In the next generation God chose Jacob over Esau. It was a sovereign choice – in fact God had determined this even before the twins were born. God chooses the man who has to be supernaturally brought into the promise, rather than the child who possesses natural strength.
- k. God chose Israel, not because Israel was the greatest of peoples, but because they were, in fact, the least:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 *For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

- l. God’s choosing of Israel was a direct consequence of the covenant that he had made with Israel’s forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It had nothing to do with their size or greatness, or anything that distinguished them from any other nation, it was all based on the promises he had made to the man he called his friend, Abraham.

Deuteronomy 9:6 *Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people...*

- i God chose Israel and called them to be priests to the nations (Exodus 19:5,6), but they were not the most spiritual of peoples. God calls them a “stiff-necked” people.
- m. Why did God choose one man, one family, one nation? It goes back to what I said earlier about God being relational.

- i Instead of dealing with each nation separately, God chose to reveal himself specifically to one nation, the Jews, with the intention that all nations might know his blessing through them. God's purpose in choosing Israel was for them to be a model nation to other nations so that through them "all the families of the earth" would be blessed (Genesis 12:3).
 - ii Other nations would see that when the Israelites obeyed God they were blessed, and when they disobeyed God they would be punished (Deuteronomy 28).
- n. Israel's calling to be chief among the nations was so that she could serve the nations by sharing the knowledge of God, through whom the gentile nations would come into the knowledge of the true God.
- o. What is Israel's position in the plans and purposes of God today? In Romans 9-11 makes it clear that her election, or choosing, remains. Even when Israel falls into sin God remains committed to her, he is committed by covenantal promise. God does not break covenant; therefore, Israel has not been cut off or replaced.
- i However, Israel as a nation is no longer serving the purpose of modelling relationship with God to the other nations, and has not done so for the last 2,000 years.
 - ii Paul explains the redemptive side of Israel's crisis. Israel's rejection of Jesus has resulted in the proclamation of Jesus throughout the nations of the Earth. Israel's fall resulted in the proclamation of the gospel among the gentiles.
 - iii The very thing Israel was called to is happening because of her, even though she is in disobedience. God is so committed to Israel's election that Israel serves His purpose whether she is in disobedience or obedience.
 - iv God chose from the beginning to declare the knowledge of himself to the nations through Israel; most of us would assume that would happen through a righteous, obedient Israel. Paul tells us that Israel serves her redemption function even in disobedience because God remains committed to his plan of election
- p. This generation must understand Israel's choosing is permanent. The Earth is currently wrestling with this very question. The Bible tells us that this age will end with a contest over Israel's election by God.
- i If we do not recognise that Israel remains God's chosen people, even when rebellious and unsaved, we will not understand why the nations rage over her. It is ultimately a rage over her calling, her choosing. The rage over Israel's choosing is ultimately not a controversy over Israel as a nation, but a controversy over the God who chose her.
- q. What is going to happen to Israel during those transitional days of the end of the age? What will happen to Israel physically, and what will happen to Israel spiritually?

3. The Time of Jacob's Trouble

- a. The final years of natural history will revolve around the nation of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and the issue of the Jewish people. (Zechariah 1-6 and 12-14; Daniel 7-12; Joel 2-3; Jeremiah 30-31; Zephaniah 3; Amos 9; Revelation 11:1-2)
- i It will be a time of unequalled violence and tribulation: it will involve all nations; it will have its starting point in the land of Israel; it will not end apart from Jesus' bodily return and hostile intervention; it will culminate with the deliverance and salvation of the Jewish people and the resurrection of the righteous dead.

Zechariah 14:1-3 *Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.*

- ii When the prophet Jeremiah saw this tumultuous hour of Israel's suffering and affliction, he coined the phrase "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Jeremiah 30:4-7 *These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: ⁵ "Thus says the LORD: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. ⁶ Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labour? Why has every face turned pale? ⁷ Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.*

- iii Jesus referred to this in Matthew 24 when he described the time of great tribulation that will precede his return. "...there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the very beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short."
- b. The events outlined in Jeremiah and Daniel, together with Jesus' words in Matthew 24-25, cover three great themes that dominate the events of the end times:
 - i The time of unequalled trouble and tribulation for Jacob (Israel)
 - ii The subsequent deliverance and salvation of the Jewish people
 - iii The resurrection of the saints when Jesus returns
- c. The "Time of Jacob's Trouble" raises three pertinent questions:
 - i When will the "Time of Jacob's trouble" begin?
 - ii How will the "Time of Jacob's trouble" begin?
 - iii How long will the "Time of Jacob's trouble" last?

Daniel 12:1-3 *At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*

- d. Daniel uses the same kind of language as Jeremiah, Zechariah and Jesus in describing the intensity of Israel's conflict at the end of the age. This is the culmination of the message that the angel r theo Daniel which began in chapter 10, in which he outlines the disastrous history of Israel to come.
 - i It chronicles a series of oppressions to come upon Israel. She will be oppressed throughout all of her history until finally the Messiah returns.
 - ii God says "Because their chastening, purging, punishment and refining isn't over yet." It's going to go on until the coming of Messiah.
 - iii The heart of the message is in 11: 35. The purpose of this chastening period for Israel is to test them and to purge and to make them white. God never gives up on His people until finally they are purified.

Daniel 11:31-36 *Forces from him [Antichrist] shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. ³² He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. ³³ And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. ³⁴ When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, ³⁵ and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time. ³⁶ "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done... ⁴⁵ And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.*

- e. It's a bleak message and Daniel is in shock when he hears it. But God was not going to leave Daniel without hope. In the first three verses of chapter 12, we find that there is hope, there is good news for the future of Israel.
 - i. There is hope; it's going to be dark for thousands of years; the people of Israel will not respond to God; they will actually reject their own Messiah and in His place, accept Satan's counterfeit, the Antichrist, even so, in the end, there's hope.
 - ii. Michael, the archangel who has special responsibility for looking after Israel, he will arise; he will go to war on behalf of Israel.
 - iii. That's the message as chapter 12 opens. It is the time of the ascendancy of the Antichrist; when he establishes his power over the Earth; when he commits his abominable deed in the temple; when he establishes himself as the only God and consumes every other religion in the world; the last 3½ years of the great tribulation, the time of Armageddon and the battle for Jerusalem.

4. Israel's end-times role

- a. We have already established in previous sessions these events that the angel is referring to here concerning Israel during these last days.
 - i. The pre-requisite is that Israel must be occupying the land and in control of the city of Jerusalem.
 - i. A worldwide political/social/religious system that the bible calls the harlot Babylon will have emerged, with tolerance and a false justice as two of its major distinguishing characteristics.
 - ii. Political and social unrest will be globally widespread, manifesting itself in physical wars, trade wars and national alliances, resulting in famines and sickness.
 - iii. Natural disasters will increase as will unprecedented extreme weather patterns across the earth.
 - iv. In the church there will be a great falling away, but God will be strengthening and maturing his true Bride ready to face the difficult days ahead
 - v. Deception will become endemic, fear will increase, the rule of law will be marginalised, right will become wrong. There will be an intense rise in the persecution of Christians.
 - vi. Antisemitism will become widespread alongside a worldwide turning against Israel.
 - vii. All of this sets the scene for the arrival of the Antichrist as prophesied by Daniel, Jesus, Paul and John.
- b. The Antichrist, or the Beast, is a shrewd political character who establishes a peace deal that encompasses the Middle East, and Israel is one of the nations that is brought into this agreement.

- i One of the benefits of this agreement will be that Israel will build their third temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. The preparations for this have been in the making for years.
 - ii The ritual vessels, the altars, everything needed for the functioning of the temple are ready to be put in place. Priests are being trained ready for service.
 - iii Everything is in place for a very swift rebuilding of the temple, which will be one of the signs that God's countdown for the end of the age has begun.
 - iv Israel is convinced that somehow, if they can just build a new temple, then God will just show up like he did in the old days. We need to pray that their eyes are opened and that they find the presence of God in relationship with their Messiah.
- c. A second benefit of this agreement among the nations will be a heightened sense of peace and prosperity. In Israel, the peace, prosperity and the temple will be seen as signs of the coming of Messiah.
- i Thousands will follow him, and this deception will be difficult to disprove; popular opinion will give him even greater authority.
- d. To the secular Israelis, peace is their dream, no longer living in fear of rockets and bombs from their neighbouring nations. Rebuilding the temple is the dream of the religious Jews.
- e. We will see a trend towards greater globalisation. The ten-nation confederacy which will be led and eventually dominated by the Antichrist will be in the ascendancy.
- i Evangelical Christians around the world will be marked as fanatics and religious bigots, enemies of the spirit of international secular humanism. Persecution and martyrdom will increase globally.
 - ii International government will turn into global dictatorship headed up by the Antichrist. Economic conditions around the world will grow worse as currencies become worthless, fuelled by the oppression of the one-world government.
- f. The Antichrist steps in and takes full control over the Temple Mount. All the functioning of the Temple is brought to an abrupt end. The hitherto benign face of the Antichrist now becomes the "fierce" face of Daniel 8:

Daniel 8:23-25 *And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of fierce face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. ²⁴His power shall be great---but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. ²⁵By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken---but by no human hand.*

- i We see the real intent of the false messiah that has been concealed up to now. He has used his influence among the nations of the world to attain a place of invincibility on the world stage. Now we see the real power behind the Antichrist displayed for all the world to see.
 - ii We see the revelation of the one who has been working behind the scenes since Genesis 3 to obtain what the pride of his heart has always desired – the worship of man that should be God's. Satan now has complete control over the Antichrist, and causes him to set up the abomination of desolation in the temple – this talking image that demands to be worshiped as God.
- g. Satan's end-times plan has two elements. The first involves setting up his throne on earth. It will be his power base and seat of authority, and it is from here that he will direct his campaign to attempt to defeat the real messiah.

- i His second strategy is the full and total annihilation of the Jewish race. If he can succeed in these ambitions he will maintain control of planet earth forever.
- h. The stage is set for Daniel 12:1 – “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.” Daniel sums up the most intense period of suffering the world has ever known. It will be unimaginable. There will be slaughter, rape and torture. Many will be taken into prison camps where they will be treated inhumanely.
 - i Jesus said that if this time had not been cut short no-one would survive. Israel has experienced many terrible times during her long history, but the time just prior to Jesus’ return will be the worst. None of Israel’s past suffering will compare with what will take place then.
 - ii Zechariah tells us that two thirds of Israel will perish during the days of the Antichrist.

Zechariah 13:8-9 *In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹ And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"*

- i. Every time the prophets prophesy of death and destruction, there is always an element of redemption included in the prophecy. There is always hope. God has not lost control, he is orchestrating everything that happens.
- j. God is not only allowing these things to happen, he is shaping history to ensure that these things do happen. God is going to have his glory, but he is going to frame it in his terms. God is going to use Satan and his plans to bring about a purifying and refining of Israel so that they finally become who God had wanted them to be all along.
 - i God now begins to release his judgments upon the Antichrist and his system, to slow them down, to impede their campaign against Israel and the saints, and to give them opportunity to repent and turn to him.
- k. During this time God has his own strategy, two groups of people who bring encouragement and hope to the Jewish people.
 - i The two witnesses, centred on Jerusalem, who perform signs and wonders as a continuous reminder of God’s power and authority.
 - ii The 144,000 from all 12 tribes of Israel, sealed by God, are sent to preach the gospel to Israel and the nations. Their fruitfulness is recorded in Revelation 7.

5. The Liberation of Jerusalem and Armageddon Campaign

- a. The prophecies of the end times all point to the second coming of Jesus. His arrival on earth, together with all the saints and the armies of heaven will bring the whole of the Great Tribulation to its climax. Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem will precipitate the final stage of God’s plan to defeat the Antichrist.
- b. One final event brings to a conclusion the “Time of Jacob’s trouble.” As Jews and Christians around the world face the horrors of prison camps and other atrocities, Jews living in Israel will face another huge problem. The armies of the nations will conquer Israel and surround Jerusalem with the intention of destroying the city.
 - i During that final siege, Jerusalem will be “like a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples”. (Zechariah 12:2).

Joel 3:2-3 *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 nations and have divided up my land, ³ and have cast lots for my people...*

Joel 3:14 *Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision...*

Zechariah 12:3 *On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.*

Zechariah 14:2 *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

- c. God has indeed brought the nations against Jerusalem to do battle. He has brought the multitudes to the valley of decision.
- d. There will have been a great earthquake, hail, and the destruction of battle as the 7th bowl judgment is released. The forces of Antichrist will be closing in, looking to finish off those left in Jerusalem.
 - i They will be trapped in a city partially destroyed by the massive earthquake of the seventh bowl, up against the Mount of Olives, and desperate for their Deliverer to come. Suddenly, he will! The mountain behind them will part as Jesus sets foot on it.
 - ii As Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives, the ground will split in two from east to west, creating a valley through which those trapped in the city can escape.

Zechariah 14:4-5 *On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. ⁵ And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.*

- iii This will allow those who are trapped within the city to escape to the surrounding hills. Jesus will meet with them there in a while but before he does he has something more to do. He heads about 50 miles north of Jerusalem to a flat plain area at the foot of Mount Megido, the area known as Armageddon.
- e. This is the gathering place of all the armies of the nations that have come to do battle in Israel. They all think they have come here to defeat what they believe to be a false messiah.
 - i Many leaders who had previously stood against or resisted the Antichrist will change their minds. They will come with their armies to join in the battle against this false messiah.
- f. God has brought all these together in what he calls the valley of decision. Zechariah tells us that it is God who has gathered the nations against Israel.
 - i The prophets tell us that God will use the nations to purge and discipline and purify Israel. In his wisdom and counsel God has deemed it necessary to bring into play. God uses the most extreme measures one last time in order to bring Israel to such a place of desperation and brokenness that they will cry out to him to deliver them.
 - ii Israel will recognise their need of Messiah to come and save them. Their pride and stubborn-ness had to be broken so they were no longer the stiff-necked nation that God branded them back in Deuteronomy. God uses the same set of circumstances to mature and purify the church.

- g. Jesus and the armies of heaven and all the resurrected saints are now facing the armies gathered at Armageddon.

Zechariah 14:12 *And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.*

- h. As Jesus approaches the city a fire will go forth from him, similar to a nuclear power. The flesh of those who came to wage war against Jerusalem will dissolve, they will become instant skeletons. It will all be over in a very short space of time.
 - i. At the end of the battle the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be captured and cast alive into the lake of fire. Satan will be bound in chains by an angel and incarcerated in the bottomless pit for the next 1,000 years.
 - i. Jesus heads south again back to Jerusalem. He once again encounters the remnant of Israel who had fled the city earlier. Hosea describes this encounter, speaking of Jesus taking this precious remnant of Israel out into the hills and addressing them:

Hosea 2:14-20 *"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁶"And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' ¹⁷For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. ¹⁸And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.*

- j. Here we catch a glimpse of the incredible tenderness and affection that Jesus has for his chosen people. This is the fulfilment of what Paul describes in Romans 11:

Romans 11:26-27 *And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."*

- k. It's essential that our understanding of the "Time of Jacob's trouble" is rooted and grounded in this great hope of Israel's future salvation. It is a salvation and national resurrection that Paul, in Romans 11:15 says is like "life from the dead".

6. Israel's destiny – serving and training the nations

- a. Is Israel's salvation God's end-purpose for Israel, or is there more? God is clearly moving history towards his intended conclusion.
- b. As part of Paul's reasoning as to why God has not abandoned Israel in Romans 9-11, he says in 11:29 that the gifts and calling on Israel are irrevocable. What is the irrevocable calling on Israel as a nation?
 - i. Israel was originally called to be a nation in covenantal relationship with God that was to disciple the other nations so that they too could enter into the same kind of relationship with God.
 - ii. Israel's task was to establish their own nation as holy before the Lord, and live before the other nations in relationship with a heavenly king.

- iii Rebellion and unbelief caused them to fail to carry out the task that God gave them, and God has used their failure to bring the gentile nations into his kingdom. At the end of the age God will bring about a restoration of Israel, and bring them to a place where they can fulfil their destiny.

- c. In Isaiah 2 the prophet gives us an insight into Israel's destiny beyond this present age.

Isaiah 2:2-3 *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

- d. There is a future role for the nation of Israel, it will be a restoration of their original mandate to disciple the nations. Jerusalem will be the centre for God's word to go out across the whole world, and nations will come to Zion for instruction in the Lord's ways.

- i Israel's priestly ministry will be recognized and accepted around the world.

- e. Familiar passages of scripture will then take on a new meaning:

Isaiah 60:1-5 *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*

- i Israel will become the brightest light of all the nations, attracting their attention and causing them to come and see what has transformed them in such a miraculous way.

Isaiah 19:23-25 *In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.*

- ii we look at the situation in Syria, Egypt and Israel today, and the relationship between them, Isaiah 19 looks impossible – until we begin to look with the eyes of faith. God has promised that these three will be in a place of friendship, prosperity and blessing.