



***Bringing Biblical
Principles of
Governance***

Understanding Israel's War, Part 2 of 7

Greetings My Friends,

***This is a continuation from Part 1 in the previous newsletter,
"Understanding Israel's War."***

Quick Overview

Let's quickly survey the four-thousand-year-old story of the nation of Israel.

From Nation to Being Ruled by Five Great Empires

During the Old Testament period, the descendants of Abraham went from being...

- a family,
- to a tribe,
- to a confederation of tribes with a succession of Judges – 12 of them, or perhaps as many as 15 – ruling over them,
- to a nation with kings – three of them, Saul, David, Solomon – until the nation split,
- to a nation split north and south with 39 kings ruling over the two separate halves of the divided kingdom.

Then Israel was overrun and controlled by five major empires:

- **ASSYRIAN:** 722BC – the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, was overrun by the Assyrians, and the Israelites were deported.
- **BABYLONIAN:** 587 BC, Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar's army captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the Jews from the Southern Kingdom, called Judah, to Babylon (modern day Iraq).
- **PERSIAN:** 539BC - the Persian king Cyrus the Great expanded his empire until finally, in 539 BC, he took Babylon in a bloodless coup and established Persia as the dominant force in the Near East.
 - 538BC – It was the Persian King Cyrus whose decree permitted the return of the exiled Jews from Babylon and the construction of the second Temple (520-515 BC).
- **GREEK:** 333-63BC – The Greek Conquest of Israel and the surrounding region by the army of Alexander the Great. The Greeks generally allowed

the Jews to run their state.

- 167-160BC – Maccabean Revolt. During the rule of the king Antiochus IV, the Temple was desecrated. This brought about the revolt of the Maccabees, who established an independent rule. The related events are celebrated during the Hanukah holiday.
- **ROMAN:** 63BC-313AD – The Roman army led by Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple at 70AD. Jewish people were then exiled and dispersed (scattered to many nations) in the Diaspora. In 132AD, Bar Kokhba organized a revolt against Roman rule, but was killed in a battle in Bethar in the Judean Hills.
 - 135-136AD – Final destruction of Jerusalem. Subsequently the Romans decimated the Jewish community, renamed Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina and Judea as Palaestina to obliterate Jewish identification with the Land of Israel.

The few remaining Jewish community members moved to northern towns in the Galilee.

Now we pick up the story in New Testament times.

Israel Under Siege During Time of Jesus and New Testament Era

At the time of the crucifixion of Christ in 33AD, Rome controlled Israel. In 70AD, the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple as noted above. When Emperor Hadrian later banned Jewish freedom and religious practices, the Jews revolted but Hadrian crushed the revolt and killed the Jewish leaders in 136AD, also noted above, which would be after the New Testament era which ends in approximately 100AD. He also destroyed and plowed under the Temple Mount (the traditional center of Jewish life) and Jews were banished from Jerusalem. Hadrian then drew up a plan to build a new city on the ruins of Jerusalem, making it a center of pagan worship.

The Name Change that Explains It All

To further humiliate the Jews, he sought to rename their nation. After learning that the Philistines were the oldest and fiercest enemy of the Jews, he renamed the country Palestina. It is critical that you know this fact: the name Palestine was to honor the Philistines, the most-hated enemy of the Jews. For the next 500 years, Jews were allowed in Jerusalem only one day each year: the anniversary of the burning of the temple.

Let's be clear that Palestine has no relation to the current Palestinians; the Palestinians are not the descendants of the ancient Philistine inhabitants of the land of Judea. The Philistines of the Bible, who arrived in the land about the same time as the Israelites, were from Greece and were not Arabic, and they were gone from the Holy Land over a millennia ago. The current Arabic Palestinians have no relation to the Philistines, and no ancient claim to the land.

Constantine and After



Emperor Constantine

Early in the fourth century, Emperor Constantine claimed a conversion to Christianity (although his subsequent practices made any such conversion seem unlikely—it seemed to be a “conversion” in name only). Under Constantine, Jerusalem began to regain lost prestige.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the Roman Empire began to weaken. In 614AD, the Persians took control of Jerusalem and destroyed many of its churches, but in 628AD the Romans (at that time calling themselves Christians) recaptured the city. And from then until the 1900s was a flurry of one conquering army after another.

So...

- Jews controlled Jerusalem for about 1,500 years until about 70AD;
- then Rome controlled it until 600AD;
- then Muslims took control, holding it until 1100AD;
- from 1100-1250, the Crusades occurred with Christians attempting to regain control from the Muslims, and power shifting back and forth;
- in 1250, Muslim Turks gained control until 1917,
- when, in 1917, the British gained control.

This is where the story of Israel’s rebirth begins.



Israel Belongs to the Muslims?

By the way, claims that Jerusalem belongs to the Muslims are bogus, considering not only that Mohammed never visited Jerusalem but also that Islam arrived there:

- 2,600 years after the Jews were founded through Abraham.
- 2,000 years after Joshua established the nation of Israel.
- 1,600 years after David made Jerusalem the capital of Israel.
- 600 years after Christianity was founded there.
- And the Islamic Dome of the Rock was not built on the Temple Mount until 687AD.

(These are important dates to remember when Muslims lay claim to the land and city.)

Interest from the West

By the 1800s (the latter part of Turkish Muslim rule), Western interest and involvement in Palestine was growing. In the 1840s, an American naval

expedition explored down the Jordan River from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Americans such as Mark Twain traveled the region, and President Abraham Lincoln expressed his desire to visit Palestine. Consular offices were established in Jerusalem, and visits occurred from celebrated American officials such as diplomat Lew Wallace (the author of *Ben Hur*).

British, French, and Germans became more plentiful in the region, and among several European nations the maneuvering for position in Palestine grew more intense. In fact, in England, the Palestine Exploration Fund was established which sponsored several surveys of Palestine in attempts to lay British claim to as much of the Middle East as possible and to counteract the efforts of the French to do the same.

The 1900s: The Beginning of Zionism (Jews coming back to Israel)

By the middle of the century, Jews comprised half the population of Jerusalem, and there was open support growing for the restoration of Palestine to the Jews. (In America, Founding Fathers such as John Adams and John Quincy Adams had long before expressed their support for the reestablishment of Palestine as an independent Jewish nation as had early American Jewish leader Mordecai Noah. From 1860 to 1870, the concept of Zionism began to take shape.

Recall that Zionism simply means the right of the Jews to return to their ancient Biblical homeland and reestablish Israel as an independent self-governing nation, with the right to defend itself. A Christian Zionist is a Christian who believes the same—that Jews have this right.

This will be continued in Part 3 of “Understanding Israel’s War...”

(Note: Portions of this newsletter were taken from *Well Versed* by James Garlow, or from *This Precarious Moment* by James Garlow and David Barton)

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