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Bridges for Peace

Israel Teaching Letter

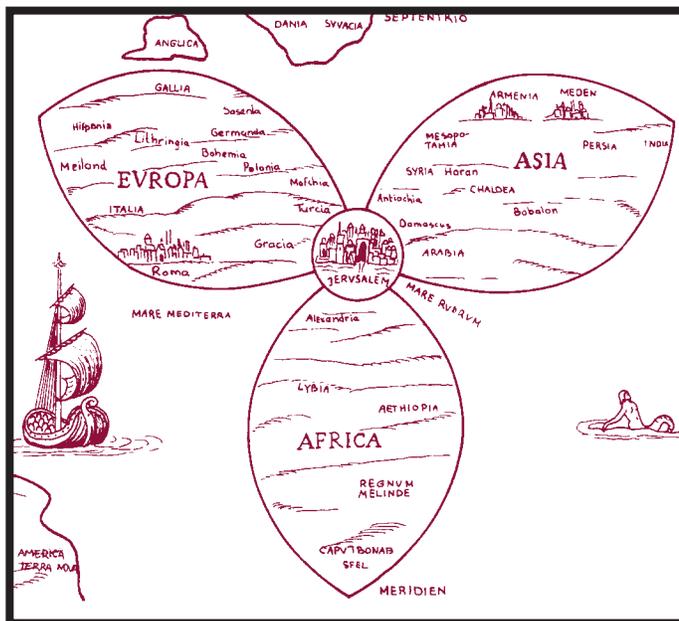
Vol. # 779903

JERUSALEM, DRIVING THE NATIONS CRAZY

For most of recorded history, Jerusalem has been the central city of the world. Many ancient maps show Jerusalem as the center of the world. This is because it is a very special city to God. During the Old Testament period, Jerusalem was the place where God's presence dwelled in His Temple. Jerusalem was, and is, both the religious and political center of Israel and the destination of the pilgrimages of God's people. During the New Testament Period, Jerusalem was the scene of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Yeshua (Jesus), and in a day to come, He will return to this city again.

Shortly after the time of Yeshua (AD 70), the Second Temple was destroyed and many of the Jewish people were exiled from the city and the region by the Romans. Despite a valiant Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD 133-135, the city was completely lost to the Jewish people. The Roman conquerors changed its name from Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina, and the Jews were forbidden from entering their ancient capital, except for one day a year to mourn the destruction of both Temples. For generations, the Jews living outside the Land of Israel longed to return to their city. As they celebrated Passover every year in exile, the prayer on their lips was, "Next year in Jerusalem."

For the past 120 years, the Jewish people have steadily returned to the Land of Israel and to their beloved Jerusalem. When the sovereign State of Israel was established in 1948, they made the western half of the city their



Ancient map showing Jerusalem as the hub of Europe, Africa and Asia.



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capital. The Arab and Moslem world fought against this development, launching numerous wars. In the 1967 Six Days War, Jerusalem came under complete Jewish sovereignty in fulfillment of Yeshua's prophecy in Luke 21:24b, *"Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* Again the Arabs and many Gentile nations rejected the outcome of a war they started, and they have continued to come against the nation of Israel. Even the so-called "peace process" is the realization of the Palestinian's "Phased Program" designed to take Israel, piece by piece, culminating in a final war to occupy all the land, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Today, the world reels from the lack of peace in Jerusalem.

- Yasser Arafat has repeatedly claimed he is declaring a sovereign Palestinian State on May 4th, 1999, with Jerusalem as its capital. Even if this date is postponed, Jerusalem will become a flashpoint and the "rope" in an international tug-of-war.

- Each year on the last day of the Moslem holy month of Ramadan, the Moslem world protests Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem. They call it "Al Quds Day," or Jerusalem Day, as Al Quds is the Arabic name for Jerusalem. This year in January, protests were staged all over the Moslem world. The largest demonstrations by far were held in Iran, where more than 3 million people rallied in the major cities. In Teheran, hundreds of thousands attended a rally where a resolution was read calling for struggle "until the aggressor Zionist regime is annihilated." A banner was carried displaying a slogan by the late Ayatollah Khomeini that read: "Quds [Jerusalem] is part of Islam's body." The Iranian Parliament Speaker, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, told worshippers at Friday prayers, "There is no country named Israel. There is Palestine, and the thieves who have occupied the houses of Palestinians should be removed from those houses."

The world seems to forget the fact that Jerusalem is the historical capital and central place of worship only to the Jewish people. While Israel struggles to hold onto its historical capital, the nations are plotting to bisect the city once again, at best, and remove its Jewish sovereignty, at worst.

The prophet Zechariah spoke of a future, prophetic day when God would make a regathered, Jewish Jerusalem into a burdensome stone to the nations. He would use this as a test to judge the nations. Those who understand His plan and support His vision for Jerusalem will be blessed, while those who reject it will be judged. In this, He would show His power to defend His city and His people. God spoke through Zechariah to say: *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about, when they shall be in siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day, I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, says the Lord, I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with madness... And it will come to pass, in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."* (Zech. 12:2-4a,9).

God also spoke through Isaiah the prophet in chapter 34 about His *"indignation upon all nations and His fury upon all their armies"* (v. 2a) The reason? In verse 8 He says, *"For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion."* The judgment on the nations in a prophetic day to come was over the issue of Jerusalem! Then, in chapter 35, Isaiah goes on to speak of future Kingdom blessing for a regathered and restored Israel.

Just as it was prophesied, today the entire world seems to be involved over the issue of Jerusalem, which is becoming the central focus of world attention as we move closer and closer to the coming of Messiah. Certainly, as people of the Bible, we need God's perspective on Jerusalem, the city He calls His own.

What is it about Jerusalem that drives the nations crazy?

This question has been answered very well by Jim Gerrish, the Director of our Bridges for Peace Galilee Study Center. His reasoning is so clear and biblically-based, that I want to share it with you so you can better understand the times and seasons in which we are living today. Yes, these may be controversial times, but they are also exciting times as we see the hand of God moving in our midst. These are Bible times, and we are privileged to be able to witness God actively working out His plans in our lifetime.

FOUR IMPORTANT REASONS JERUSALEM AFFECTS THE WORLD

1) JERUSALEM REMINDS PEOPLE OF THE GOD OF THE BIBLE, AND THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE IN CONFLICT WITH GOD:

Jerusalem is God's capital and the navel of the world through which God brought life to the world. Blessing to the world went out from Zion.

- Psalm 48 sings of the glory of Jerusalem because it is the "city of the great King." Foreign kings joined forces to come against Jerusalem, and they trembled and fled when they saw the city of God. "God is in her citadels; He has shown Himself to be her fortress" (v. 3).

- Jerusalem is God's chosen place of habitation: "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13-14).

- Jerusalem is the footstool of the Lord (Ps. 99:5), the place of His throne (Jer. 3:17), and holy ground.

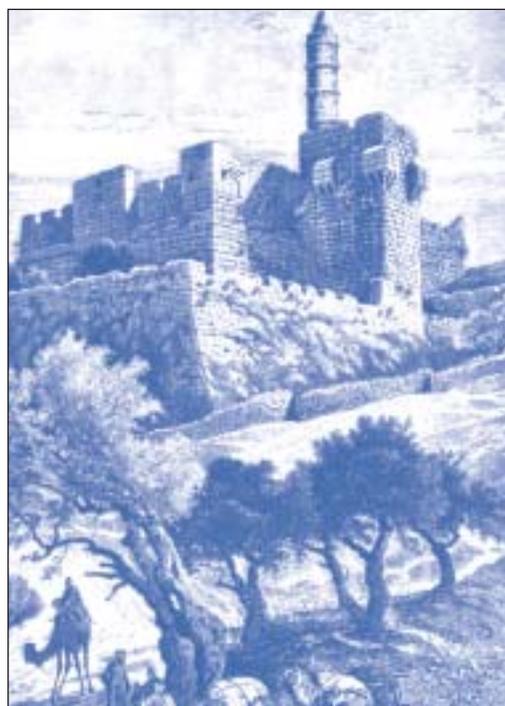
Because Jerusalem is God's city, it is a reminder of God's rule on earth. Because of this many nations and groups have worked to conquer Jerusalem to erase its "God-of-the Bible Connection" and use it as a symbolic "megaphone" for their own message.

Today, a reunited Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty that will usher in a Messianic rule of law for the whole world is a threat to secular world governments with their secular humanist world view and coming New World Order. This is why they are trying to divide and conquer the city again.

Many pagan groups have worked to conquer Jerusalem to stifle God's message. This is why the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, changed the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina in AD 135. As a Roman Emperor, he was also considered a god. Therefore, in changing the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina (naming it after himself, for his family name was Aelia), and Israel to Palestine, he was attempting to erase God's claim, because it was a thorn in the flesh of his Roman World Order.

The Moslem world also conquered Jerusalem in the 7th century AD and immediately established a mosque on the site of God's ancient temple, which still stands there today! Now, Jerusalem is described as the capital of the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam! But, the Allah of Islam is not the God of the Bible. Naturally, this confuses the whole issue of the worship of God in Jerusalem. The worship of the Lord in this city is important to the fulfillment of God's plans. Yet, we must ask: Who is God - the God of the Bible or Allah? Both are claiming this city today. And, whose city is Jerusalem - that of Israel and the Jewish people in covenant with the Lord of the Bible, or the Palestinians, most of whom follow another god, the god of Islam - Allah? The Moslem world is calling for a *jihad* (holy war) to push Israel out of Jerusalem, and the world is calling for a redivision of Jerusalem in an effort to appease the Moslem world, all in the name of "peace." In the Bible, God is called, "The God of Israel" over 200 times. Those who do not accept the God of Israel, surely don't accept His plans for His land and His city, Jerusalem.

The Bible speaks of a spirit of the world that denies the things of God, often to the point of violence against the people and places precious to God. Historically, this has been true for Jerusalem, and it will be true in the future. Throughout history, there have been many world



Jerusalem has always been central to God's plans.

systems that have denied and acted against the God of the Bible and His plans on earth. Each of them ultimately came against Israel and Jerusalem to make their voice heard from Zion and against the biblical message God established here.

Daniel reveals the anti-God world systems:

The prophet Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2) about the future of the world (v. 45). In his dream, the king saw a statue that Daniel described: "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:31-35).

Daniel then told the king that the various parts of the image represented successive world powers that would ultimately pass away. God would raise up a "rock" (His Messianic Kingdom) that would never be destroyed; it would crush all those worldly kingdoms and bring them to an end (v. 44).

What are these world systems?

- The head of gold is Babylon, which represents **religion without God**. Babylon was full of religion. Their well-developed pagan system still prevails in many forms today.

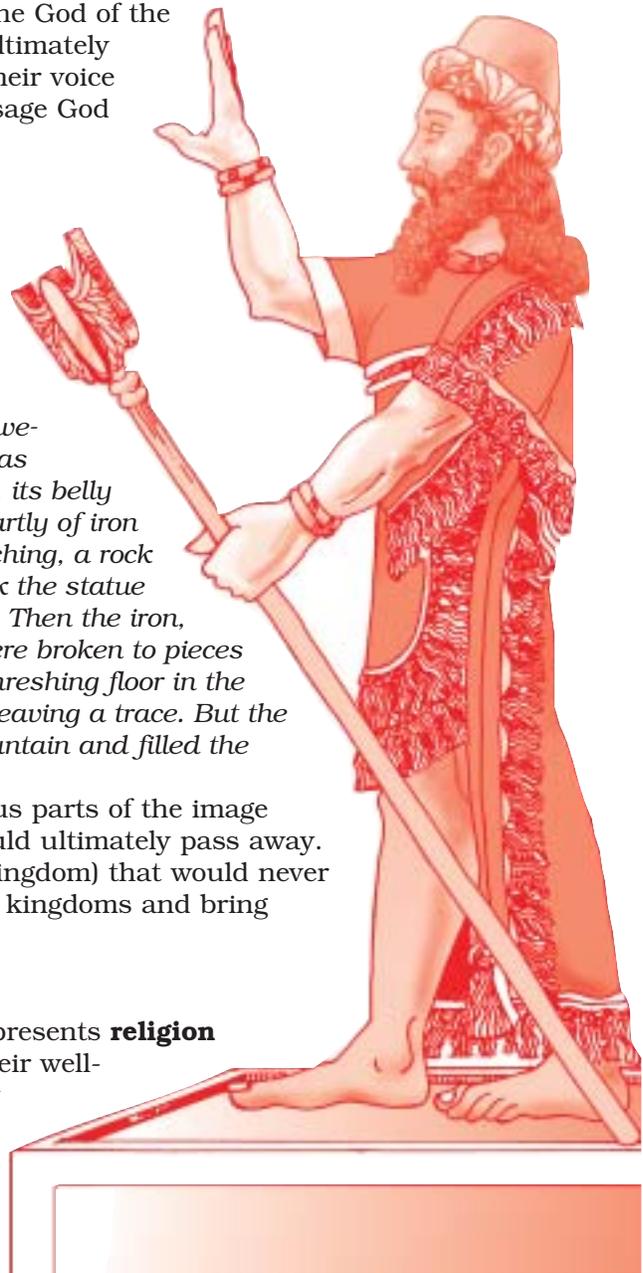
- The arms of silver is the Medeo-Per-sian Empire, which represents **government without God**. They had a system of law "that could not be changed," but their laws were not based on God's law, but their own.

- The belly of bronze is Greece, which represents **knowledge without God**. In Greece, education ruled, yet their quest for knowledge was not of the things of God, but knowledge for knowledge sake.

- The legs of iron are Rome, which like legs, split into two empires: east and west. Rome represents **power without God**. Rome expanded its empire by sheer might, the Roman legions marching across the earth conquering and subduing many people and lands. The *Pax Romanus* simply meant, if you got along with Rome, Rome got along with you. They had the muscle, and if you got out of line, then you felt the iron fist of its power. For them, might made right, but it was a power without God.

- The feet of clay and iron appear strong, but are really brittle and fragile. Ultimately they are not strong enough to hold up this image. A stone came out of Zion which hit the image and brought it all crashing to the ground.

Each of these world powers had a season of pre-eminence and left their mark on the systems of the world to this day. In our societies, we surely see religion without God, government



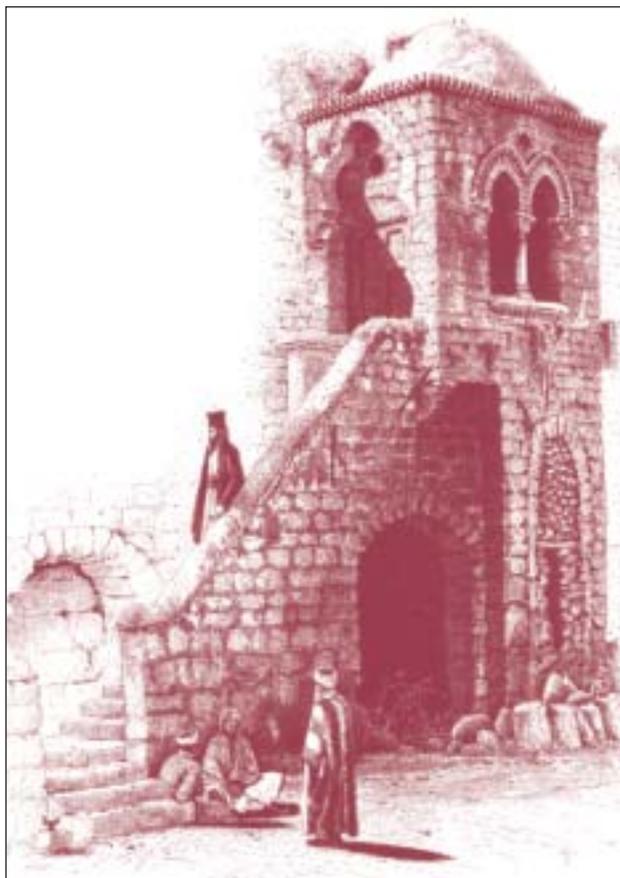
Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image symbolizing the nations of the world given to him by God in a dream.

without God, education without God, and power without God. All of these systems deride the things of God and the Bible. While the former empires of Babylon, Medeo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, each represented one of these attributes, today's society incorporates all of them. Our world system is moving toward a New World Order, and when they achieve it, it will eschew anything to do with God, including biblical faith, the Church, Israel, and the Jewish people.

There is a Messianic system yet to come to Jerusalem. The Messiah will rule and reign from Zion. He will be the stone that smashes the feet of the image, once and for all, and bring it crashing to the ground. All along, the image has rested on feet of clay. This foundational instability will eventually be destroyed by the God of the universe and His Rock!

Because Jerusalem reminds people of God, throughout history, we have seen world systems challenging the sovereignty of the Jews over Jerusalem. In Nehemiah's day, it was Gesher, Tobiah, and Sanballat who mocked Nehemiah and told him and his workers that the walls of Zion would never be built. They asked Nehemiah to come to sign a peace treaty on the Plains of Ono, and he refused. The times change and the players and names change, but the program of the world against Israel and Jerusalem remains the same. If the restoration of Jerusalem can be thwarted, then the systems of the world can buy time and put off the inevitable coming of Messiah and their demise - or so they think.

Meanwhile, the spiritual battle rages on, with Jerusalem at its center. Psalm 2 presents the ultimate conclusion when the Psalmist asks the question: *"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One"* (vv. 1-2). God's response? *"The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them ... saying, 'I have installed My King on Zion, My holy hill'"* (vv. 4-6).



Jerusalem is spoken of as the center of the earth by Ezekiel. It has always been a place of controversy.

2) JERUSALEM REMINDS PEOPLE OF GOD'S LAW:

After World War II, all mores of society started to collapse as everyone began to "do their own thing." Rebellion rules in our society today and the off-beat and unusual is glorified as "in." If it feels good, do it. Man is doing whatever seems "right in his own eyes." Meanwhile, biblical mores that were once honored in many societies are now mocked as outdated and old-fashioned.

Blind people go by feelings, and the world today is going by feelings. Truly, the blind are leading the blind. On the other hand, God's people must walk by faith in God's Word and His law with their eyes open. A prevailing lawlessness cannot survive where there are laws and God's Word is preached. This is why we see such opposition to biblical values and God's laws in the world media today. The secular humanists simply do not want to hear of biblical values that call into question their free-wheeling lifestyles. These days, it is not "politically correct" to tout morals and values and call anyone's lifestyle into question. That which is wrong, they call right; while they mock those standing on God's Word, calling them wrong. They are living outside the mores of God's Word and are rebelling against it. Interestingly, this is also the group that does not want God's rule to be established again in Zion.

Even the Church is weakening to lawlessness and compromise. Many have given in to

the “feeling” and have begun to incorporate many worldly practices into the Church, even things that are clearly contrary to God’s Word. Some have completely left the Church in apostasy. II Thessalonians 2:3 says this is one sign that Messiah is coming soon: *“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion (or falling away) occurs...”*

An “eat, drink and be merry” spirit and lifestyle prevails, even in the Church today.

I Thessalonians 5:3 warns of being blind to this fool’s paradise, for it won’t last: *“While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”*

In Ezekiel 13, the prophet records God’s words to those leaders who are really false prophets, leading the people of God astray, calling their false teaching good and saying, “peace, peace when there is no peace.” Instead of building their houses on a foundation of stone, they are building on a foundation of sand. They are plastering their houses with untempered plaster, and God will send the rain and wind to “melt” these structures away. They will not last when the storm comes.

To those who are rebellious against God, He says: *“Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled! She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to God”* (Zeph 3:1-2). The passage goes on with a whole list of rebellious acts. God then says He will judge them all, *“...but I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the Lord”* (Zeph. 3:12).

We need to heed God’s warning and not be guided by the ways of the world, the false prophets in the sanctuary, and the lie of this present age that “if it feels good, do it.” Living for God requires discipline, and it is often not easy with so many worldly things to draw us away from God. While it is hard, when we are weak, He can make us strong. The Bible is God’s Manufacturer’s Handbook, and to ignore this book will cause a breakdown. We need to stand for Truth in an age where nothing is allowed to be openly criticized unless it is the Bible itself.

As Bible believers, we cannot get caught up in the things of the world, no matter how compelling they appear or sound to us. This includes the world’s stand against Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem for the cause of a false, man-made “peace.”

Israel, too, needs to stand in faith on the Word of God and not be persuaded to give into the world’s plans that promise peace when there is no peace. Israel has already given over biblical lands to the Palestinian Authority: Jericho and the Valley of Achor (the Valley of Hope), which was Israel’s gateway into the Promised Land; Shechem (Nablus), where Joshua divided the land of Israel among the tribes of Israel; Bethlehem, the birthplace of David and Yeshua; and Hebron, the burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of Israel and the first capital of Israel under David.

Psalms 83:4-6 says that nations come to take the Land of Israel, *“‘Come,’ they say, ‘let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.’ With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you.”* Yet, God responds to defend Israel if she will only stand strong in the face of such pressure.

Many other nations want to usurp the place of God’s throne in Jerusalem and send forth their own message from Zion. However, Isaiah says: *“For out of Zion will go forth the Law, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isa. 2:3c).

3) JERUSALEM IS GOD’S BASE OF OPERATION:

Jerusalem was the place of the Temple of God where His presence dwelled. God’s Word, the Bible, came forth out of Zion. Sixty-four of the 66 books of the Bible were written by Jews. Our salvation was accomplished in Jerusalem when Yeshua died and was resurrected here. And to Jerusalem, He will return. Jerusalem is the single most important city on earth to the Lord. He loves all men and all nations and seeks their salvation, but Israel and Jerusalem are His first love.

God is coming back. He says, *“I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called, The City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called, The Holy Mountain”* (Zech. 8:3). Then, and only then, will true peace prevail.

Psalms 102:21-22 declares that the nations will come to worship the Lord in Jerusalem: *“So the Name of the Lord will be declared in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem when the people*

and the kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord.” Zechariah 14:16 says: “Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty...”

A totally restored Jerusalem is a threat to Satan and the enemies of God. Therefore, all the stops are being pulled out in the spiritual realm, and manifested in the physical realm, to destroy God’s plans for Jerusalem.

4) JERUSALEM IS A REMINDER OF GOD’S COMING JUDGMENT:

We already mentioned the controversy God has with the nations of the world regarding Jerusalem (Isa. 34). The prophet Joel also takes up the theme and says, “I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (in Jerusalem). There I will enter into judgment against them concerning My inheritance, My people Israel, for they scattered My people among the nations and divided up My land. They cast lots for My people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink” (Joel 3:2-3).

God is angry at the way the nations have disregarded and dishonored His land and His people, Israel. He is angry that they divided up the land and maltreated the Jewish people, who are called “the apple of His eye” (Zech 2:8).

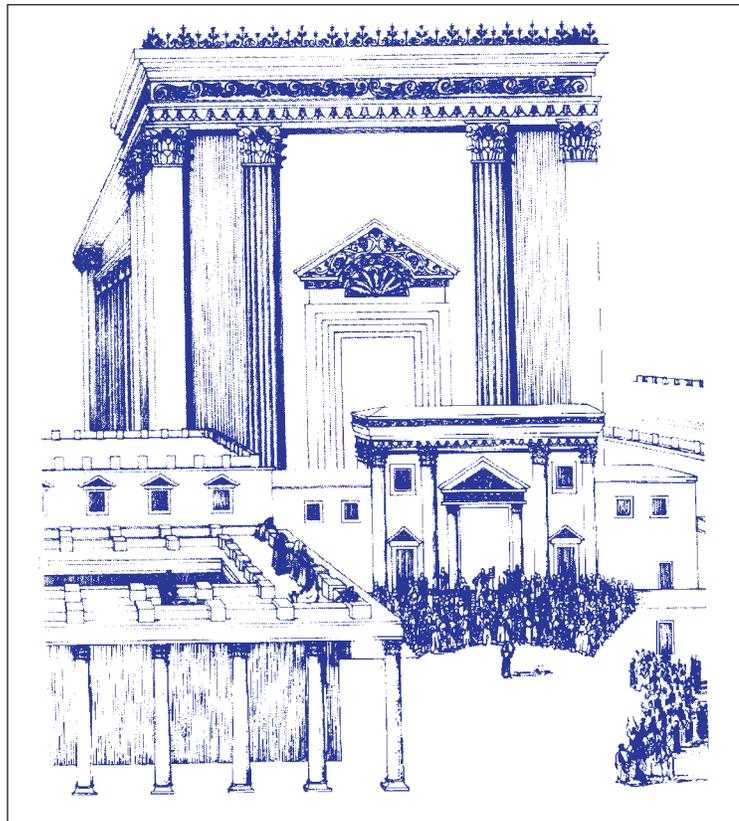
Matthew 25 describes God’s judgment on the nations when the Lord returns. He says, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left” (Matt. 25:31-33).

Matthew then goes on to describe the scene where the sheep nations on His right will be blessed in God’s eternal Kingdom, while the goat nations on the left will be sent to “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” What is the difference? The criteria is based on how they treated the “least of the brethren” of the Lord, Israel and the Jewish people.

Did they feed them when they were hungry, give them a drink when they were thirsty, clothe them when they were naked, visit them in prison? What about us? We can be on the side of blessing as we do these things, too. (A contribution through our Bridges for Peace Operation Ezra and Rescue projects is an excellent way to help the “least of the brethren” of Yeshua.)

What Does This Mean to Us?

Most of the Scripture references reviewed in this article point to a coming judgment on the nations of the earth that fail to get with God’s program concerning Israel. God’s program is not contrary to true peace, nor is it a detriment to the Palestinians or anyone else in the



Herod, master builder of the Roman Empire, improved the Jewish Temple creating a gleaming showpiece for the holy city in Yeshua’s time.

world. When God's plans are fully realized, it will mean blessings for the whole world. That is why we need to get involved with God's peace plan.

Jerusalem was and is a very important city in which the blessings and judgments to the world are manifest in a physical form. There is blessing for those who see this city as God's appointed city, forever and for all time, and seek to bless it, pray for its peace, honor its God, and honor its people. We need to encourage others to understand God's plans for this city and support these plans, not the man-inspired plans of the UN, the US, the EEC, Oslo, Wye, etc. God is not in any plan that would wrestle the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount area and the Mount of Olives, and give it to the Moslem world. Messiah is not coming back to a Moslem city called Al-Quds, but to the regathered, restored Jewish city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem will continue to drive the nations crazy as long as they rebel against the Lord's plans. While judgment may fall, it is only upon those who continue to defy the Lord's plans and rebel against them. The best solution is to understand God's plans for Zion and pray in agreement with them. It is so easy today to get caught up in the gods of this world that offer pleasure and "peace, peace when there is no peace."

We need to take a stand for the Lord. In the words of Joshua, which are just as relevant today, "*Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord*" (Josh. 24:14-15).

Many pastors, Bible teachers and even lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding, YES! That is why I am sending out this *Israel Teaching Letter*. It is my hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "*For out of Zion shall go forth the law, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" (Isa. 2:3).