

Israel & the Shaking of the Nations Pt2

by Keith Parker

Keith Parker explores Israel's unique role as a priestly nation amidst the shaking of the nations, emphasizing God's unchanging nature and the importance of obedience and witness for believers today.

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Scripture: Exodus 19:5

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Description

Keith Parker discusses the significance of Israel in the context of God's plan for the shaking of the nations, emphasizing that this shaking is a divine process to remove what is not of God and establish His purposes. He highlights Israel's unique calling as a priestly nation, chosen to represent God to the world, and reassures that God's gifts and calling for Israel remain irrevocable despite their historical failures. Parker encourages believers to pray for Israel's restoration and the spread of the Gospel, asserting that the fulfillment of God's promises is imminent as we witness the signs of the times.

Transcript

The shaking that God said he would do in the end times, and we noticed that that wasn't just a sort of airy fairy in the sky thing, it wasn't just a spiritual thing. It's a very real thing that's happening in our generation, particularly in our century, and that this is increasing in intensity as the days go by. But our title today is Israel and the shaking of the nations, and we want to begin this evening to see how Israel fits in to this whole thing of the shaking of the nations.

We said that God was basically shaking the nations, or shaking up all that is in the world today, so that everything which is not of God can be shaken right down to the ground, and that the things which are of God can prosper, and also that some things which are not there as yet may be able to be established by God as it were on the cleared ground where other things have come down. So really we are in the middle of a process of what God is doing. I believe we're in the middle of a shaking which will go on right up until the return of the Lord, and until the Lord returns this shaking will take place, and there'll be more and more things that maybe we thought were secure which will come down.

But don't worry about that because if they weren't secure it's just as well they're down, isn't it? There's no point there staying up, you know, there's no point praying that God will, whatever else he does, you know, will you please preserve this or this, you know, those things are going to come down. But God is, at the same time, is in the middle of a process of putting things into place in our world, and he's doing it actually

now but some of it is still up ahead, and I want to share just some of this this evening. Now you could easily go away from here today and think that, well, this man, he's got a thing about Israel, and that, you know, he can't see anything else but Israel.

Now that isn't true, but the subject I'm speaking on today is Israel and the shaking of the nations. I could speak on the church and the shaking of the nations. We've had the shaking bit this afternoon but we're going to have the Israel bit tonight.

So would you turn with me first of all to Exodus chapter 19 and I'm beginning to read to you in verse 1. In the third month when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness, and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak to the children of Israel.

Now Moses was told by God that Israel had a special calling. God was putting a special calling on Israel and it was basically the calling to be a priestly people. Now keep your finger in Exodus 19.

You don't need to turn over with me but if you want to just check up and make sure I'm not making it up as I go along. And turn to Romans 11 and this is what it says concerning Israel from verse 28 of Romans 11. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake.

He's speaking here to Gentile Christians particularly. As concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake. But as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake.

In other words they are an elect people. They are a chosen people. And even in their unbelief, Paul says this, they are beloved for the Father's sake.

And the fathers of course are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs who knew God so wonderfully. And then he says for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance or are irrevocable. So he says whenever God calls you to something, calls somebody to something, he never revokes it.

And when he gifts someone with a particular gift for his service, he never revokes it. Now I believe this is true in our Christian life. You know you as an individual have a calling from God as a Christian.

Now I don't know how many people here have ever backslidden. Maybe you've never done it spectacularly as some people do. But you may have done it just on the quiet.

It wouldn't surprise me. Most Christians have had a time of backsliding in their life. And they have sometimes really lost the sense of the call of God on their lives.

But the call was never revoked. Also you know you can have people who have great giftings from God. And when they are far from God, those giftings cannot operate.

But God never ever revokes them. He is waiting for the day when there is repentance there. And all those gifts that he has put in that life can be used and put into operation in his service.

Now that's true of us, but that's also true of Israel. That as a people they have a special calling upon them and special gifts. And God is not revoking them.

In other words, as far as God is concerned, time doesn't matter all that much. So if you think when God was speaking to Abraham, not Abraham here, I'm sorry, Moses, I think it was probably say around about 1500 BC. Let's say it was 1500 BC.

We're not quite 2000 AD. So it's about three and a half days ago from God's computation that he was saying these things. Do you think God changes his mind in three and a half days? I mean even you wouldn't.

I know the chance of the exchequer might or the prime minister might, but that's because what we've seen earlier this afternoon that those are things beyond their control. But there's nothing beyond God's control. And God doesn't say one thing one day and say, oh well, actually I'm a bit old.

I'm three and a half thousand years older now and I'm much more knowledgeable than I was before and really I've changed my mind. I was a bit primitive back in those days, but now I've got really civilized and we're going to have a different way of looking at things. You see God never changes.

He never changes. James says, in him is no changeableness, neither shadow of turning. In other words, God is from eternity past and unto eternity future.

He never will change one tiny bit. God never had a beginning and he will never have an end and he will never ever change. He is exactly the same God that we had in the Old Testament, the same God that we had in the New Testament and the same God we had today.

The God who provoked the apostle Paul to write about faith, hope and love is the same God who provoked the prophet Moses to write the law and he hasn't changed a bit. He's exactly the same. Some people say the God of the Old Testament is a God of vengeance and the God of the New Testament is a God of love.

No, it's not the truth. God's nature and his name is love. It is nature to love, but also it is in God's nature to be just.

And God's attitude to sin is that if he possibly can through all the work of redemption that he is willing to do, he will forgive sin. But if men refuse to receive the gift that he gives them, he will judge sin. And so we have a God who has never ever changed.

Now then, going back to Exodus 19 and verse 5, he says to Israel, now therefore if, now ifs are very important in the Bible because it means that there is a certain degree of if-iness about this promise. If you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you shall be to me a peculiar treasure above all people for all the earth is mine. He said all the earth is mine.

I could have picked the Hottentots. I could have even picked the British. But I didn't.

I picked the Hebrews. And that was God's business. He picked out the ones he wanted for this job.

And it's no use asking God, you know, how odd of God to choose the Jews, you know. He chose them. That's his problem, if God ever has a problem, which I very much doubt.

And he says all the earth is mine, but you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now what God is saying is, as long as you are in obedience to me, you will function as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

But when you're out of fellowship with me, you will no longer function in this way. Do you understand what he's saying? Now then, do you understand? Good, excellent. Now then, who can tell me where in the New Testament it says that Christians are priests? Which book in the New Testament? 1 Peter, which chapter? Chapter 2, which verse? Wonderful, wonderful.

Did you know that by heart or did you look it up? Never mind. Here we are. You could say he was really asking because he didn't know where it was.

But I did actually. But let's just look at verse 9 of 1 Peter, chapter 2. And Peter says, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, which before time were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Now it's interesting that Peter who wrote this letter was the apostle to the Jews, to the circumcision.

Do you remember Paul and Peter decided, they said, look, you know, we're just a bit different, you know, you go to the Jews, I'll go to the Gentiles. And they agreed to do that. And this letter of 1 Peter was particularly written to Jewish believers, although it applies to Gentile believers also.

So I think it's very interesting that he picked that passage out of the calling of Israel and he said it's also upon the church to be priests. And notice what a priest does. According to this, there are people who show forth the praise of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Now showing forth something means it's something you do publicly. You are witnesses unto the Lord. You make known the good things that God has done for you.

And isn't it true of the church that that works as long as we are in obedience to the Lord? And when we're out of obedience to the Lord, we just are just about useless, aren't we, as witnesses. Isn't that true? And it was so for Israel as well. So God called Israel to be a priestly people.

Now in Israel he had a whole tribe that was priestly. Do you remember what that tribe was called? The tribe of Levi. And within the tribe of Levi he had one family that was very, very specially priestly.

Do you remember whose family it was? Aaron. And he had one person in the family who was the high priest and that was Aaron of course. For us the Lord Jesus Christ is the high priest.

And he indeed is the high priest of Israel as well as being the king of Israel. And he's the high priest of the church. He is the one who offered the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

Aaron had to go in once every year to offer a sacrifice but Jesus has offered it once for all. What we offer are the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving and we also live as people who make known God. Because a priest is a person who comes between God and the people.

And towards God he represents the people but towards the people he represents God. Now then if Israel had a special priestly tribe that stood between the rest of Israel and God we can understand that. But if God says to the whole of Israel look all of you are priests then who are they standing between? God on the one side and who on the other? It can't be themselves can it? Who will it be? Let's be logical.

Who can it be? The world. It's got to be the rest of the world. So you can see that God, actually God didn't change at all.

He said right from the very time at Mount Sinai he said now I am going to choose you people to be a set of people who will make me known to the world. Now then most Christians say and that didn't they make a mess of it and that's why God gave up on Israel and he decided to have the church in place. Now I think it's utterly amazing what the church has accomplished considering what a mess we've been in for 1900 years really.

I mean it has to be the grace of God doesn't it? Thank God we can't stand up and say aren't we marvelous and didn't God do a good thing when he chose us. I just look and see the effect of the witness of the church in the world and I say well look this has to be of God because what a mess we are. As they would say you know a shower of drips you know spiritual drips.

That's what we very often are be honest brethren. Now some people say of Israel well you know they were failures as well. Well they are in good company aren't they then.

But actually they didn't fail as much as you may think. Now I want to go through one or two points where Israel really did do an excellent job and they are quite simple. Do you remember Rahab the harlot right? She kept a house probably not a very nice house in Jericho.

It was on a wall and you remember there were two nice young Israeli soldiers went across to do some spying work and they turned up at her house. Not a very good house for two godly young men to turn up at but they turned up there and this woman I mean she was a brazen woman but she said I know that God has given this place to you people. Please could you arrange it for me to be saved and my mum and dad and our family.

And they said yes if you keep faith with us we'll keep faith with you. And when the walls of Jericho fell down one little bit of wall remained standing on which Rahab's house was. And after the slaughter of Jericho that whole family was brought out and they became part of Israel.

Now Rahab married a man of Judah and she became an ancestress of Jesus and she is one of the few women who are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. Isn't that interesting when you think where she started off. But you see what was it that did it.

Those two young men without even knowing it they brought God into that household. Do you see what I'm saying. Now here's another one another woman Ruth the Moabite.

You remember she married one of Naomi's sons. Naomi a Jewish lady who with her husband fled from famine to go to the land of Moab. And I have a daughter called Naomi and she has told me often she said dad my name is I moan backwards.

And actually if you spell if you spell the biblical Naomi's name backwards that is her character. I mean you listen to her you know. Oh you know no use you know God has really been bad to me and don't call me

Naomi because that means pleasant.

Call me Mara that means bitter. You know she's quite a moaner. But the thing that amazes me is that something in her got through to her daughter-in-law Ruth.

And I mean you know she said well my daughters go back to your home you'd think they'd say oh great you know got away from the mother-in-law you know she moans all the time. And Ruth says no fear. She says where you go I'll go.

Where you dwell I'll dwell. Where you die I'll die. And there I will be buried.

Your God shall be my God. Because she said there's something about you mum you know you do moan at times but there's something somebody you know your God's better than our God. Please you know could I join your organisation you know.

And she goes with her. And you remember Boaz let's collect you know glean in his field and he says of this woman he says this young woman has come to shelter under the wings of the God of Israel. And remember he married her.

And she became she's mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter 1 as well. Now what did she see? She saw something because she met Jewish people who made known unto her God. So they weren't that much of a failure.

Now here's another one. Do you remember Naaman the Syrian? The Syrian general? Full of leprosy. And there in his house was a little scullery girl.

She'd been captured in some raid in Israel. Just a little Israeli girl. And typical little Jewish girl you know she didn't just stay in the scullery.

She went up to her mistress and said you know if my master went down to Israel we've got a fantastic prophet down there you know we've got a better God than yours as well. And if he went down there you know he'd get healed actually. And the amazing thing is that not only did her mistress believe her but also the general believed her too.

What was this little girl? She must have had power in her life mustn't she? She probably didn't even notice it or know it. But you know God used her to witness to the heathen. This heathen he went down he got healed of his leprosy.

He got converted to God and he said please can I take a couple of bags of Israeli soil so that when I pray I can pray off the right ground you know. Well okay it was a bit daft and I'm sure God said you know well goodness me you know you can pray off any soil. But you know God looked at him and said well he's only a poor old heathen anyway and at least he believes in me and I love him.

And you know we shall meet Naomi in heaven. Wouldn't it be wonderful? Here's another one. Remember old Nebuchadnezzar? He was a nasty piece of work if anybody ever was wasn't he? I mean he knocked down, he had the temple burned, he knocked down Jerusalem, he killed people, he poked out the eyes of the king of Judah.

I mean not a very nice man at all. And you remember one day the Lord gave him a dream about a tree that was chopped down in a field. And he went to Daniel the Lord's servant in Babylon and he said Daniel

what's it mean? And Daniel said well you know and I suppose he thought you know am I still going to have my head on my shoulders after this lot? But he said this is what it is.

He said actually you're pretty proud and you've just got to humble yourself or God is going to do something really decisive with you. And he was ever so careful for about a year. And at the end of the year like lots of people who get a warning from God and nothing happens he began to you know get a bit more relaxed.

And there he was he was standing up there looking out of his roof and he says it's not this great Babylon which I have built. You know just imagine him can't you know sticking his hands behind his braces and really feeling proud and sticking his tummy out you know. And the Lord just struck him.

And there he was down mooing, eating grass and so I think it was for seven years. And you know well the royal household must have been in a terrible mess. You know his sons were saying oh crumbs we mustn't let this trickle out we must say he's gone off on a long holiday or something you know.

And I dare say he was kept in a little paddock you know out the back of the palace or something. I mean that's probably what they had to do. But he says at the end of the time he said I lifted up, this is his testimony, I lifted up my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me.

And he said now I know there's only one true God and it's the God of Daniel. And what's more if anybody says anything against the God of Daniel you know that's the last thing he'll ever say. Now you know that wasn't a very Christian thing to say was it? And I'm sure it wasn't even a very Jewish thing to say really.

But God looked down on him and said well you know consider where he started from and he loves me and I love him. And we'll see Neb in heaven. And how, why? Because you've got a man like Daniel who witnessed, do you see what I'm saying? He's a priest of God to Nebuchadnezzar.

I wonder how many of Neb's men got saved as well. But here's another one, you may not know this one because you have to dig it out rather carefully. You ever heard of the Kerasites and the Pelesites? Some of you have heard of it and some of you are kind of thinking crumbs I'm not quite sure what that is.

But I'll tell you where it is. They were two crack regiments in David's army. Now the Pelesites is short for the Philistines actually.

And the next tribe up the coast from the Philistines were the Kerasites. And they were related to the Philistines you see. A bit like the Scots are related to the English.

I don't know how many Scots we've got here but anyway and we're getting up a bit near the border aren't we? But anyway really we're brothers but you know how you fall out in a family. But the Kerasites and the Pelesites were two separate tribes you see but they were very similar. They spoke the same language and they worshipped the same array of gods and all this sort of thing.

Now then David once went down to live amongst those people. Do you remember when it was? When he was persecuted by Saul the king. And in the end he had to flee and he wasn't there very long but it's amazing.

All those Kerasites and Pelesites they wanted to follow with David afterwards and join him and become a crack regiment in his army. Now really this is amazing isn't it? Because the Philistines hated the Hebrews

and the Hebrews returned the compliment. And they didn't get on at all well together.

And I'm absolutely certain that King David who was a godly man would never have had just a bunch of raw heathen in his army however good they were. Those were men who really came to know the Lord. And I'll tell you one of the ways you can tell that they really knew the Lord.

You remember when Absalom David's son rebelled against him and everybody left him and went to Absalom. And the Kerasites and the Pelesites went with him. And David said look go back to your own nation.

And they said oh no we'll stick with you. If we have to die we'll die with you. That has to be the grace of God doesn't it? That made people like that.

And how did they get like that? Well David took 200 debtors who joined him at the cave of Adullam or maybe a few more by then. And landless men and people like that. Just a bunch of Jews.

And he took them into Philistine territory. And the Philistines saw something in those men that impressed them. And they said please can we join your church.

You know in effect that's what they said. To me don't you think that's pretty good? I do. And I can think of another one.

This one you have to dig a little bit. But you know in the Bible we learn about Cyrus the Persian. And he was the man who made a decree that the Jews were to go back and rebuild the temple.

And he said I want you to go back because I want you to pray to God for me. Now in the book of Isaiah God calls him my servant. Now I often wonder about Cyrus that he obviously he had some knowledge of the true God.

And I wonder how it came about. Now this is pure guess work. But it wouldn't surprise me if he'd had a Jewish nurse.

Because none of the royalty in those days were ever brought up by their parents. They aren't even nowadays are they? You know there's always Crawfee or somebody like that you know who brings up members of the royalty. And if you have a really godly nurse or governess who brings up you know a scion of the royal house.

Then that scion of the royal house will grow up godly. And conversely if you have an ungodly nurse or governess you know you're going to have an ungodly you know next king. That's why King Hezekiah who was a good man produced Menashe who was a bad man.

Because he didn't bring up Menashe. He very stupidly allowed the wrong person to bring him up. Same with Josiah you know whose father was an awful man.

But Josiah grew up to be a really godly young man and I believe he was brought up by somebody who also was godly. That's how it goes. And so there are various examples.

And you can see things even in the world today. You know all those Jews have come back from Ethiopia. They're black Jews.

Well let me tell you Jews don't just kind of change skin colour according to where they live. The reason that they're black Jews was because the original Jews who went to Ethiopia witnessed to the black people of Ethiopia and the vast majority of the nation turned to the God of Israel and they became Jews. That's why we have black Jews today from Ethiopia.

That's how it is. It's not a miracle. Well it is in one sense because it's a miracle of grace.

Now later on one of those black Jews went down to Jerusalem to the feast and he met Philip the evangelist. Do you remember? In his chariot. And he'd gone down to the feast and he bought a scroll of the book of Isaiah.

I bet he'd saved up half his life to buy that when he went to Jerusalem. And he went that journey and the big thing I'm going to have is a scroll of the prophet Isaiah all for myself. And there he is reading you know winding it on in the chariot.

It must be a bit difficult reading this thing. And then Philip gets up with him and interprets the prophecy and says it's all about Jesus. Do you remember he got saved? He was a black Ethiopian Jew.

That was what he was. And then later on the Ethiopian nation became overwhelmingly Christian but a few of them remained Jewish. And now those very Jews are back in the land.

Now that is a fruit of Jewish evangelism. Actually that's what it is. That's why you've got what you've got there now.

And here's the biggest success that the Jews ever had. Back in the first century they started to evangelize the heathen. That's us.

And the work they did was so successful that we today think the church is a Gentile organization. Not realizing that it's really a Jewish mission. That's all it is really.

But we've become overwhelmingly Gentile. And listen that is because some Jewish men in the first century were such good witnesses to Jesus and did such a fantastic job that we are here today. Now that was the calling that God put upon Israel.

But now having said all that very obviously Israel did not do all that God wanted them to do. And at various times they fell into sin and unbelief and God wasn't using them. And at the time, not actually at the time when Jesus was crucified, but sort of within about 20 years the nation began to fall away from the Lord Jesus.

At the end of the first century there were a million Jews who believed in Jesus. But gradually they all kind of died out and they weren't followed on by other Jews. So that the nation as a whole rejected the Messiah and guess what? They ceased to be a light to the Gentiles.

They ceased to be a priestly people. They still got the calling but they couldn't carry it out because God had said if you keep my covenant then you will be a priestly people. But yet God's calling was never revoked.

Now then turn with me will you to the book of Revelation now and chapter 7. Now you say oh here he goes he's going into the book of Revelation we're really going to get anything now. I mean if you'd heard young men, if you'd heard all the people I've heard who preach in the book of Revelation you know you'd not do it

yourself. But I'm going to pick a bit which I don't think there's any problem to understand right? Actually a lot of Revelation is easy to understand but we tend to make the word of God too complicated.

Anyway let's read from chapter 7 and verse 1. Now then when you read the New Testament what does it mean when it talks about God's seal? Forget about the book of Revelation but what seal does God put upon us? The seal of the Holy Spirit. So when you've got this picture in Revelation it's not an angel going along with a thing that he kind of stick in hot wax or something like that. It's talking about the seal of the Holy Spirit.

And what it's saying here is until you have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads, until you've put the seal of the Holy Spirit on them I want you to hold back the natural forces of the earth, the wind and so on so that it shouldn't hurt the earth and the trees. Now then I don't think any of us have got a problem, I hope not anyway, in believing that God can bring judgment through natural disasters. Now God can.

Again I would say we ain't seen nothing yet. God's only extending just the end of his finger. I remember I live in York and I remember when York Minster set fire.

And we were sitting in our house, this is the absolute truth, we were sitting in our house watching the lightning flash. And we were saying when is the thunder coming? There was no thunder. And I had some friends who lived up on the walls about 15 miles away and they saw this same phenomenon and said where's the thunder? Now the interesting thing is this young couple and they went to bed that night and half way through the night the young man woke up and he shook his wife and he said I've just had a dream, he said I've dreamt that York Minster's on fire.

She said oh shut up and go to sleep again. He said Julian you have some funny dreams. And so he just rolled over and of course in the morning they put the wireless on, you know, York Minster is in flames.

And they looked at one another absolutely shocked and it was just amazing. And if you knew anything about it, you know, the sky over York was completely clear that night. And the other thing was that just one transept of York Minster had the roof burned out.

When they checked it out afterwards they found that the fire had begun in the centre of the beams. Now when I say beams, these were tree trunks like that. In the centre of the oak beams the fire had begun.

There was a wonderful lightning conductor system right the way round the Minster. It was completely blown. There was also a fire alarm system.

That was blown. And what's more the fire spread downwards not upwards. I mean where are you? Went into town the following day and every working chap I met who, you know, didn't have any time for God, he said, well you know who did that don't you? He said it's Him up there.

They should never have made that bloke a bishop what didn't believe in the resurrection. I mean they were saying it. I'm walking around the marketplace, you know, and people were saying it on the market stalls, you know.

The only people who had a problem were the Christians. Particularly if they were Anglicans. Now some of you here are Anglicans and I love the Anglican church and God loves the Anglican church too.

He loves the Anglican church so much that He burned the roof off York Minster to fire a volley over the bowels of the Anglican church to say look be careful who you make a bishop. I believe that's why God did it because He loved them. But I do believe God did it.

And some people have a problem to believe God does anything. You know, you just have to be really careful young man because you know you have to understand the dispensational truth and God doesn't do anything nowadays. I mean God does do things nowadays.

I say hallelujah too, I'm glad He does. But I know you can go off the beam on these things but to say that God can't do something with the elements is to me to be saying something very foolish. And here in this Revelation 7 God is saying look before we really let the natural powers of the earth loose to bring judgment I want you to put the Holy Spirit on my servants.

And He says on their foreheads. Now then your forehead is that part of you which is most visible. The fore part of your head.

And when the Holy Spirit is in a person there's evidence. People can see a difference you see. It's something that's like that.

And so in other words it's not a secret seal deep deep inside so deep that you know only a drilling rig can reach it. It's right there visible. And God says look I've got some servants and I want them sealed in their foreheads.

Now I know the Jehovah's Witnesses say a lot about the 144,000. I'm not one. They got it wrong.

About what they think the 144,000 is. They think that they're some special. They think they're the only Christians who will ever be born again.

That's what they actually believe. And that anybody beyond the 144,000 cannot be born again. That's why they don't teach you know that to become a Jehovah's Witness you need to be born again.

Because you can't be. Because by now God is 144,000. That's what they teach.

But God teaches that the 144,000. I mean whether it's a literal 144,000 or just an awful lot of people. But they are all Jews.

Of the tribe of Judah. Of the tribe of Reuben. Of the tribe of Gad.

Of the tribe of Asher. Of the tribe of Naphtali. Of the tribe of Menashe.

Of the tribe of Simeon. Of the tribe of Levi. Of the tribe of Issachar.

Of the tribe of Zebulun. And all of those tribes. And the 12,000 from every tribe.

And what he's saying is look out of Israel I'm going to pick a crack regiment for my army. It's going to be a lot of people and they're going to be going to be filled with the Holy Spirit and they are my servants he said. Now what do servants do? They serve.

And how do you serve the Lord? Well you do it by doing what he says don't you? That's how you serve the Lord. And one of the things he says is you shall be witnesses unto me. That's one of the ways we serve the Lord.

And in praying and lots of other ways as well. But don't forget that the calling upon Israel was to be a priestly people. Priestly people with a relationship with God.

But also a priestly people who would make known to the world the goodness of God. And here is God really saying look it's only three and a half days ago that I said this. You see three and a half thousand years.

A thousand years is butters a day. Okay don't get too blown if I say it's three and a half days ago. But from God's point of view it's only a short time ago.

He said you know the echo scarcely finished in heaven about me saying I was calling them to be a kingdom of priests. So obviously I haven't changed my mind and I'm about now to do this. And so he chooses them out to be a kingdom of priests and to serve him.

To me that is a wonderful thing. You know our God never changes his mind. And our God never revokes something that he has said.

Are you pleased about that? Because I am. I'm so glad that God didn't save me one day and then said oh if I'd really known what that Keith Parker was like I'd have, I wouldn't have chosen him. I think I'm, I think I'll pack him in.

You know I mean and often the devil says to us doesn't he you know you're, you're no use. I wonder if God really, you know maybe God's just given up on you. Have you ever had that feeling come to you? Well if you haven't you're a very, very fortunate Christian.

But if you're fairly normal like me you'll have had it two or three times at least. And you know God doesn't change his mind and he hasn't changed his mind with Israel. Now then if they're going to be servants of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit, they're not just sealed with the Holy Spirit in order to look beautiful and to carry a lily round you know and looking to the sky and everybody says oh what wonderful people you know.

I mean they're there to do the Lord's work right? Now then let's look and see what work they do because remember that this chapter, there weren't chapters in the Bible when it was first written and there weren't even full stops and commas and there weren't verses. Now then verse 9 this is immediately after he's described these servants of the Lord. After this I beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number of all nations.

Now those are the people that God called Israel to witness to, the nations. And of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice saying salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

These are all heathen you know red and yellow, black and white all are precious in his sight. They're from every nation on the face of the earth. They're all up there in heaven waving palm branches saying hallelujah isn't Jesus wonderful and God has saved us and oh it's a tremendous time.

This is all the angels stood around the throne and about the elders and the four beasts and fell down before the throne on their faces and worshipped God and said amen, blessing and oh it's a marvellous time going on up in heaven. And then one of the elders, verse 13, one of the elders turned around, elders

can be awkward people can't they, you know that. One of the elders turns around and says to me what are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they? And John who was a very polite person said sir thou knowest.

I mean he could have said what you want to ask me for you know if he was a bit impolite but he didn't. He didn't know. So the elders said look listen I'll tell you who they are.

These are they which came out of the great tribulation and they've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Where did they hear about the gospel from? Because you know it's through the foolishness of preaching isn't it that people come to know the Lord. Where did they hear it from? Well it's obvious isn't it.

God said look before I let things really loose on the earth I want to seal with the Holy Spirit a large number of Jewish people. Now that large number of Jewish people obviously have to really believe in the Lord first before they can be sealed with the Holy Spirit for a particular task. So by this time in history there is a large number of Jewish people who believe in the Lord Jesus and they are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

They go out and do this work and this is the result of their work. I can't escape from that. Now then you say well that's all very nice Keith and you know you do get nice and worked up in the pulpit and it's nice to see you but you know where are we today? I mean you know let's be practical.

Well I'm going to be practical now. Just go back with me being practical to the gospel according to St. Matthew and chapter 23. And I want to point out in this passage we're going to look at, remember again that we say chapter 23 but it's just going straight the way through in the original, no chapter headings and so on.

And first of all, well there are two sets of people that Jesus speaks to in the passage we're going to look at. The first set of people he speaks to is the unbelieving Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and the scribes. And the other set of people he speaks to are the disciples who represent the church.

So first of all we're going to see what he says to the Pharisees and scribes. Here's verse 27 and this is how to make friends and influence people and be gentle Jesus, meek and mild. Listen to this.

Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. When's he saying that to somebody? You want to influence them, dear me. But you see Jesus was very straight wasn't he in the things that he said.

Then down to verse 33, even worse, listen to this one, you get thrown out to some churches on this. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? They wouldn't like that some places would they? But he said it. Now then, he's still speaking to the same people, listen to this.

Wherefore behold I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes. Who's he speaking to? He's speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes. Now the Pharisees and the scribes are still with us today.

They are the ultra-orthodox Jews. They are spiritually descended from the Pharisees and scribes. Now like in that video we saw, he said don't let yourself get into anti-semitism because of their attitude.

That would be quite wrong. But realize that you've got a problem with them. So Jesus said I'll send you these people and some of them can't remember what I said.

Okay, verse 35, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barakas whom you slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say to you all these things shall come upon this generation. By the way generation there can mean what we mean by a generation which is about a 40 year period of people.

But it can also mean a nation, a generation can be a nation. That's why Jesus said you're a generation of vipers. He said you're a nation just of snakes who bite people.

That's what you are. And he said everything will come upon this generation, this generation of vipers. And he said Jerusalem, Jerusalem thou that killest the prophets.

Now I never saw a city kill anybody, did you? Did you ever see a city pick up stones and throw? No you never did. But the people who live in the city, they did it. And he said Jerusalem, Jerusalem thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee.

How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. He said you know I'd come to Jerusalem, people would gather round me and then you lot would come up and say shoo, shoo, go away, don't listen to that man, he's a heretic. And that was what the scribes and Pharisees were doing.

And he said behold your house is left unto you desolate. That refers to the temple. Jesus used to call it my father's house but he said listen if you're that keen on it you can keep it.

It can be yours and what's more it's not going to last for very long. It'll be desolate. And then he said this, for I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth till you shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

He said you scribes and Pharisees, he said when I came into Jerusalem and my disciples were waving the palm fronds and throwing the garments in front of my donkey, he said you lot were standing there with your arms folded saying utterly disgusting, fancy, going on like that and Rabbi stop your followers doing this. And Jesus said listen if I was to stop them the stones would be crying out. You know, do you remember Jesus saying that? Now he's saying now to them, he says listen I am not going to return to this earth until you scribes and Pharisees change your attitude to me and you start doing what my disciples did, waving the palm fronds, you know welcoming me and saying Baruch Haba B'Shem Adonai.

Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord. See they never said that. Well I've heard so many sermons preached in churches, you know it gets to Good Friday and you get the same people who on Palm Sunday were waving their palm branches in the air, were on Good Friday crying out.

So we see the fickleness of human nature. Well it would be nice if it were true but it isn't true because the people who were waving the palm branches were his disciples. It says so in the Gospels and it says that the Pharisees said stop your disciples and the people who were shouting out crucify were a completely different set of people.

All the good men were asleep in their beds that night including most of the disciples and these people were a renter crowd that the chief priests had brought in. They would say anything that they were paid to

say and that's exactly what happened. But Jesus said listen until you change your attitude and you say blessed be he that comes in the name of the Lord I am not coming.

Now you know this tells us something about the importance of the restoration of the Jews to the Lord, doesn't it? See that thing we saw in Revelation about the Lord sealing servants out of the twelve tribes of Israel. By the way people say that ten of the tribes are lost. I can prove to you that they are not lost.

So I'll prove to you they are not lost. Okay just a quickie now. Go to the beginning of the letter of James.

That's immediately after Hebrews. James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad greeting. And that was inspired by the Holy Ghost.

So there has to be twelve tribes. The ten are not lost. I'll tell you another one too.

Do you remember Anna who met Jesus as a little baby in the temple? Do you remember her? Mentioned in the beginning of Luke's Gospel it says she was the wife of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. That was one of the ten tribes that's supposed to have been lost. Now I know a lot of Jews over the centuries of all the tribes have been lost.

But I believe there's some of all those tribes still remaining. Only God knows who belongs to which tribe you know. But I believe they're still there.

You know Paul when he spoke to the Sanhedrin he talked about our twelve tribes who day and night worship the Lord. So okay I merely said that just to point out that out of those twelve tribes God is going to seal servants and the Lord is going to do this before he comes. Now don't get me onto an argument about when the rapture occurs please.

Because let me say this. Christians have lots of different opinions about when the rapture is going to occur. And I have to say this that I'm not absolutely certain myself when it's going to occur.

But I'm quite sure it will sometime. And really if Jesus had wanted to make it absolutely crystal clear so that no idiot could have got it wrong then he would have put about five more verses in the New Testament which would have really cleared up any problem on this thing about when the rapture shall occur. So I don't want to get into an argument about that.

All I'm doing to you brothers and sisters is to bring forth what the Lord Jesus actually says in his word. That his coming has something to do with the restoration of the Jews to the Lord. Okay.

Now then if you go into chapter 24 that's a different subject and it's talking now to the church. It was to specifically to and if you see in verse 3 the disciples came to him privately saying tell us when shall these things be. And if you look in Mark 13 don't bother to turn it up but you can find it later on.

Mark 13 verse 3 it says that it was Peter and James and John and Andrew. So it was four of the central apostles who came to Jesus privately. And remember when Jesus spoke to the disciples privately he told them everything plainly not in parables.

Do you remember when he said that? He said the people who are outside the unbelievers I talk to them in parables so that they can't understand. But to you who are inside you are given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. So I tell you it's straight.

So now Jesus is telling them straight. And just look at verse 14. And it says this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.

So the Lord Jesus says that before the end comes the gospel has got to go out and be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations. Now I know some people argue that the gospel of the kingdom is different from the real gospel. But now this is the lovely thing about having three synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Because the Holy Spirit can actually clear up difficulties. And guess what if you turn into Mark 13 which is the parallel passage. The verse that corresponds to this it just says and the gospel shall be preached to all nations.

Now I believe that the original the Lord Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom but I believe the Holy Spirit said to Mark leave out that bit about the kingdom just say the gospel so they won't get all tangled up about which gospel it is. There is only one gospel. And it's the gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ and it will bring in the kingdom ultimately.

But here we are then the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all the nations and then shall the end come. But this is a kind of a two pronged thing about the Lord's coming. The Lord says I'm going to do something in Israel.

They're going to have to say blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. But I'm going to do something in the nations also. And the gospel is going to go out to the end of the earth.

Now the gospel has gone an awful long way around the world right now really. Jesus didn't promise that every single individual in every nation would hear the gospel actually. He didn't promise that certainly he didn't promise that every single individual in the nations would be saved.

But he did promise that the gospel would go out to all the world. Listen if we love the Lord Jesus there should be two concerns in our hearts to reach Israel and reach the nations. And those are two specific things you see that the Lord Jesus spoke concerning his coming.

And now when Israel gets reached there's going to be an amazing amount of things happen. Turn with me to Romans 11. Now it's probably very familiar ground to you but let's just go through one or two things that Paul says about Israel in Romans 11.

And I just want to look in verse 15. I can only pick out a few verses here because we're a bit strapped for time. Verse 15.

For if the casting away of them, that is Israel, be the reconciling of the world. In other words when Israel ceased to believe as a nation the gospel went out to the ends of the earth. See he said now that was a real blessing from God.

It was a blessing in disguise. He said if that was so what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead. He said when they come back to the Lord it will be just like a resurrection.

The effect it will have on the world will be electric. They're going to be the most effective evangelist the world has ever seen. Do you understand what I'm saying? Now then you say well okay when is this going to happen? Well again I find it very hard to set dates for these things but we do have some very clear

statements in scripture about this restoration of Israel.

Let me turn you up just one or two from the Old Testament. Turn to Zechariah chapter 12. Now the context of Zechariah chapter 12 is that there is a multinational attack on Jerusalem.

Now you wouldn't have to be very spiritual to believe that nowadays would you? Right? So it's ever so easy to believe. Now this multinational attack, remember it's prophesied by Zechariah. And Zechariah was alive at the time when they were building the second temple.

That was after they'd come back from Babylon. Now this passage Zechariah chapter 12 has never ever been fulfilled in history. So therefore it must be reserved for fulfillment later on.

And see what happens. We'll just go to verse 9. And it shall come to pass in that day, God says, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. In other words there's going to be one almighty battle and it's the Lord who's going to come against those nations.

I believe that that one verse refers to much of what we have in Ezekiel 38 and 39 which again speaks of a big multinational attack on Israel. But we can't go into that tonight in detail. But then look in verse 10 what happens.

At the same time as you have the deliverance, the military deliverance, you have, and I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications. Now then the spirit of grace and supplications is the Holy Spirit. Right? Because he is the spirit of grace, he brings the grace of God and he is the spirit of supplications, he teaches us really to pray.

Remember when Paul got converted, the Lord spoke to Ananias and said, there's Saul of Tarsus, behold he prayeth. Now you saw pictures of Jews praying at the Western Wall, didn't you? And Jews can pray and Paul could pray. I mean Saul as he was then, you know, I bet he was really good at it, you know, he was doing all that stuff.

But for the first time in his life he's really making contact, blind as a bat and making contact with God, oh wonderful. He said you go there, he's really praying this time. And listen, when the Holy Spirit comes upon somebody, you can pray, can't you? When you get born again of the Holy Spirit, suddenly you find you're in a relationship with God, isn't that right? So the Holy Spirit comes upon the Jewish people, it's grace, undeserved grace and it's prayer.

And then it says, they shall look on me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. As a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they change their attitude to Jesus. Now this verse in Zechariah 12 is a problem to the rabbis, it really is a problem to them.

And they look at it and they say, oh well, it probably means something else, let's go on to the next chapter, you know, that's how they go. But it's talking about the Lord Jesus and it says, they shall look upon me whom they have pierced. Now it's no use you going to a Jew and saying, you killed Jesus.

Well they didn't actually, it was somebody way back who killed Jesus. It's like going to the Italians and saying, you know, you're under a curse because of Pontius Pilate. I never heard anybody say that about the Italians.

So why do they say it about the Jews? But anyway, you know yourself, when you really come to know the Lord and the Lord reveals the cross to you, you say in your heart, I did it, didn't you? I did it. And the Jewish people will say, we did it, we pierced him. Alright, we weren't there at the time, but we did it.

And all the things that the church has tried to do, but with wrong methods over the centuries and utterly failed, God will do in a very short time with Israel. Isn't that wonderful? Just by the pier, pouring out the Holy Spirit. And it says, and they will mourn and be in bitterness.

And it actually says, they'll all go off by themselves to have a good cry. Now, you know, sometimes in meetings, you know, you get somebody starts to cry in a meeting. And it is amazing how all the people gather around them and put their arms around their shoulders and say, there, there, don't cry, you know, God loves you and all that.

Let them have a good old cry, because if it's the Holy Spirit, then he wants them to have a good old cry. He's dealing with them, leave them to God. You know, let God deal with them.

He's far better at it than you are. You might comfort them out of something that God is wanting to do in their hearts, you see. So that's what's going to happen.

When the Jews all start weeping, they're going to all go off by themselves and have an individual experience with the Lord. That's going to be wonderful. I believe that that's got to happen before the servants of God can be sealed to do the work that God has for them.

Now, this work is actually, in many ways, beginning, even now, even as we are here. There are Jews, plenty of Jews, who believe in the Lord Jesus, and particularly in Israel. You remember when I brought Lance Lambert here back in February, and I spent hours and hours behind the wheel of my car driving him around the north of England.

So I talked a lot to him, and he said, one day, he said, in his home, there was a ring at the door. He went to the door, and there was this rabbi there, a real Orthodox rabbi, he said, in a big black hat and side curls and a big long black gabardine, you know, how they get on in the hot weather, I don't know, but they do. And he said, I looked into his eyes, and he said, I knew he was a believer.

So he came into the house, and they shared all about the Lord Jesus together, and then he said, well, you know, why don't you get rid of all this paraphernalia then, he said. So the rabbi said, well, he said, who should I join? He said, shall I be a Pentecostal? I don't like swinging on the lampstand. Should I be a Baptist? They're too boring, you know.

Do I be an Anglican? Well, I do, he said. He said, I think the Lord has told me to stay where I am. But he said, listen, I know eight other men in the rabbinate who believe as I do, in Jerusalem alone, Orthodox rabbi.

Now, you know, you pay your money, you take your choice, but I think something's happening. I really do. A friend of mine, a Methodist minister, and his wife went to Jerusalem just a few years ago on their silver wedding anniversary.

Their family paid for them to go to a hotel in Jerusalem. And in the hotel was also a rabbi and his wife from New York. And, you know, they got sitting down in the hotel lounge talking to these people, very friendly people.

And then eventually the rabbi's wife said to them, now then, you tell me, do you think that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of Israel? And they gulped and said, well, yes, we do. And she said, well, actually, so do we. You know, they said they were so shocked by this revelation.

Now, things are happening therefore, you see. All these Russian Jews who are coming in, we understand that maybe from 10 to 15 percent of them are saved before they ever get to Israel. Because they lost all their Jewish faith because, you know, there were no synagogue or anything like that.

Then they met Christians in Russia and just got saved. And then they come to Israel. And incidentally, if you're a Jew from England and you want to immigrate into Israel, you've got to have a letter from a rabbi and all sorts of things.

But if you're a Russian, there are no rabbis, so all you do, they give you a piece of paper that says, I declare that I, Ivan Ivanovich, am a Jew, signed Ivan, you know, and that's it, you're in. And God's got a really good sense of humor because they're saying, you know, we're not going to let you in if you believe in Jesus. And so God says, oh no, you and whose army? I'll get in who I want.

And it's amazing they're going in. And they are very, very open to the Gospel. The Jews who come in, you know, even the atheists who come from the Soviet Union, believe in nothing, they're open to the Gospel, you see.

So God is doing something. But listen, this is only the beginning. It's just the twinges at the beginning.

You know, in the Bible it tells us there are the birth pangs of the Kingdom of God. Now, I remember the very first time my wife and I were expecting a baby. Well, it was her really, but it seemed to be me because it was so exciting, you know, when it's the first one.

And I remember one night, one never-to-be-forgotten night, she said, oh, I've got some twinges, you know. I said, oh, great, you know, it's going to be here by the morning. And we sat up all night reading books, you know.

Of course, I mean, after, later on, you know, we realized that this wasn't the way to do it. But, I mean, later on I would have just given her two aspirins, knock on the head and said, turn over and go to sleep again. But anyway, we were so excited, you know, and of course it was so stupid because the poor girl, she was awake basically then for about 36 hours, you know, before the baby was born.

But we weren't to know that. It was just the twinges, the twinges at the beginning. And it can take a bit of time.

Listen, we're having the twinges of the birth pangs. Even the shaking we're talking about in the world, it's only the twinges. Don't get, you know.

But the thing is, when the twinges start, pack your bags for the maternity home. It's coming. And the twinges are starting.

Have your bags packed, folks. We could be going any time. And we need to be faithful to the Lord in this time, particularly.

You know, God hasn't put us on the earth just to be raptured out of it. Not just for that. He's put us on the earth to be witnesses, hasn't he? Wouldn't it be a shame when we stand before the Lord Jesus at his

coming and he says to us, well, you know, you did a lot of study on the second coming, but you didn't tell many people about me.

And he's going to have to say, well, I'm afraid you've forfeited a whole lot of the rewards I would have loved to have given you. You'll get to heaven, but I'm just sorry I couldn't give you more than I can. You see? The Lord wants us to serve him.

And here's one of the ways we can serve him. If we want to see those two things fulfilled, the Jews turning to the Lord and the gospel going out to all the nations, first of all, these are two things that should be very central in our praying. They should be very central in our praying because we know that prayer actually brings about, in the grace of God, it brings about the things of God.

Now, I don't understand prayer. You know, God says, I'm going to do so-and-so. And some Christians say, all right, then Lord, do it then.

You're sovereign, you just do it. We'll sit back and watch you. But God says, no, when I say I'm going to do so-and-so, I want you to start praying.

You know, the Lord Jesus, when he was in his ministry, he said, I only do what I see the Father doing. And I imagine he said, you know, he probably prayed every day and said, Lord, what do you want me to do today? And he said, well, you know, there'll be a lame man just down the road there, just deal with him. And I'll tell you one that he never dealt with.

Do you remember the lame man in the gate beautiful of the temple? Jesus often walked in through there and every time he looked at him, the Father said, no, it's not for now, leave that, that's for Peter and John later on. And so the Lord didn't heal everybody, actually. He did what the Lord told him.

And we need to do what the Lord tells us. And I believe, brothers and sisters, without trying not to be too dramatic, I think we are living in times when these predictions from the scriptures have to be very close to fulfillment. So it's good that we can pray for them.

Now, we're living in a time, aren't we, when we want instant everything. It's got to happen immediately. Well, God's very merciful to us because a lot of these things are going to happen pretty soon.

You know, there were Christians. You know, if you know your history, Oliver Cromwell, over 300 years ago, invited the Jews back to this country. They'd been expelled in 1290 and there'd been no Jews all that time, and he invited them back.

But maybe you don't know this, that a lot of the Puritan Christians in England at the time said, if we bring the Jews back here, we could use the British Navy to transport them back to Palestine so that we could start the State of Israel again for them. They actually had that in mind. And the Dutch reform, the other side of the channel, said, we could use our Navy too.

Now, it wasn't God's time, you see, so it never happened. But those men and women, they prayed for the restoration of Israel 300 years ago. Now, they lived in a generation when it wasn't instant everything.

Now, every one of their prayers they prayed, God has written down in a book. My Bible tells me your prayers are written down in a book and your tears are kept in His bottle. And I tell you, God's got a very, very big bottle up there with all the tears of the saints in.

But, isn't it lovely, when you get near to the fulfilment of something in the Word of God, then you know that all the prayers of the saints, for maybe for centuries, that they never saw answered, those prayers are going to be answered. It isn't just because we pray that God's going to do these things. There's lots of far better men and women than we who have prayed.

And their prayers, at long last, are going to be answered. Those people in heaven are going to say, right, oh, at long last, Lord. You know, you're going to bring our prayers into operation.

But we also can pray. Now, in closing, let me look at one other scripture. This is in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapter 36.

And I've got to take this a bit out of context, but I can assure you I'm not using this scripture dishonestly. You can check it for yourself. But we'll begin in verse 23.

God is speaking here through the prophet to Israel. It's all the same word. Now, that's the promise of the restoration of Israel to the land.

But then he goes on to say, Well, now, how many of us have experienced that in our own lives? Anybody but me experience what's talking about here? You know, having your heart washed and receiving the Holy Spirit and all of that, being born again and all of that. I mean, this is straightforward Christian salvation, isn't it? What we call Christian salvation. Listen, that's what Israel's going to get.

Now then, there's only one way to get that. You have to come through the Messiah, through Jesus. So they've got to come through Jesus to get it.

See, the way of salvation for Jews is no different from the way of salvation for Gentiles. So it's through the same Messiah. And so God says, I'm going to take you back to your land and then I'm going to save you.

Well, listen, we're in the middle of the process of millions coming back to the land. There's already a lot back there and there'll be a lot more back yet. But we're also at the beginning of the process where God is starting to save Israel.

And it's happening as we're here just at this moment. But what's going to happen ultimately is going to be so amazing that it will just amaze everybody on the earth. I mean, you think of your ordinary sort of godless bloke in the street and you go and talk to him about Jesus and he says, Oh, you know that a wild lot of these Christians, they're always kind of talking about Jesus.

The one people you feel confident with are these rabbis. They never talk about anything to you. They just kind of keep themselves to themselves and keep in their own religion.

There's going to be one day when a rabbi comes down the street with his big black hat and his big long black gabardine coat and his Jesus stickers down his lapels. And he's going to say, you know, can I tell you about Jesus? Oh no, not them as well. But it's going to happen.

Can you imagine the impact that's going to make on the Gentile world? I mean, that is going to make an impact. Because the one thing your ordinary bloke in the street is quite certain of, he says, Jews, oh, they're people who don't believe in Jesus. And I've even had people come to me and say, look, it's all very well you preaching what like you're preaching.

But the Jews didn't receive him and they ought to have known. So how do we know that it's true? Oh boy, you know, wait till they come. Now listen, there's a sting in the tail of this whole thing.

Look at verse 37 in this chapter, chapter 36 of Ezekiel, verse 37. Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. He says, listen, I'm not going to do this unless somebody prays.

But the Lord's got some other priests in the world, hasn't he? So we need to pray for that. We're powerful people, you know, particularly if we pray according to the will of God. Now God has said what he wants to happen, so he says, now you pray about it then.

And if I can inspire you in any way by what I've said to see the relevance of praying for Israel. You know, there's one good reason to pray for Israel, that's out of gratitude. Because they gave us our saviour, they gave us the scriptures, they gave us the church.

They gave us practically every good thing we know as believers. So out of gratitude we should pray for them. But here's another good reason, out of greed.

Pray for them out of greed, because if you're greedy for the good things of God, there's going to be more of the good things of God around when they come to know the Lord. The power of God will be even more apparent. Now I know, you know, many Christians sort of see the, you know, the last days scenario as, you know, God doing great things in the church.

And I do believe that that is the truth, but it's only half the truth. The other half is God has not forgotten his calling upon Israel. And the scriptures, so clearly to my mind, show us what he wants to do.

Now you, again, some people can say, well if God's going to do it, he must do it. You know, he's sovereign, he can just do it. But we need to pray.

You remember when Daniel prayed and the Lord revealed something to him, it said that then he began to pray when the Lord revealed something to him. He revealed to him, he'd been doing Bible study, and he saw that Israel was going to come out of Babylon in 70 years. The 70 years was nearly up, and if he'd been a charismatic, he would have had a celebration meeting.

You know, and they would have been playing their guitars and everything up at the front and, you know, kind of doing whoopee and everything and dancing and pushing the chairs back, and they'd say, hallelujah, you know, God's about to deliver his people. But Daniel didn't go, you know, God said he's going to do it, he's sovereign. He wasn't daft, you know, he knew a few things, did Daniel.

And because of his intercession, God brought something about, brought about the restoration, the first restoration of Israel back to the land. They had to go back to the land because the Messiah was going to come to the land, you see, the first time off. Listen, they've got to be back in the land now because the Messiah's going to come back there the second time off.

And boy, what God is going to do. Well, may we be moved upon by the Lord as believers. Amongst all the other things we should be concerned about, and there are many, let us be concerned also with what God is going to do with Israel, because it is key.

Now, some people say, well, Israel's such a tiny nation, you know, why bother about them? Well, have you ever heard of a thing called a fulcrum? You know, when you want to move something very heavy, you get a crowbar and you pull it down, but you have to make it go across a fulcrum, don't you? And a fulcrum is a very, very small thing. It's not big like the crowbar is. It's very small.

But because it's in a strategic position, it's very, very important. Well, Israel is like a fulcrum. It may be little, but it's very important.

If Israel isn't there in place, then the big lifting up of the nations to the Lord doesn't take place as God wants it to take place. Now, it will take place. God's going to do it anyway because He's sovereign, but I want to be involved in that, don't you? Let's pray.

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