

The foundational reasons behind the conflict in the land of (Eretz) Israel.

By Kelvin Crombie

AN OLIVE PRESS
RESEARCH PAPER

No. 54



Welcome to the Olive Press Research Paper – an occasional paper featuring articles that cover a wide spectrum of issues which relate to the ministry of CMJ.

Articles are contributed by CMJ staff (past and present), also by Trustees, Representatives, CMJ Supporters or by interested parties.

Articles do not necessarily portray CMJ's standpoint on a particular issue but may be published on the premise that they allow a pertinent understanding to be added to any particular debate.



Telephone: 01623 883960

E-mail: office@cmj.org.uk

Eagle Lodge, Hexgreave Hall Business Park, Farnsfield, Notts
NG22 8LS

CMJ UK is a working title of The Vincent Society, a charitable incorporated organisation, England & Wales Registered Charity Number 1153457

The foundational reasons behind the conflict in the land of (Eretz) Israel

By Kevin Crombie

Introduction

The current crisis in the land of Israel affects us all in different ways. Most of us in the West are shocked and even traumatised by the evil and brutality that occurred on 7th October 2023, which can only be described as a demonically inspired massacre. Sadly, others have seized upon this act of pure brutality and made it a convenient platform on which to expound anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiment. As Israel endeavours to destroy the perpetrators of this heinous act of brutality and cowardice, such anti-Semitic and anti-Israel sentiment is bound to escalate.

I have personally witnessed, numerous times over the last forty-plus years, how quickly the world forgets atrocities against Israelis, including murder, which precipitates a response and then focuses solely upon Israel's response. This dynamic is even more significant when many ordinary people, in or out of the Church, seemingly pay little attention to terrible acts of violence throughout the Islamic and Arab-speaking world and get very agitated and opinionated when it comes to perceived and actual Israeli violence against the 'Palestinians'. This is not negating the fact that many innocent Arab-speaking people in Gaza, Judea and Samaria do suffer and are caught up in the conflict – but there is most definitely an imbalance in people's attitudes and responses, fed by the often-erroneous media reporting. Why is this so?

But, more importantly, why did this cowardly act of barbarism occur in the first place, and why has it so quickly escalated into an anti-Jewish and anti-Israel worldwide crusade? The main purpose of this paper is not to analyse the events of 7th October and the subsequent response of the Israeli government, as there are numerous other avenues covering these aspects, but to hopefully provide some broader background and context to the current crisis.

The Middle East situation is neither simple nor straightforward, especially to the western mindset. It is composed of many layers

and is therefore quite complex and complicated, and cannot be even remotely understood unless one looks at these different layers. Some of these layers stretch back for thousands of years, while some are more recent in time. But all of these layers are connected. The very foundational layer relates to the cosmic battle between Almighty God and the adversary, named Satan, Lucifer or the devil, between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. This brief analysis by no means covers all such layers, nor does it pretend to cover all aspects of those layers, although hopefully it might provide some comprehension to this dynamic, a dynamic that affects every person in the entire world.

Explanations of terminology

Several basic explanations for my terminology will be necessary at the start. I will invariably use the term the land of Israel, which is the translation for the biblical term Eretz Israel, the term used in the New Testament (see Matthew 2: 22-23). The land of Israel encompasses the regions of the present-day State of Israel, Gaza (under the control of Hamas) and Judea and Samaria (much of which is governed by the Palestinian Authority – PA). The term ‘West Bank’ is a relatively modern term for the region of biblical Judea and Samaria and is politically loaded. The term refers to the period when Jordan illegally annexed that region, and it originally referred to the west bank of the Jordan River, meaning the west side of the nation of Jordan.

Most Arabic-speaking people, and especially Christians within the land of Israel, most likely did not originate from Arabia when the Islamic armies from there invaded and illegally occupied the land from 638 AD. Strictly speaking, they are not Arabs, although they speak Arabic. In most instances local Arabic-speaking people only began seeing themselves as Palestinians after 1948, if not later. During the period of the British Mandate, it was mostly the Jewish people who called themselves Palestinian.

The Arabic-speaking peoples were mostly aligned to their family or clan (or Church) rather than to having a national identity.

Personal interest

My personal perspective is shaped by having lived in Israel altogether for some 25 years stretching between 1979-2009. While there I was introduced to Jesus, I met and married my wife there and my four children were all born there.

Although most of my/our interaction was with Israeli people, yet there was considerable interaction with Arabic-speaking people, both Christian and Muslim. For one year I worked with physically handicapped Arabic-speaking and Jewish young adults and did all that was required in such a capacity. For three years in the mid-1980s I/we lived in what was then a totally Muslim village, Silwan (the City of David), while many of my work colleagues and staff in several work situations were Arabic-speaking people. Just as in any part of the world, there are pleasant and unpleasant Israelis and there are pleasant and unpleasant Arabic-speaking peoples.

In the years before the first *Intifada* (an uprising of violence against Israel inspired by the Arab leadership), which began in late 1987, I visited Gaza on numerous occasions, and even spent time walking through the refugee camps. Back then they were overcrowded and not at all pleasant places to visit, let alone to live in.

Then from 1988 I began conducting *In the Steps of the Light Horse* tours from Jerusalem down to the area near Gaza and then onto Beersheba. The Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles were infantry on horseback, part of the Anzac Mounted Division, and they played an important role in the British-led campaign to liberate the land of Israel from Muslim-Turkish occupation between 1916-1918¹. The region near Gaza was particularly significant as this is where the Anzac Memorial is located

As a result of conducting dozens of such tours, I became quite familiar with much of the territory, which was to become well known on 7th October 2023.

The broader spiritual dynamics behind the conflict

As a born-again follower of Jesus (John 3: 1-17), I became somewhat aware of many of the spiritual dynamics associated with the Jewish people, Jerusalem, Islam and the land of Israel, and particularly of the principles of covenant.

What unfolded on Saturday 7th October can never be understood at the physical level as it is a spiritual conflict at the highest level. Unless there is some comprehension of these spiritual dynamics, then it is well-nigh impossible to comprehend the conflict on the ground. Paul, Moses and Jeremiah summarised the matters at hand:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6: 12)

Then the LORD God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6: 5)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17: 9)

There is a spiritual conflict of the highest order over the land of Israel. This battle is over the accomplishment of the purposes of Almighty God for worldwide redemption and the attempts by God's adversary to hinder and thwart the accomplishment of this grand plan. Central to this plan are the dual themes of covenant and the heart of humankind.

Why is man's heart prone to deceit and evil?

The foundation of the conflict in the land of Israel and of the very essence of evil as it affected humankind began in the Garden of Eden. There, Almighty God created Adam and then Hava (Eve) and enjoyed a personal relationship with them, and there was total peace and harmony. Such a relationship was based upon trust and obedience. Almighty God gave them just one commandment to obey, but also gave them the gift of free will, to choose for themselves how they were to live. Disobedience, however, would result in the breaking of that relationship of trust – and the penalty for this disobedience would be separation from Almighty God and death (Genesis 2: 17).

But there is an adversary, a fallen angel named Satan or Lucifer, often mentioned in the Scriptures as the devil, one who opposes God's plans and purposes for humankind. The characteristics of the adversary are perhaps best summarised by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 14: 12-13), who described Lucifer as a usurper, desiring to exalt himself and 'unseat' Almighty God. Jesus said that the devil was a 'murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him' (John 8: 44).

Although the text in Genesis does not specifically say so, Satan operated through the serpent, craftily and deceitfully enticing Hava (Eve) and then Adam into disobeying Almighty God. That close relationship was now broken, and the penalty of death was legally and rightfully invoked. This separation and penalty of death thereupon came upon all the descendants of Adam and Hava (Eve), all of humanity, as we are ALL 'in Adam' (Romans 5: 12-17)

Almighty God, however, greatly desires communion with humankind, so He set in motion a plan to restore this personal relationship. This plan of redemption revolved around a coming seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent –

that is Satan (Genesis 3: 15). From the very outset, Satan has endeavoured to thwart God's plan of redemption.

The fruits of Adam and Hava's act of disobedience to God's spoken word was that the spiritual nature of Satan took authority over them. The authority given to Adam (and Hava) to govern as God's regents was usurped and they were now subject to another kingdom – the kingdom of darkness. Peace and harmony were now lost. The nature of this new authority was evidenced when Cain, the son of Adam and Hava (Eve), murdered his brother Abel. Matters thereafter spiralled out of control, as Moses stated: 'Then the LORD God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Genesis 6:5).

The plan of redemption to be carried out through the institution of covenant

Almighty God's great plan of redemption would be worked out through the institution or avenue of covenant, which is a legal agreement between two parties, in this instance between God and representative men. There are some very important principles involved in the institution of covenant. One of these is that the destinies of the two parties entering into such an agreement are then united, they become as one. If one group or party is attacked or violated, then so too is the other group or party.

Additionally, they are committed to the welfare of each other (as in a marriage covenant). Invariably the stronger party or group has a responsibility of caring for the weaker party. The stronger party would also invariably give certain stipulations underlying the relationship. If these conditions were obeyed there would be peace and harmony, but if they were disobeyed there would be dire consequences – as was evident in the Garden.

Covenants were then formally instituted with the killing of an animal and shedding of its blood, whereupon representatives of the two parties would walk between the two halves of the animal, upon the spilled blood. By so doing they were making a pledge, swearing an oath, to uphold the conditions of the said agreement. This in the Bible is termed 'cutting of the covenant.'

Without a basic understanding of the principles of covenant, it is very difficult to understand God's plan of redemption, as it entails the ensuring history of Israel and an individual's status once they enter covenant union with Jesus².

God's covenants with Israel

Almighty God called Abram (Abraham) to be a representative man and gave him a number of promises, especially:

- A land, the land of Canaan, which became the land of Israel
- A people, the descendants of Abraham, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, the people of Israel, also known as the Jewish people
- That all people groups and nations would be blessed through Abraham, that is through the promised individual seed who would come from Abraham (Genesis 12: 1-3)
- That those who blessed (supported) Abraham (and his descendants who inherited the covenant promises) would be blessed; while those who cursed (opposed) Abraham and his descendants of promise would be cursed.

These promises were conditional upon Abraham obeying Almighty God and leaving his own land and going to the land of Canaan - which he did. Then, while in Canaan, he wanted confirmation from Almighty God that these promises would indeed be fulfilled. In Genesis 15 God says to him: 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you

this land to inherit it' (Genesis 15: 7). To this incredible promise and statement, Abraham retorted: 'LORD God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' (Genesis 15: 8). This is an amazing response – Abraham is questioning the integrity and word of Almighty God!

Yet God did not rebuke Abraham. Instead, He gave him the most tangible proof, known in the ancient world to reveal the integrity of His word – He cut a covenant. What is interesting to note here is that God in the form of a 'smoking oven and a burning torch' went between the pieces, while Abram did not. God was Himself swearing an oath to fulfil the conditions of this covenant! (see Genesis 15).

What is equally interesting is that God cut the covenant to confirm His promise concerning the land – although we know from the broader context of Scripture that all those other wonderful promises, including that the Gentiles would be blessed, were included in the cutting and sealing of this covenant with Abraham.

So, the land of Israel is important, not because it is holier than any other land, but because God's redemptive plans are to be instituted and fulfilled in this land of covenant promise. Is it any wonder then that there is a cosmic conflict over this land? Incidentally, no-one is to worship the land of Israel or be proud because the land is part of their inheritance. Such acts are a form of idolatry. God **covenanted** the land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob so that his redemptive plans for the entire world can be consummated. Conversely, no-one else is to **covet** possession and ownership of the land. (It should be noted that God has not covenanted any other portion of His world to any other people or group).

When God's redemptive plans are fully consummated, when God and humankind are again reconciled with each other, then Satan will be banished from interfering in the affairs of humankind.

Additionally, all those human emissaries who are empowered by Satan and who drive various ideologies and worldviews that are opposed to God's plan of redemption will be disempowered.

The covenant promises given to Abraham were transferred to Abraham's son of promise, Isaac, and not to his eldest son, Ishmael. They were then transferred to Isaac's son, Jacob, and not to Esau. These three patriarchs all lived in or near Beersheba and were all buried in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

But Jacob (also named Israel) and his entire family then moved to Egypt and the children of Israel lived there for 400 years, where they were mostly in bondage to the Pharaoh. In such a position, how was God's plan of redemption ever to be fulfilled? Yet at one point, the people cried out from under their bondage. Moses, who God raised up to be a representative Israelite, wrote: 'So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob' (Exodus 2: 24).

God redeemed or delivered the people of Israel from slavery, a deliverance known as the Exodus. Redemption from slavery was due to the obedience of the people to remain in their homes, kill a lamb and paint its blood on the doors and windows for protection. This national redemption is remembered each year at Passover. Through Moses a separate covenant was 'cut' and God's Kingdom Constitution (His law or *Torah*) was given to Israel, a time synonymous with the feast of *Shavuot* (Weeks). There would be blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience of the associated commandments, in what is often referred to as the Sinai-Mosaic Covenant. A relationship of sorts was now possible with Almighty God, through (1) a repentant heart, (2) the blood of an animal sacrifice and (3) the mediation of an officiating priest from the family of Levi. The purpose of Israel as a nation was that it would reveal the character and knowledge of Almighty God to the world and would be the conduit through

which the seed of the woman, the redeemer, the second Adam, would come.

The only way that there could be a complete restoration of the relationship between Almighty God and humankind, however, would be if the penalty of death imposed upon Adam and all those 'in Adam' was legally rescinded or overturned. This could only happen if a totally pure and unblemished human (not a lamb) would willingly take that penalty in place of us, as we are all 'in Adam.' As no human being can be pure and unblemished, then only God Himself can fulfil this legal requirement and become at the same time a representative human. Such an event would require a mighty miracle.

The forthcoming representative Israelite who would be the individual seed of Abraham would come through the family of David (from the tribe of Judah), with whom Almighty God also cut a covenant (1 Samuel 16; Psalm 89: 3-4). David became the arch-type of the coming redeemer, known in Jewish terms as Messiah, as a representative Israelite³. It was King David who made Jerusalem the national and spiritual capital of the nation of Israel. This city was dedicated to the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and was destined to be the physical location where the plan of redemption would be instituted – and consummated. The choice of Jerusalem was significant, being centrally located in the land of Israel⁴.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the future redeemer would indeed come from the family of King David (Isaiah 9: 6-7) and who would be as a pure and unblemished lamb (Isaiah 52: 1-13; 13-53). The prophet Micah foretold that this person would be born in Bethlehem and whose origins had been from everlasting (Micah 5: 2), while the prophet Jeremiah wrote that this coming redeemer, or Messiah, would be called by the people 'HASHEM is our righteousness' (Jeremiah 23: 5-6)⁵. HASHEM means 'The Name', referring to Almighty God.

Jeremiah also foretold that Almighty God would institute, literally cut, a new covenant with the people of Israel, which would not be like the covenant He cut with them when He took them out of Egypt. This new covenant would include a restored relationship, as indicated by the words 'they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.' The term 'know' in Hebraic thinking refers also to relationship. This restoration of relationship could happen as there would be forgiveness of sin (Jeremiah 31: 31-34). This new covenant, Jeremiah continued, would not invalidate God's ongoing covenant relationship with the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 31: 35-37). Such a new covenant would require:

- A representative Israelite
- A sacrifice in order to be instituted
- A sacrifice so that sins and iniquity can be forgiven.

The institution of these wonderful promises, however, was short-circuited when the nation of Israel went into exile – the northern kingdom to Assyria and the southern kingdom of Judah (which was basically collective Israel) to Babylon. This exile occurred because the nation was disobedient to God's Kingdom Constitution (*Torah*) as revealed in the Sinai-Mosaic Covenant.

But as Almighty God had to honour His word and covenant promises, a remnant of those in Babylonian captivity returned to the land of Israel. One person in particular, Daniel, interceded and reminded God of His covenant grace. (Daniel 9). This restoration occurred because Persia had conquered the Babylonian Empire and the new Persian king, Cyrus, permitted their return. This restoration from exile meant that in the fullness of time God could send forth His promised seed, the redeemer, to Israel and to institute the new covenant. But in their absence other peoples had settled in the land and usurped possession. There were

immense challenges for the people of Israel to resettle in the land of covenant promise.

This physical restoration occurred within a broader geo-political framework. The land of Israel and Jerusalem were strategically located in the centre of the earth (Ezekiel 5: 5). As such, they were sandwiched between the large empires of the north (namely the Hittites, Mittites, Assyrians and Babylonians) and the south (always Egypt). At that time it was Persia to the north and Egypt to the south. It suited the Persians to have a suitable ally in the strategic land of Israel. Additionally, due to its location at the centre of the known world, major trade routes either crossed through or were adjacent to the land. One such major trade route was the *Via Maris* (The Way of the Sea), which went from Egypt up to Damascus. A major location on this route was Gaza, due to its plentiful water supply and proximity to the coast.

The land of Israel continued to be a region of conflict. In 332 BC the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, conquered the land, and in the process they introduced a new culture and religious system - Hellenism. This new worldview was a great cultural challenge for the Jewish people who were endeavouring to reform their religion so they would not again succumb to idolatry, which was the main reason they went into exile. Some Jewish people, however, were enticed into adopting this new tempting worldview, while most did not.

At one time the evil Syro-Greek emperor, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, endeavoured to destroy the national identity of the Jewish people. His evil plans were thwarted by a revolt orchestrated by the Hasmoneans (Maccabees). This episode was thereafter remembered each year at Hanukkah (John 10: 22-39) and became etched into the minds of all Jewish people.

From circa 165 BC a degree of Jewish autonomy was established in the land of Israel, but then significant rifts began showing up in Jewish society. The people were mostly aligned into two major blocks, with one being those more prone to the Greek or western culture and worldview, which were especially associated with the Sadducee Party. The people in the other group were much more conservative and endeavoured to maintain true worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These were mostly associated with the Pharisee Party. In time, other smaller parties also began to emerge. The differences between the two main groups became so pronounced that it often spilled out into conflict. It was not a peaceful time, and those words of Jeremiah concerning the condition of the human heart were often revealed during this period. The superpowers of the time, Rome and Parthia, were always hovering on the periphery, with Rome ultimately occupying the land in 63 BC.

The first coming of Jesus

The constant conflict in the land of Israel did, however, create a deep desire and expectancy among many for a redeemer, known as the Messiah, to come. It was at this time, about 6 BC during the reign of the illegal King Herod, that a baby named Yeshua ben Yosef (Jesus the son of Joseph) was born in Bethlehem. The baby was a total miracle, as His mother, Miriam, was a virgin (*betulah*)⁶, as foretold by Isaiah and the Archangel Gabriel (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 18-25; Luke 1: 26-36). When his parents presented baby Yeshua before the LORD at the Temple in Jerusalem, an aged man named Simeon took the baby in his arms and proclaimed:

‘For my eyes have seen your salvation,
Which you have prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your
people Israel’ (Luke 2: 30-32).

When of age, Jesus became an itinerant rabbi teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven (God). But the main purpose for Jesus

coming to earth as God-incarnate was to live in perfect obedience to the 'Constitution' of the Kingdom of Heaven (God). If He did, then He could legally take the penalty of death that had been imposed upon Adam and his descendants – upon humankind.

In about the year 27 AD Jesus and His followers visited Jerusalem for the Passover (Pesach). While on the way He told His followers that He would be condemned to die, and that His life would be a ransom for many (Mark 10: 33-34; 45). Then, while eating the Passover meal, Jesus took a cup of wine and declared: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you' (Luke 22: 20). Jesus was alluding to Jeremiah 31.

Then, according to His own words, He was arrested and condemned by many of the Jewish religious leaders on the trumped-up charge of blasphemy. He was then charged by the Roman civil leader, Pontius Pilate, of the trumped-up charge of treason. Although totally innocent, Jesus was sentenced to die and was subsequently brutally (but willingly) executed on a cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. While on the cross, Jesus said of His persecutors: 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23: 34). Then Jesus also said, 'Peace be with you' (John 21: 19) and then 'It is finished' (John 19: 30). In other words, God's plan of redemption was completed – a pure and innocent man (akin to a lamb) was dying in place of all of humankind to restore true peace.

In total vindication of his innocence and demonstrating that he was completely obedient to Almighty God, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. The death and resurrection of Jesus was the greatest act of love ever witnessed in human history. It revealed the great depths that Almighty God was willing to go to restore His relationship with humankind, to bring them into personal covenant union with Himself.

Thereafter, many Jewish people believed that Jesus was in fact the sacrificial lamb of God (Isaiah 53) and the representative Israelite of the new covenant. They repented, that is, changed their allegiance, from being 'in Adam' to being in covenant union with Jesus (Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Luke 22: 20). Not only was the penalty of death over them legally rescinded, but they also received the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life (Romans 5: 12-19; Hebrews 9: 13-15).

The coming of the Holy Spirit in power was foretold by Jesus at the time of His ascension. On that occasion His followers asked Him: 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Jesus responded: 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1: 6-8).

Jesus did not say that God's kingdom purposes for Israel had now been negated by His coming, He merely said that God the Father alone knew the 'times and seasons'. The task of His followers was now to take the message of what He had accomplished by His death and resurrection out to all nations.

At that point, Jesus ascended into heaven in a cloud and His followers gazed steadfastly at His departure. Then, as written in the book of Acts, 'two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" ' (Acts 1: 10-11).

Being Jewish men immersed in the Scriptures, they knew that Zechariah had declared of the coming Messiah: 'And in that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east' (Zechariah 14: 4). The hope of the

followers of Jesus thereafter was that Jesus would return in like fashion, to the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem.

The birth and growth of the 'Messianic Israel' movement – the Church

Ten days later, during the Jewish feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus' followers, and thereafter thousands more were added to the movement of 'Messianic Israel'. Later, Gentiles also willingly accepted this pardon from the death penalty and were also born-again of the Spirit. Many of these Gentiles were introduced to Jesus through Saul, or Paul, who later wrote to the congregation of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus in Rome of the relationship between Gentile Christians and Jewish people, who yet did not know Jesus as Messiah. Paul's clear instruction for the Gentile Church was that they were to provoke Israel to jealousy – for their Messiah (Romans 11: 11). He also said that ultimately there would be a full or complete number of the Gentiles who would believe and then all Israel would be saved (Romans 11: 25-26).

But all the nation of Israel did not repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah and sin-bearer (Isaiah 53); they did not personally 'know' Him (Jeremiah 31). In fact, most of the leaders openly rejected Him. So, does this mean that God's word spoken through Jeremiah and Paul is wrong? Does this mean that God has rejected the people with whom He entered covenant? Does this mean that Simeon's prophecy, that Jesus would be the glory of God's people of Israel, was wrong?

Jesus never rejected His own people according to the flesh, but stated of those who persecuted Him: 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23: 34). He also had to practice what He preached concerning loving one's enemies.

Jesus knew that His people according to the flesh would ultimately accept Him as their King Messiah when He said, 'you shall see me no more till you say "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" '. (Matthew 23: 39; Psalm 118: 26). That time is most likely synonymous to what the prophet Zechariah prophesied: 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for him as one grieves for his only son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a firstborn' (Zechariah 12: 10).

The timing of this incredible reconciliation in Jerusalem (like Joseph being reconciled to his brothers in Egypt), would be somewhat delayed. In 66 AD a revolt broke out against the Romans. By the year 70 AD the Romans had defeated the Jewish people, destroyed both Jerusalem and their Temple and exiled many of the survivors from the land of covenant promise. One survivor, Rabbi ben Zakkai, then redeveloped Judaism, so it could survive without a Temple, a priesthood and a sacrificial system. One major building in Jerusalem was not destroyed by the Romans – the Fortress or Citadel, which was left as a symbol of Roman victory and Jewish defeat.

Then, some years later, the Romans renamed Jerusalem, calling it *Aeolia Capitolina* – in honour of the chief deity of the Roman state, *Jupiter Capitolinus*. They even built a temple to Jupiter on the very place where the Temple to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had once stood.

It was most likely this event that provoked a second major revolt against the Romans in 132 AD. This Jewish revolt was led by Shimon Bar Kokhba, who was even endorsed as being the messiah by the great Rabbi Akiva. The Jewish followers of Jesus could not fight under someone whom they believed was a false messiah. As such, they were persecuted and ostracised by many within the Jewish community.

The second exile

During this period, the Jewish leaders basically ousted the Jewish followers of Jesus from the community of Israel. The collective attitude towards Jesus and Jewish followers thereafter became progressively more negative. In time Jesus was given the name Yeshu, which is an acronym that basically means 'may his name be blotted out'. These Jewish followers of Jesus were often badly treated during this period.

By 135 AD the Romans had defeated the Jews. They again exiled many of the survivors from the land of Israel (especially from Jerusalem and Judah). Then, to disconnect the Jewish people from their earthly inheritance, they renamed the land *Syria Palestina*, or Palestine, in honour of the pagan Philistines! David would have rolled over in his grave!

This exile included the Jewish followers of Jesus – and the *ecclesia* or Church in Jerusalem became Gentile-led. Thereafter the broader Church progressively became more Gentile-led and, in the process, lost much of its Jewish character, as it mostly erased the Jewish identity of Jesus. Much of this process came following the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 AD and especially the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), which Constantine convened in order to consolidate the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire. As the Christian faith became the official religion of the Roman Empire, there was less emphasis given to personal repentance and faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. In such a case, more than likely many 'members' of the institutional Church were not born-again of the Spirit (John 3). Additionally, a wide rift developed between this new Roman religion of Christianity and the Jewish people and religion.

Constantine established a new capital for the Roman Empire at Byzantium on the Bosphorus Straits in 330 AD, which was then renamed Constantinople. Today it is Istanbul. In time the Roman

Church in the east was centred upon Constantinople, capital of the eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, while in the west it was based upon Rome, capital of the western Roman Empire.

It was within this broader dynamic that some unbiblical doctrines were espoused by the leaders (known as Church Fathers) of the Gentile Church, including: (1) that the Jewish people were collectively responsible for the death of Jesus and (2) that the Gentile Church inherited all the promises and blessings once bestowed upon the nation of Israel and that the Church was now the new Israel⁷. The Roman Church, be it Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, basically adopted these attitudes.

These teachings were contrary to those of Jesus and the New Testament. While on the cross, Jesus asked His Father to forgive His persecutors for they knew not what they were doing. Additionally, Paul clearly stated that God's gifts and calling to the patriarchs 'are irrevocable' (Romans 11: 29). Gentile followers of Jesus, he wrote, were grafted into the natural olive tree (Romans 11: 17-24), which is the new covenant community.

This new covenant is instituted *with the nation of Israel*, a covenant that is yet to be fully consummated – with Israel. Besides this, the very purpose of Jesus coming to earth as God-incarnate was to take the death penalty that was upon ALL humankind, the Gentiles and the Jews.

Through many centuries the custodians of God's revelation concerning Jesus and the Church were also the main persecutors of Jesus' own brethren according to the flesh. Many evil acts occurred, especially on Easter Friday following anti-Jewish sermons relating to how the Jewish people had murdered Jesus. It is essential for Gentile Christians to become familiar with this history⁸. This factor reveals what happens when any individual, institution or movement does not understand the principles of covenant, as revealed in Scripture, does not understand that God's covenant commitment to the nation of Israel had not been

revoked, does not abide by the teachings of Jesus, as stated in John chapters 14-17, for instance. A result of this negative attitude towards the Jewish people by the institutional Church was that it further hardened the hearts of the Jewish people against Jesus.

In the physical then, the likelihood of a Jewish restoration from exile and for the associated reconciliation between Jesus and His brethren according to the flesh, seemed well-nigh impossible. But as God's gifts and calling to Israel are irrevocable (Romans 11: 29), then for the sake of His holy name, of His integrity, and of His word, God will honour the oaths He swore to the fathers, the patriarchs.

The land of covenant promise occupied by Islamic imperialists

In the following centuries other imperialist regimes and ideologies occupied and coveted possession of the land of covenant promise – although a minority of Jewish people did remain in the land. The most notable of these regimes was Islam, an ideology which originated in pagan Arabia through Muhammed. Even a cursory reading of the life of Muhammed and the birth of this movement reveals the huge difference between his character and that of Jesus. From the outset, the Islamic movement was founded upon manipulation, deceit, control, coercion – and death. The Islamic armies invaded and illegally occupied the land of Israel from 638 AD, offering the residents three options: accept Islam, live as second-class people known as *dhimmis* under Islamic hegemony, or die. Terrible evil was perpetrated by the followers of Islam as they endeavoured to spread their worldview, mostly by the sword - by *jihad*.

Islam usurped the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, stating that the promises went through the line of Ishmael. Islam was therefore a counterfeit ideology and worldview. This attitude is no better revealed than the Al Aksa Mosque and Dome of the

Rock which they built on the Temple Mount – the very location where the Temple had been built to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Various Islamic empires coveted the land and declared it to be part of the region of *dar al Islam* – the region of Islam. The Jewish people living under Islamic domination, even in their own land, were thereafter classified as second-class citizens with very few rights⁹. Islam, however, was not completely homogeneous. Two major streams developed, one being Sunni Islam, centred upon Arabia (Saudi Arabia today), with the other, Shia Islam (*Shi'ite*), centred upon Persia (Iran today).

In the late eleventh century the Seljuk Turks began to seriously persecute Christians living in and visiting the so-called 'Holy Land.' In response, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church called for a crusade to redeem the land from Islam. The so-called Christian forces, known as the Crusaders, captured Jerusalem in 1099. Unfortunately, although the overall objective might have been worthy, the outcome was anything but a true reflection of the character of Jesus. Not only were many innocent Arab-speaking people indiscriminately killed, but the Crusaders also massacred Jewish people, all the way from King's Lynn in England to Jerusalem¹⁰. The Crusader armies left a stain on the character of Christianity in the minds of many communities in the Middle East.

The Muslim Mamelukes from Egypt finally succeeded in defeating the Crusaders in 1291, with the land of Israel returning to Islamic control. A new Islamic imperialist force, the Ottoman Turks, then entered upon the scene. They captured Constantinople in 1453 and by 1517 had captured Jerusalem.

Birth pangs of restoration – the Reformation and Enlightenment

Within this geo-political context, the likelihood of there being a physical restoration of Israel to the land seemed well-nigh impossible. God, however, would at the right time honour His covenant promises so that Israel and the world could enter the fullness of what He had determined. A process of restoration began with the Protestant Reformation, when Bible-believing Christians all over Europe, Britain and Ireland began to read of His promises to the people of Israel. They then began to remind God about these promises – akin to Daniel reminding God during the period of the first exile (Daniel 9). God then ‘remembered’ His covenant promises, just as He did when the children of Israel cried out while in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2: 24). The process of restoration now began, led by Christians associated with the Puritans, Pietists, Moravians and Evangelicals, primarily in Britain, Ireland and ‘Germany.’ Many Jewish people became followers of Jesus, especially in ‘Germany’¹¹.

Unfortunately, not all Protestant leaders understood the Word of God concerning the Jewish people. One notable example was the great reformer Martin Luther, who wrote terrible and vitriolic statements against the Jewish people, especially in his book *The Jews and their Lies* (1543). A later generation of anti-Jewish Germans used these writings to substantiate their plan to eradicate all vestiges of the Jewish people!

Almost simultaneously, two other movements occurred that shaped the cultural environment of Europe, these being the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment had greatest impact upon northern Europe, where it challenged the hegemony of the established Church and led to the increase of what could be termed ‘secularism’. It was during this time that an increasing number of Jewish people were able to leave the narrow confines of Jewish Orthodoxy and enter mainstream European society. This exposed them to streams of academia hitherto

out of their reach. The representative of this movement was Moses Mendelsohn.

Geo-political moves in and near the land of Israel

After the Ottoman Turks took control over the land of Israel they monopolised the ancient trade routes, forcing prices to increase. This in turn forced European powers to seek alternative routes to the regions of the east. The Eastern Mediterranean region was, temporarily, no longer at the centre of the trade system.

It was within this broader dynamic that the lands of South and North America, Australia, New Zealand and Oceania were 'discovered' through the voyages of Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Magellan. Ultimately, a number of these 'newly discovered' regions would become involved in Israel's modern-day restoration from exile. There were, of course, people already living in these land masses, going there sometime after the great dispersion following the flood (Genesis 9).

One landmass was central within this broader dynamic – India, which came progressively under British control. In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte and a large French force set sail to India to oust the British. This large invasion force landed in Egypt, with the intention of then sailing from the Red Sea to India. When thwarted in Egypt by British intervention, they entered the land of Israel in 1799. Napoleon understood the connection between this strategic location and the Jewish people and made a proclamation near Nazareth calling upon the dispersed people of Israel to return to their promised land. However, this plan was not fulfilled as (a) Napoleon was defeated by a combined British-Turkish force and (b) the Jewish people were not in a position to effect such a restoration.

Bible-believing Christians primarily in Britain and Ireland, from both Anglican and non-Anglican streams, recognised that the

events of the 1790s could well be related to the ultimate return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel – and the return of Jesus to Jerusalem¹². They began to further remind God of His covenant promises¹³. One such person was Rev James Bicheno, a Baptist minister in England¹⁴.

Simultaneous to these happenings, Jewish people began awakening from their slumber in Europe due to the influence of the Enlightenment and some thereafter began contemplating a national restoration, although most of the Jewish religious leaders opposed any such restoration. They basically believed that *shivat Zion*, the restoration of Zion (Israel), would occur *after* the Messiah came.

Beginnings of the second return from exile to the land of Israel

In 1823 (exactly 200 years ago) the first tangible signs of that spiritual and physical restoration from exile began, when British Christians associated with an Evangelical Anglican society, named CMJ¹⁵, restored the message of the Jewish Jesus to the city of the Great King - Jerusalem (Matthew 5: 35). Such a pioneering move was dedicated to introducing Jesus as Messiah to the 'Jew first, and also to the non-Jew' (Romans 1: 16). However, such a move was virtually impossible under Ottoman Turkish control, but in 1832-33 the Egyptians rose in revolt and ousted the Turks – and thereupon permitted CMJ to establish its presence in Jerusalem, which it did in 1833 – the first Protestants to do so.

Thereafter the message about Jesus being the Jewish Messiah was consolidated in Jerusalem. This was furthered when the British and Prussians (Germans) joined in establishing the Anglo-Prussian Protestant Bishopric in 1841, a Protestant bishop was sent to Jerusalem, who was a former rabbi named Michael Solomon Alexander¹⁶. The Protestant-Anglican foundations in Jerusalem were very much associated with the restoration of Israel.

These pioneering moves were associated with the first tangible European political involvement in the city and land, when the British sent a consul there in 1838. Among the first instructions given to the British consul were to 'protect the Jews generally'. This was a tangible beginning point for Jewish people obtaining some redemption from their terrible status as *dhimmis*, or second-class citizens under Islamic law. The physical symbol of this restoration became the Anglican-Protestant Christ Church inside the walls of Jerusalem, also the location of the Consulate¹⁷. Incidentally it was forbidden under Islamic law for new churches to be built – so the building of Christ Church was indeed quite significant. Christ Church was built in part to resemble a synagogue, which itself was quite a statement in a city where anti-Jewish sentiment even in the Church was very prevalent. Just how anti-Jewish is revealed by an official letter sent by the British consul in 1839, in which he stated:

... the Jew in Jerusalem is not estimated in value much above a dog – and scarcely a day passes that I do not hear of some act of Tyranny and oppression against a Jew – chiefly by the soldiers... If a Jew... were to attempt to pass the door of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, it would in all probability cost him his life – this is not very Christian like, considering Christ Himself was a Jew¹⁸.

Interestingly, there was a conflict in the land of Israel in 1840, known as the Syrian Crisis, in which Britain aided the Turks into ousting the Egyptians (who were being supported by the French) from the land. It was at this time that the British Government, with firm support from the Evangelical Christians, officially proposed there be a restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. This proposal was thwarted however because (a) the British were allied to the Turks and they would never consent to such a proposal and (b) the Jewish people still were not ready for such a restoration.

Although CMJ was an Evangelical Anglican society, it represented a much broader range of Evangelical Christians throughout Britain, Ireland, Europe and elsewhere, including the United States, which held a similar worldview – that Jesus was to be introduced once again to the Jewish people so that a remnant would be saved from the penalty of death, while the Jewish people as a collective entity were to return to the land of Israel. There, at some time known only by God the Father, they as a nation would come to recognise Jesus as their King Messiah. This event would be closely associated with the return of Jesus to Jerusalem. Opinions differed as to exactly how all this would happen, but in the main these pioneer British Evangelicals adopted a very basic perspective concerning the full restoration of Israel. Later generations, especially in the United States, developed quite elaborate schemes, which often seem to complicate the matter.

Thereafter, the Jewish interest in a physical restoration also grew. Those advocating such a restoration were not primarily the Orthodox Jews, but basically more secular or cultural Jews. These were the children of the Enlightenment, those who had been accepted into mainstream European society and could divest themselves of the constraints of an Orthodox Jewish life. But it became progressively more apparent, especially with the growth of European nationalism after 1860, that Jews were not completely accepted within Europe unless they completely assimilated. Many desired to leave Europe and escape this growing anti-Jewish sentiment.

This feeling increased following despicable pogroms (outbreaks of violence) within the Russian Empire in 1881, which were often supported and encouraged by the leaders of the Orthodox Church. Many Jewish refugees sought a haven in Turkish-occupied Palestine, which for the most part was under-developed and under-populated (as glass slides from the 1860s onwards and diplomatic records of the time substantiate). These Jewish

settlers purchased often very infertile land, usually at exorbitant prices and began to make the desert places blossom. From 1905, many more Jewish settlers came to the land of Israel following further outbreaks of violence against them in Russia. Most of these people were imbued with quite a pronounced socialist humanist worldview and were associated with what became known as socialist Zionism.

In the period following Napoleon's French incursion, the focus of Britain and other European powers shifted back to the region of Egypt and the land of Israel, as this region offered the quickest route to India and the Far East. It is within this dynamic that a French consortium constructed the Suez Canal in 1869.

Thereafter this small area became a major economic and geo-political focal point – and became even more so in time with the discovery of huge deposits of oil in the region in the next century.

The involvement of France in this region was due firstly to its desire to reach the markets of the Far East and to develop economic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean region, while also offering protection to numerous educational and philanthropic interests in the 'Holy Land'¹⁹. Britain's main involvement in the region was to hinder French encroachment and ensure the link to India was not cut off. The number of British institutions was few, with CMJ and other Anglican-related entities, with the Palestine Exploration Fund being the most prominent. From the 1860s and in the wake of the Crimean War, the Russian Empire became a major factor in the land. The Russians built enormous complexes and it was common knowledge that they coveted possession of the 'Holy Land', which had once 'belonged' to the Byzantine Empire. After Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks, Orthodox Russia thereafter viewed itself as being the custodian of all that once 'belonged' to Byzantium, including the land of Israel.

The land of Israel, mostly referred to then as southern Syria, or Palestine, was still very much a neglected and impoverished region of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, whose government did virtually nothing to improve the productivity and general quality of life within the province of Syria. The region was governed according to the *millet* system. The Muslims were predominant and all the other communities were minorities, be they Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, Maronite or, officially from 1850, Protestant. The Jewish community, or *millet*, was at the very bottom and they often received harsh treatment. Yet with the growing western influence in the land, through political, Christian and Jewish involvement, living conditions improved for all people. Many Arabic-speaking and other Muslim groups now immigrated there from surrounding regions.

Most Arabic-speaking peoples did not view themselves as being part of a national entity, as they did not see themselves as being Palestinian or Syrian or Lebanese. Their first allegiance was to their clan or family or ethnic group, or whether they were Sunni or Shi'ite, or as far as the Christians were concerned, to which Church they belonged. However, from the 1850s many residents benefitted from western education, especially in Christian missionary schools. In Syria and Lebanon most of these schools were operated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It was in this environment that seeds of a national Arab identity began, especially from Arabic-speaking Christians. They desired acceptance as equals but realised that under Islam they could never achieve this goal. But if the region could be united under the banner of an Arab identity (Pan-Arabism) rather than a Muslim identity, then they could all have a common identity and destiny. The Arab nationalist movement thus began from the 1860s.

The Jewish nationalist desire for physical restoration increased with the formation of the Zionist Movement under Theodor Herzl in 1897. Such a restoration, however, depended upon the

sympathy of a modern day 'Cyrus' nation that could support its goal to obtain a charter from the Ottoman Turks to settle in great numbers in the land of Israel. It first approached Germany and, thanks to an Anglican minister named Rev William Hechler, Herzl was able to present the matter to the German Kaiser on his official visit to the Turkish Empire in 1898²⁰. Ultimately the Germans refused the opportunity to be the modern day 'Cyrus' nation, as they did not want to jeopardise their geo-political relationship with the Turks. This rebuff occurred when Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Jerusalem to open the new German Church.

The possibility of obtaining support and endorsement from the Islamic Ottoman Turks was an impossibility. The Sultan was the *Caliph* of Islam and Islam could not endorse any form of Jewish national autonomy in the region known as Palestine, which Muslims regarded as part of *dar al Islam*. The Jewish leaders then looked to Great Britain, which initially was not at all interested in supporting their goal, as it too was seeking to maintain a good geo-political relationship with the Ottoman Turks.

End of the Islamic-Ottoman occupation of the land of Israel

The outbreak of the First World War completely changed these dynamics. The Ottoman Turks made a very unwise decision to join with the German alliance against the Allies of Britain, France and Russia. This costly decision ultimately resulted in them losing control of much of their huge empire. This process began with the Dardanelles or Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. Although the Turks were victorious there, nevertheless it was at this time that the Allies began to consider the future of the Ottoman Empire in the event of its ultimate defeat. Thoughts of a future Jewish physical restoration to the land of Israel now came into focus²¹.

Following their victory at Gallipoli, the Ottoman Turks then endeavoured to seize control of the Suez Canal. The best form of defending the Suez Canal was through capturing the Sinai, so in

1916 a British-led force including Anzac horsemen (the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles) captured this vast desert region. Then in early 1917, following a decision from the new British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, this British-led force crossed into Turkish-occupied Palestine. The first battles were at Gaza, which was strategically based on the ancient *Via Maris*, near the coast and which had a sizeable water supply. Two major battles were fought in and around Gaza and the Turks won on both occasions. Many Allied soldiers fought and died in this region, including Australians and New Zealanders and for this reason the Anzac Memorial was built there many years later.

During this same general period, the desires and ambitions of both the Jewish and Arab nationalist movements came to the fore. The Jewish movement was associated politically with Chaim Weizmann and militarily with Zev Jabotinsky, who was instrumental in forming both the Zion Mule Corps at Gallipoli and the 'Jewish Legion' for service in the land of Israel. The Arab nationalist movement was associated especially with the Emir Hussein of Mecca, with his son Feisal and with T.E. Lawrence. There are some who maintain that the British authorities gave assurances to the Arab nationalists that the land of Israel would be included in a future Arab kingdom. These considerations are not substantiated when observing the broader perspective and taking into consideration the deception of Muhammed al-Faruqi²².

Following the defeat at Gaza, the military objective now turned inland, to the town of Beersheba, a town associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The British-led force attacked there on 31st October 1917 and, following British and New Zealand successes, victory was ultimately gained by the gallant charge of the Australian Light Horse. On that very same day the British War Committee meeting in London promised to establish a Jewish national home in the land of Israel once the land was fully

redeemed from Turkish-Islamic occupation. This decision was later known as the Balfour Declaration²³.

This campaign was fought with geo-political factors in mind - the land of Israel was sandwiched between Britain (and Europe) on one side and India and the Empire, including Australia and New Zealand, on the other. Nothing new under the sun! These were very similar dynamics operating at the time of the first restoration of exile, which led to the first coming of Jesus, although the imperial dynamic then was the rivalry between Rome and Parthia.

This quest for the redemption of the land from Islamic control took another major step forward on 9th December 1917, when British-led forces captured Jerusalem²⁴. At the official surrender ceremony on 11th December 1917, soldiers representing the British, Australian and New Zealand forces stood outside the gates of Christ Church Jerusalem facing General Allenby, who stood on the steps of the Citadel or Fortress of Jerusalem opposite.

Ultimately, by 31st October 1918, the Islamic Ottoman Turkish Empire, which had unwisely first attacked the Allied forces, was defeated. A Conference was convened in San Remo in Italy in 1920 for the victorious Allies to determine the future of the regions once occupied by the Ottoman Turks. The Allies offered mandates to both Britain and France to prepare these regions for local sovereignty. The Mandate for Palestine was officially offered to Britain by the League of Nations in 1922, and was entrusted by all member states of the League of Nations to prepare the land for a future Jewish national home. The League of Nations recognised the historic connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and this endorsement became enshrined into international law²⁵. This was one of the most momentous occasions in modern history. Islamic control over the land of covenant promise was being revoked.

In the huge swathe of territory captured mostly by British, Australian, Indian and New Zealand soldiers, at great cost of life, the Arabic-speaking mostly Islamic nations of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan were ultimately formed. A very small percentage of that captured region was to become the Jewish national home, although there was a considerable number of non-Jewish people living there.

Unfortunately, most of these residents, be they Muslim or local Christians, opposed this decision and promise. Like those opponents did after the first restoration from Babylon, they did not understand the principles of covenant and of Almighty God's plans and purposes for the redemption of the world. They obviously did not realise that it is not advisable to oppose those with whom Almighty God has entered covenant! Oh, if they had only understood what great blessings such a restoration was sure to bring for them and for the world! But perhaps in the plans of a sovereign God it was also destined that they would not acknowledge such a restoration. Perhaps He desires to reveal His holiness to all the nations of the earth in a way and at a time known only by Him!

The full restoration draws near – and opposition intensifies

The full restoration of Israel was now drawing nearer, a restoration that would precede 'all Israel' coming to know God in a personal way through the new covenant. This reconciliation would be closely associated with the physical return of Jesus to Jerusalem (Matthew 24: 30-31; Acts 1: 6-9; Zechariah 9: 3-4a). Such a reconciliation would be, as Paul wrote, 'like life from the dead' (Romans 11: 15). Mind you, most Jewish people living in the land of Israel at the time (and still today) were not at all inclined to consider turning to Jesus. Many Jewish people were either religious to varying degrees and maintained a vigorous opposition to the claims of Jesus being the Messiah of Israel or were secular humanists with strong socialist tendencies. Most of

these secular Jews had rejected Orthodox Judaism and any semblance of religion. It would be nothing short of a miracle for the nation to turn en masse to accept Jesus as Messiah. But miracles are known to happen in Israel's history, especially in the land of covenant promise!

Satan, however, knows that when Jesus returns and establishes His reign over redeemed Israel and the nations from Jerusalem, he is bound, and will do everything possible to hinder this return and the associated spiritual restoration of Israel. It is within this context that local Arabic-speaking leaders, such as the senior Muslim cleric in British Mandate Palestine, Haj Amin el-Husseini, began to violently oppose the Jewish people. Such violent opposition further invigorated the Jewish people to succeed in establishing the *Yishuv*, or settlement, on lands that they legally purchased, often at exorbitant cost.

The adversary of Almighty God then inspired the Nazi Party in Germany into persecuting the Jewish people living there. From 1933, many thousands came to the land of Israel and once again the Arabic-speaking leaders resorted to violence to stop this immigration. As a result, the British proposed a partition of Mandate Palestine in 1937, into a very small Jewish State and a much larger Arab State. Although the Jewish leadership was not completely satisfied with this proposal, the **Arab leadership rejected the offer outright**. For them there could be no Jewish State at all.

Herein lies the physical foundation of the conflict – the Muslim leadership cannot endorse any form of Jewish sovereignty in the region which it contends is part of dar al Islam – be that entity small or large.

The negation of any Jewish immigration into the land of Israel meant that Jewish people desiring to flee from Nazi-controlled Germany were stopped from doing so. Their plight, and those of

all Jewish people in Europe, then deteriorated when Germany invaded Poland in 1939, plunging the world into another War. Persecution of Jewish people then intensified, and mass murders began in earnest in 1941. Then, in 1942, the Nazi-leadership decreed at a Conference in Wannsee near Berlin to complete the murder of eleven million Jewish people in Europe and surrounding regions. This included all those living in the land of Israel and the Middle East. There can be no greater evidence of the nature and spirit of evil than what the Nazi leadership planned to do²⁶.

The quest to murder the 700,000 or so Jewish people in the Middle East would be conducted together with local collaborators, people of the same character as Haj Amin - who was then living in Nazi Germany. Thankfully, the attempt upon the lives of the Jewish people in the land of Israel and the Middle East was stopped, due mostly to the victory of the British-led forces under General Montgomery at the battle of El Alamein in Egypt in late 1942. Tens of thousands of British-led forces, including Australians and New Zealanders, were involved in this strategic victory. One of those killed there was my mother's cousin²⁷.

Unfortunately, however, some six million Jewish people were murdered in what became known as the Holocaust. The spiritual force behind the perpetration of this greatest crime in human history and the greatest evidence of the existence of evil, is the same that endeavours to destroy all those connected to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The State of Israel established – a modern day miracle

Following the end of the War and with hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors desperate to leave Europe, the British sadistically closed the gates to 'Palestine'. Further conflict broke out, between Jewish, Arab and British forces, forcing Britain to

finally relinquish the Mandate to the United Nations. The United Nations ultimately formulated a plan for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish State **and** an Arab State.

A vote was taken at the United Nations on 29th November 1947, at which a majority of nations voted for the establishment of **both Jewish and Arab States**. While the Jewish leadership accepted the offer, **the collective Arab leadership refused to accept** the United Nations decision, these being the Arab leaders in British Mandate Palestine and those in the Arab League. Instead, they ordered the immediate attack upon Jewish settlements. This decision meant that the collective Arab leadership refused the opportunity to form their own sovereign state!

Herein is tangible proof that the Muslim-Arab leadership again made unwise decisions and were not committed to what was best for their own people.

The Jewish people had no choice but to defend themselves – and in the process they managed to secure certain strategic areas that had originally been designated to be part of the Arab State. Those unwise decisions made by the Arab leaders caused considerable angst for the ordinary Arabic-speaking peoples.

The British were to withdraw at midnight on 14th May 1948. The Jewish leadership made the courageous decision to establish a State and thereupon be able to obtain weapons and thus to defend themselves. This they did – and immediately five surrounding Arab nations invaded the fledgling Jewish State. It would still be near impossible to defend itself against national armies, as the weapons Israel had purchased would need to arrive and be assembled.

Although this invasion by belligerent nations was a clear violation of the United Nations decision, the UN did not tangibly intervene on Israel's behalf. This, unfortunately, became a trend thereafter.

No other nation has received more condemnation and negative resolutions against them than has Israel! This itself is clear evidence that Israel's restoration as a nation is a challenge to the powers and principalities that control nations and political entities in the world.

In the ensuing conflict Israel somehow managed to not only defend and preserve itself, but it also gained more strategic territory. Unfortunately, in the process numerous Arab people were forced to leave their homes, some by the Israeli forces for strategic reasons, some of their own accord, and some by order of their leadership. Those who left by order of their leaders were told they could come back once the Jews had been driven into the sea. Many Arabic-speaking peoples in the southern region were forced into the region of Gaza, which was then taken over by Egypt. They were encamped thereafter in refugee camps – and like elsewhere they were not permitted to assimilate. Jordan took control over much of biblical Judea and Samaria including the Old City of Jerusalem and illegally usurped control over this region. Later it annexed this and did not permit the establishment of an independent Arab State – as voted for by the United Nations!

Altogether more than 500,000 Arabic-speaking people became refugees, including many Arab-speaking Christians, a few of whom were housed at Christ Church. But almost an equal number of Jewish people also became refugees, being forced to leave surrounding Muslim countries. Israel was able to absorb these into their small State. As in any conflict, there were bound to be innocent victims, with atrocities being committed on both sides.

Interestingly, during those very same years there were multiple conflicts that involved population exchanges and refugees, including in post-War Europe and India-Pakistan, so this situation was not an isolated event in that period. Yet while Israel managed to integrate its refugees, the surrounding Arab countries refused

to allow their co-religionists to be absorbed. This was done purposely. Additionally, a large, mostly Muslim, population remained within the State of Israel, with most of them, thankfully, prepared to co-exist. No Jewish people, however, were permitted to live in those regions illegally occupied by Egypt and Jordan.

The preservation of the Jewish people in the land of Israel from the evil designs of Nazism and from the evil designs of the mostly Muslim leaders enabled the establishment of Israel in 1948 – a modern day miracle (see Isaiah 11: 12, where the word banner in the context of a second national restoration is the Hebrew word *nes* - miracle). The very existence of the modern State of Israel, despite its many imperfections, is clear testimony to the existence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the One who keeps His covenant oaths and promises.

It is therefore not surprising that any ideology and worldview that does not acknowledge the existence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would seek to destroy or discredit Israel's very existence. Foremost of these is Islam. Western worldviews such as secular humanism will also be reluctant to accept claims that Israel's restoration is testimony to the existence of this sovereign God. Unfortunately, there are also many in the worldwide Church who do not accept Israel's establishment as being part of God's universal plan of redemption. Most of these adhere to what is often termed 'replacement theology' or 'supercessionism' – the false belief that the Gentile Church has replaced the nation of Israel.

Somewhat ironically the Communist regime ruling the Soviet Union supported Israel's establishment, most likely viewing it as a possible platform for increasing its geo-political goals in the strategic Middle East. Over time, however, Israel's main support came from the United States. There were many Jewish people living in the United States, while there was also many conservative Christians, who like the Puritans and Evangelicals in

Britain and Ireland in a former period, clearly understood that Almighty God had not revoked His covenant commitments to the people of Israel. As the influence of the United States increased, that of the Soviet Union decreased, with the Soviet Union began supporting the antagonistic Muslim nations, especially Syria and Egypt.

The support of a larger power is like the situation facing Australia and New Zealand for the last two centuries, which have only been able to withstand larger opposing forces and thereby prosper due to the powerful support of either Great Britain or the United States! Many countries are in a similar predicament, including Ukraine today.

After 1948, while the surrounding Islamic countries licked their wounds and were making no efforts at all to integrate the Arabic-speaking refugees, the Jewish people set about consolidating their fledgling state. But their existence was always going to be somewhat precarious. There were constant border infiltrations and clashes, which always resulted in responses from the Israelis. Cross-border and even international terrorism against Jewish people increased after the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was formed in 1964 by mostly nationalist and 'secular' Muslims – with some Christian participation. For the most part this terrorist organisation was composed of young men from the refugee camps who were imbued with the ideal of redeeming the lands from which they and their families had to leave. The PLO itself was not homogenous, but was composed of several groups, the largest of which was Fatah, whose leader became Yasser Arafat. Also, although Egypt and other antagonistic nations were predominantly Muslim, they were not governed by Islamic or *sharia* law. But in the aftermath of these humiliations by Israel, an Islamic group named the Muslim Brotherhood emerged in Egypt.

The Six Day War of 1967 and Yom Kippur War of 1973

By June 1967 the nations of Egypt, Syria and Jordan were preparing for an unprovoked attack upon Israel. Israel had to preempt this attack or she would have been overwhelmed. This she did through her air force and as a result Israel was able to successfully limit the attack from these three nations. Fighting was nevertheless intense and ultimately Israel found itself in control of the regions of the Sinai, Judea, Samaria, the Golan Heights, Gaza – and Jerusalem.

One unfortunate result of this War was that again there was a human tragedy – more people were killed and more Arabic-speaking people became refugees. Once again, the Arabic-speaking leaders made very unwise decisions and created considerable angst for their own people. It also now meant that Israel, almost against its will, found itself in possession of areas when combined had a very large Arabic-speaking population. Israel began to administer these regions as best it could – but it was never going to be easy and mistakes in governance were bound to occur.

Perhaps this could have been the opportunity to create an ‘Arab State’ as decreed by the United Nations in 1947 and which the Arab leaders had refused to establish. To achieve this there would need to be a just settlement with Israel, which would provide her with security. This possibility was nullified when the Arab League met in Khartoum in Sudan shortly after, and on 1st September 1967 the eight member nations categorically stated:

‘No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel’.

This stark statement was followed in November 1967 when the United Nations issued Resolution 242, which called for the ultimate withdrawal of Israeli forces from those captured areas.

But the problem now facing Israel was the realisation that Egypt, Syria and Jordan had all launched their assaults upon the small Jewish State from those very regions and unless there was a complete change of attitude, further attempts would be made to destroy Israel. Such a distinct possibility is evident in the statement of the Arab League at Khartoum and the Charter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which clearly called for the destruction of the Jewish State of Israel (until today the wording of their Charter has not been changed).

Israel at that time realised that to ensure such an attack could never happen it needed to establish settlements in places of strategic significance. In time these settlements grew in number and size. Yet, it must be said, had the Egyptians, Syrians and Jordanians not attacked Israel, then there would have been no such settlements! But in view of the clear goal of the Arab, mostly Muslim, leaders to destroy Israel (see Psalm 83), can one seriously expect Israel to dismantle these settlements and withdraw from that region?

This Israeli victory in 1967 was a serious affront to the Islamic world. It now had to avenge the dual defeats of 1948 and 1967. This it attempted to do with a surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in 1973 (fifty years ago), the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar. In the first days the Egyptians and Syrians almost succeeded in overpowering Israel. Israel was caught unawares, due to shoddy intelligence, complacency and perhaps even due to pride in their armed forces, following the success of the Six Day War. Once again Israel somehow miraculously survived - due to a large degree to the timely assistance of the United States, which at one point came close to conflict with the Soviet Union. The United Nations issued Resolutions 338 and 339 and finally the fighting ceased. Is it any wonder that Israel thereafter would do all in its power to ensure its borders were secure and that never again would it come so close to being militarily defeated?

There is no doubt that this near miss sent shock waves throughout the tiny nation and many were forced to reflect upon this near defeat. What is also interesting is that although there had been Jewish followers of Jesus in the land since the 1830s and of Israeli followers of Jesus from 1948, in the years after 1973 there was a marked increase in the number of Jewish people coming into a personal relationship with Jesus as the God-incarnate Messiah. By the end of the 1970s the modern day Israeli Messianic movement became very vibrant and has continued to grow ever since. This movement has witnessed more Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus as Messiah in the land of Israel than at any time since 135 AD. Ironically, whereas in that period Jewish followers of Jesus refused to fight under the false messiah bar Kockba, today almost all the eligible Messianic Jews serve in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

Settlements an obstacle to peace - really?

It has been the slogan of many opposers of Israel's existence and Israelis on the political and ideological left for many years that Israeli settlements in the Sinai, Judea and Samaria, Gaza and the Golan are an obstacle to peace and that so-called occupied Arab lands had to be surrendered. Thus, there was somewhat of a receptive audience when President Sadat of Egypt made an offer to enter into a peace treaty with Israel – peace for the dismantling of settlements and surrender of the region of the Sinai. This treaty was signed between Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1979. This treaty has been quite successful – but there was no sizeable Arabic-speaking population in the Sinai.

As for Judea, Samaria and Gaza throughout these years, there was a great amount of 'goodwill', and tens of thousands of Arab workers would enter Israel each day for work. Living conditions throughout the Israeli-administered territories improved dramatically. Life for the ordinary person in Gaza was now as

good as it could possibly be, indeed much better than when it was occupied by the Egyptians.

But all this goodwill changed in late 1987 with the outbreak of very serious Arab-led violence known as the first Intifada and Arab workers were thereafter stopped from entering Israel. Israel, however, needed labourers, and thus began to bring in many overseas workers, especially from Romania and the Philippines. Once again, the Arab leaders had made unwise decisions which negatively impacted on the lives of ordinary Arab peoples.

This outbreak of violence saw the formation of an Islamic organization named Hamas (an acronym for 'Islamic Resistance Movement'), whose founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, had been involved with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Hamas was ideologically dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel and the return of the land of Israel to Islamic control. Another similar organisation named Islamic Jihad was also formed.

Ultimately regional leaders recognised that this outbreak of violence needed to end. Such endeavours resulted in the first major political steps in obtaining a lasting 'peace' with the 'Palestinians' – even with Yasser Arafat, the violent leader of the PLO. As such, in 1993 the Oslo Accords were signed, in which varying degrees of autonomy were to be handed over to local Arab leaders, especially Arafat. It was a huge gamble. A large part of the Israeli-administered territories was to be designated as the Palestinian Authority, or PA. It was never officially named Palestine. Jordan relinquished its claims to the so-called 'West Bank' and this resulted in a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in 1994. Many Israelis, although pleased that there would now be peace, were at the same time quite apprehensive.

In goodwill Israel was involved in arming the police force of the PA. 'Peace' did initially follow, but it was rather short-lived. Instead, a sustained period of terror against Israeli civilians began,

much of it instigated by Hamas, as well as by Islamic Jihad. Terrorists crossed over into the State of Israel and began bombing buses and indiscriminately murdering Israel's citizens. We lived in Jerusalem during that period and can testify that it was not pleasant.

There were some cases of Israeli retaliation and aggression towards Arabic-speaking people. One such atrocity was when a right-wing Israeli named Baruch Goldstein entered the mosque at the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Machpelah) in Hebron on 25th February 1994 and shot dead some 29 defenceless Muslim worshippers. On that day I had to closely monitor my Arabic-speaking and Israeli staff in the Christ Church Guest House in case of any further acts of violence erupting in Jerusalem. Almost all Israelis abhorred this senseless act of indiscriminate murder. There is a minority of ultra-nationalist Jewish people in Israel who desire to oust all Arab people from the administered territories. Every time there is a terrorist attack upon innocent Jewish people, the number of people holding this view is bound to increase.

To dissipate this intolerable violence, which was precipitated on almost all occasions by acts of terrorism against Israelis, then resulting many times in a harsh Israeli response, President Clinton of the United States invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Arafat of the PA to a meeting at Camp David in the year 2000. Although significant concessions were offered to Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, these were rejected. The PA wanted more than Israel was prepared to agree to, including control over part of Jerusalem. This setback was followed in late 2000 by the beginnings of a second *Intifada*, which resulted in terrible consequences, first for the Israeli population upon whom the atrocities were perpetrated, and second upon the ordinary Arabic-speaking population who endured the often-harsh Israeli responses. The reason given by the Arab leaders for this outbreak of violence was the visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount,

but this was only an excuse to have a 'legitimate' reason to begin a new cycle of violence.

The violence then spiralled out of control. In 2002 a security fence began to be constructed to thwart the infiltration of murderers into Israel. We lived there during that period and were supportive of this initiative, although a few Arab landowners lost some land in the process. The higher ideal was the preservation of life. Preservation of Israeli lives also meant better conditions for the local Arab population, as they would not get caught up in the crossfire of Israeli counter measures. Unfortunately, and inevitably, with each terrorist attack, Israeli measures became harsher and more restrictive. The number of Israelis being murdered was significantly reduced by the presence of the security fence, which in part was also a security wall.

This new wave of deadly terror basically ended on 8th February 2005 at a Summit at Sharm el-Sheik in the Sinai, which was attended by many regional leaders, including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Then, quite amazingly also in February 2005, Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) passed a law calling for the unilateral withdrawal of all Israeli settlements in Gaza. Most Israelis were shocked by this decision and were extremely apprehensive, except for those who continued to hold onto the adage that peace would follow the dismantling of the settlements and the surrender of territory. The final Israeli withdrawal in August-September 2005 was done in good faith that the Palestinian Authority would adhere to their adage that 'settlements were an obstacle to peace'.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. During those years I would take the Light Horse groups down to that area on a bi-weekly and even weekly basis, especially to the Anzac Memorial near Kibbutz Be'eri. Only on rare occasions was I stopped from going there for security reasons. However, following the Israeli withdrawal,

I would often be thwarted from going there because of security reasons, primarily rocket attacks – from Gaza.

Wait, that can't be right. They always said the Israeli settlements were an obstacle to peace – but all the Israeli settlements were withdrawn, so there should not have been any rockets being fired into Israel. Yet there were. Such incidents increased when the radical and extremist Islamic group Hamas gained control over the political life of Gaza from 2007 onwards and militarily defeated the Fatah faction of the PLO. Hamas, as stated, is an avowed enemy of Israel and the Jewish people and is dedicated to the destruction of the Jewish State.

The current crisis

Since then, there has been constant tension emanating from Gaza. The Hamas leadership, however, is not able to sustain such violent opposition without financial, moral and military support from a senior party, mostly Iran, but also from other sources.

Somewhat surprisingly Israel has of late established diplomatic relations with several Islamic nations, the so-called Abraham Accords, and was even forging closer links with Saudi Arabia. Such a move would potentially further isolate Iran, and it was this that might very well have precipitated the recent violent attack upon innocent Israelis, whereby some 1,300 were murdered, mostly in cold blood. Interestingly following this recent massacre, the Palestinian Authority seemingly gave financial 'rewards' of some US\$2,789,430 to the families of Hamas terrorists who were killed²⁸! Many democratic countries including Australia provide financial support to the PA! This is the time to seriously reconsider this support and call the PA leaders to account.

It was known by Hamas that Israel would retaliate and retaliate hard, as had been the case on several previous occasions when it sent numerous rockets into Israel. It is well known that Hamas

will shelter within civilian locations and use the general Arab population as shields. On this occasion it also has Israeli hostages as human shields. What is quite amazing is that Israel, although having by no means a perfect army, will nevertheless broadcast to the people what it intends to do, to allow them the time to move out of harm's way. Yet this move is still criticised.

But let us ponder on this for a moment. Most informed people will agree that D-Day in June 1944 was a necessary event to rid Europe and the world of the evil Nazi regime. Yet tens of thousands of innocent French people were killed, wounded and uprooted in Normandy, as the Allies could not broadcast their intentions for fear of surrendering their invasion plans.

The main problem in this situation at the physical level is not the Israeli government and army, although both parties are by no means perfect. The main problem is the leadership of the Arabic-speaking people, as these leaders have, time after time, made unwise decisions. A clear indication that the Palestinian leadership in whatever form is not really interested in the welfare of their own people is indicated by the fact that each time they endorse major terrorist operations, especially from Gaza, they know there will be a strong Israeli response. This means that despite Israel's best intentions and best efforts, innocent civilians will be affected. So why do it?

In this current situation Israel has every right from a legal perspective as a sovereign nation to hit back against Hamas. Any democratic country would do the same. Unfortunately, the innocent civilian population will again suffer. Once again, the ultimate blame must be upon Hamas and the Arab leaders who have made a serious mistake. But many will then say that Israel must grant them more autonomy, even statehood and even dismantle their settlements in the administered territories of Judea and Samaria. Then, they say, there will be peace.

Here we need to ask the basic question – what constitutes peace? Is it harmony and acceptance between nations, in this case between Israel and ALL the surrounding Muslim nations, and within the land of Israel between Jewish and Muslim peoples? If this is the peace people are seeking, then it just is not going to happen. Basically, Muslim leaders cannot tolerate an independent Jewish national entity within the land of Israel. The humanistic worldview of some Israelis, especially on the political and ideological left and many others of a similar persuasion throughout the world (including some Jewish people) is that peace will result from (a) the dismantling of Israeli settlements, (b) the surrendering of land and (c) recognition of Palestinian statehood. But even if all of these criteria were met, there would still not be any true peace.

All it will do is create a larger platform for the enemies of Israel to launch further attempts to destroy the State of Israel. Those who entertain such a possibility really have little or no understanding of the broader ideological and spiritual dynamics involved. There is absolutely no political solution – although there could be a false peace, which Islam allows, seeing it as a precursor for the accomplishment of its ultimate goals. But this would be a false peace.

This current crisis has again brought to the fore the hate and venom present in the human heart. In the end, nations, individuals, movements and ideologies will align themselves against Israel. They all think that they are doing a noble thing by opposing the so-called pariah nation of Israel. But ultimately, they will find themselves battling against God, as He will defend those who are in covenant relationship with Him.

What is true peace?

I postulate that true peace is only possible when there is harmony and reconciliation with our Maker and Creator – the God of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This peace and harmony can only occur if we approach Him in the way that He has prescribed – through (a) a repentant heart and (b) through a blood sacrifice. As there is no blood sacrifice offered in the prescribed way according to the Sinai-Mosaic Covenant, there is only one option. This is by accepting that reconciliation is accomplished by the finished work of Jesus who took the penalty of death that is upon us all²⁹. Through repentance we enter a covenant union with Jesus and because of this we have restored relationship and access into the presence of Almighty God (Jeremiah 31: 31-34). Then there will be peace.

Today there are many thousands of Jewish people confessing Jesus as the God-incarnate Messiah. However, there are many within Israel who do not accept that such a person remains Jewish and they will oppose and even persecute those who do. But it is unwise to attack anyone who is in a covenant relationship with Almighty God – as Pharaohs and other dictators, nations and empires have discovered over the centuries. This principle is obvious in the story of Saul (Paul) while en route to Damascus, when Jesus spoke to him saying: ‘Saul, Saul why do you persecute me’ (Acts 9). When Jesus said that Saul was persecuting Him, Jesus meant that Saul was persecuting those in covenant relationship and union with Jesus.

This situation facing the Messianic Jews today is like that of the first century. In fact, there are many similarities to that period. Then there were two main blocks, and many smaller groups, as there are today. Then there were some more so-called ‘secular’ in outlook, while there were many who were more conservative adherents to Judaism. There were ultra-nationalists, the zealots, as there are today. Some rabbis contend that Israel was defeated, and Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed in 70 AD, not just because of Roman might, but because of internal division within Jewish society at the time.

So what will need to happen before the nation of Israel as an entirety comes to that point of acknowledging that Jesus is the King Messiah of Israel? Perhaps it will be that it will recognise that it can no longer depend upon the strength of its own army, upon its much-vaunted high-tech and military prowess, upon a superpower ally. Perhaps it will be when it realises that its only sure support is its senior covenant partner, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Perhaps then it will call out while in bondage and God will remember His covenant.

As God desires for all humankind to enter a personal relationship with Himself, and as this includes those under the spiritual bondage of Islam, what will be required to bring the Muslim peoples to repentance and acceptance of the source of true peace found only in the Jewish Messiah Yeshua? Perhaps it will be when Islam is just not able to conquer Israel and 'redeem' the land for Islam. The very best future for the Arab people living in Gaza, in the areas governed by the PA and in those areas administered by the Israelis, is to accept the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to forsake their counterfeit god named Allah and accept God's prescribed way to live in true peace.

It is not a simplistic cliché to say that the only solution rests in both groups of people submitting to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and accepting His prescribed way of true reconciliation.

What role should the Church now be playing?

What role then should the Church, the custodian of this message of true peace and reconciliation play at this time?

- First and foremost, it is to reveal the true face of Jesus and the true gospel to all peoples, Jewish and Arabic-speaking. Paul wrote 'The gospel is the power of God for

the salvation of all people, to the Jew first and also to the non-Jew' (Romans 1: 16)

- It must comprehend the principles of covenant and understand that it must not oppose those with whom Almighty God has cut covenant and entered relationship with, namely Israel and the Jewish people. Israel is not perfect and does make many mistakes, as all nations do and as the Church does. If God is displeased with Israel, then He must be even more displeased with the Church for not behaving the way it should. The Church is far from being the entity that Jesus asked for in that profound prayer in John: '... that they all may be one, as you Father, are in Me, and I you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me' (John 17: 21)
- It must renounce the false teaching that the Gentile Church is the new Israel. This attitude is akin to the sin of covetousness
- It must renounce all forms of anti-Semitism, which is often cloaked under the banner of anti-Israelism. This is contrary to the teachings of Jesus who said that 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John 4: 22). Besides, true followers are in covenant union with Jesus, who is a circumcised Jew
- It must recognise that, by supporting anti-Israel activities, it is endorsing the objectives of Islam, which is to restore the land of covenant promise to Islamic hegemony and for it to become part of Islamic territory once again. Seriously, what status would Christians and Jews have in such an entity?
- It must heed Paul's instruction for the Gentile Church to provoke Israel to jealousy – for its Messiah (Romans 11: 11). Such Gentiles can be from the nations, and more importantly Arabic-speaking Christians and Muslim-background followers of Jesus. What a great witness it would be for these people to reveal the true face of

Jesus to the Jewish people and to provoke them to jealousy for their own Messiah.

Conclusion

What a great time it will be for the entire world when the nation of Israel turns to Jesus, when 'all Israel shall be saved' and when Jesus shall be the glory of God's people Israel. Concerning Israel, Paul further declared that: '... if their casting away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?' (Romans 11: 15). Which of Jesus' followers would not want to see this happen? If one believes that Jesus did what He said He came to do - to be a ransom to set humanity free from the prison of sin and the penalty of death - then how can we withhold this great message from them, or from anyone?

But there is an adversary who opposes this very message, who opposes everything associated with Almighty God's plan of redemption, who opposes the fulfilment of God's covenant promises. This is the ultimate source and foundation of the current crisis and in fact of every crisis in the world. Yet the contention is at its most intense when it revolves around the people of Israel in general, and the people of Israel in the land of Israel - for this is where God's great plan of redemption will be consummated.

But for the here and now there is only one matter of immediate concern. This revolves around the only remedy for true peace, which is God's desire for all people to repent and call upon the One whom God has raised from the dead (Acts 17: 30-31) and to receive a heart transplant. True peace results from individuals entering covenant union with Almighty God, through Jesus. True peace for the world will be when the nation of Israel enters the fullness of this new covenant relationship and have their hearts of stone replaced by hearts of flesh and have God's Spirit indwelling them (Ezekiel 36: 24-28). Having such a heart

transplant is the key for ALL peoples, the Jewish people, the Arabic-speaking people and every other people group in the world. When this happens then there will be no further evil in the world, evil of the likes that was witnessed on 7th October 2023.

© Kelvin Crombie 2023. kandlcrombie@hotmail.com

Endnotes

¹ The Australian and New Zealand soldiers were collectively known as ANZAC – an acronym for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps. My own research on the subject is found in: *Anzacs, Empires and Israel's Restoration 1798-1948; Anzacs & Israel; Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem*.

² My research on this subject is found in *The Oath of the Covenant; In Covenant with Jesus; Israel, Jesus and Covenant*.

³ For more on this see *Israel, Jesus and Covenant*, published by Heritage Resources.

⁴ Jerusalem was also associated with the 'mysterious' priest king, Melchizedek, to whom Abraham once gave a tithe. David later wrote of a coming leader of Israel who would be a priest-king of the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110: 4).

⁵ As recorded in the Jewish Stones Edition of the *Tanach* (the 'Old Testament').

⁶ Some would say that she was an *almah*, a young woman. But Scripture reveals that invariably a young woman was always a virgin.

⁷ For more on this subject I recommend the writing of Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*; Michael Brown, *Our Hands are Stained with Blood*; and the various writings of Rev James Parkes.

⁸ I refer you to the previously mentioned sources.

⁹ There are numerous sources detailing this dynamic. My own research is mostly found in *Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem*.

¹⁰ While recently visiting the small town of King's Lynn I located a Jewish cemetery. On the wall was a plaque from the local historical society detailing how many in the Jewish community were massacred by Crusaders *en route* to the 'Holy Land.'

¹¹ There was no actual nation of Germany, but a conglomeration of many German-speaking entities.

¹² For more on this I refer you to *Anzacs, Empires and Israel's Restoration 1798-1948; Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem; Three Sons of Abraham*. Important primary sources are found in these publications.

¹³ The beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 was also a major stimulus for the formation of many evangelical missionary societies thereafter, as many Christians saw the Revolution as a sign of the coming end of days and they felt they needed to obey the command of Jesus in Matthew 24 to take the gospel message out to the uttermost ends of the earth.

¹⁴ Bicheno wrote a profound book entitled *A Glance at the History of Christianity and of English Non-Conformity* (London, 1798). Further details are located in *For the Love of Zion; A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem* and *Gallipoli - The Road to Jerusalem*.

¹⁵ Church's Ministry among Jewish People, originally the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, which was formed in London in 1809. Its founder was a German-born Jewish follower of Jesus named Joseph Frey and one of its first vice-Presidents was William Wilberforce.

¹⁶ Ironically in the 1970s one of the assistant bishops of the Anglican diocese of Jerusalem was Elias Houry, a member of the Executive of the notoriously anti-Jewish terrorist organisation the PLO.

¹⁷ My research on this subject is found in: *For the Love of Zion; A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem; Three Sons of Abraham; CMJ – 200 Years of Serving the Jewish People; From Exile to Restoration*.

¹⁸ Consul Young to Lord Palmerston, March 1839, FO 78/368, No. 131. Cited in Hyamson, A. *British Consulate in Jerusalem in relation to the Jews of Palestine 1838-1914* (London, 1939), Vol. p.6.

¹⁹ France had been a protector since the Capitulation agreement with the Turks in 1535.

²⁰ For more on this subject I refer you to the research of Rev David Pileggi of Christ Church, Jerusalem.

²¹ My research on this subject is found in *Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem*.

²² This is not the place to provide an in-depth description of this scenario, but there are many excellent publications on the subject. My own research is primarily found in *Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem*.

²³ My own research and involvement in this period is found in *Journey to Beersheba*.

²⁴ On this occasion one Anzac unit was involved – the 10th Light Horse Regiment from Western Australia.

²⁵ Space does not permit to provide more details about this process, but I point you to the exceptional work of 'The Hague Initiative for International Co-Operation', THINC, headed by Andrew Tucher, www.thinc-israel.org. Also to the various works of Hugh Kitson of Title Deed Media, hugh.kitson@titledeedmedia.com. My own research is found in *For the Love of Zion; Anzacs, Empires and Israel's Restoration 1798-1948*.

²⁶ My own research on this subject is mostly found in: *Seven Phases of the Holocaust; Bazylki & Anna Jocz – Jewish Christians Victims of the Holocaust; Jewish Christians in the Netherlands during the Holocaust*.

²⁷ My own research on this subject is found in: *El Alamein – Halting an Impending Holocaust in the Middle East*.

²⁸ Palestinian Media Watch, PMW, 15th October 2023, www.palwatch.org

²⁹ Jesus is also a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5: 1-7: 28).



CMJ UK

The Church's Ministry
among Jewish People