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An Israel On The Rise

in [Commentary](#).^[1]

It has been 70 years now since Israel was miraculously reborn as a nation back in her ancient homeland. In that time, the Jewish state has faced many wars, terror attacks, rocket barrages, economic boycotts and other attempts to strangle the young nation. She also had to absorb several million new immigrants, many penniless refugees of conflicts and forced expulsions. Yet despite all these challenges, Israel is a nation on the rise.

Israel remains on an ever upward trajectory because of God's favour, and the resiliency and determination of her people. Yet, some still expect the Jewish state to go through one last dark period of divine judgment and annihilation during the 'Great Tribulation' before they are finally reconciled to God.

However, the Bible assures us that Israel has already been through the worst of God's dealings with them during their times of uprooting and exile, while their future back in the land is now bright and full of hope (Isaiah 60). No doubt, Israel will face more troubles ahead, but the Lord will deliver her out of them all (Isaiah 31:5; Joel 2:32; Zechariah 14:3). Rather, the troubles and tribulation still to come are all about God's humbling and judging of the nations to prepare the way for Jesus to come take up the throne of his father David in Jerusalem. This was the teaching of Jesus himself in his Mount of Olives discourse, found in Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

The Eschatology of Jesus

The context of these parallel passages is that Jesus has just predicted the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. His closest followers ask him when this will occur, and what is the sign of his coming and of the end of the age? Now we think they are asking about what we now refer to as the "Second Coming". But they had no idea yet about the return of the Lord after many long centuries in heaven. They did not even know about his Ascension yet. Rather, the disciples wanted to know when and how he would present to the entire nation the proof of his divine authority and credentials as the promised Messiah. And they expected this to trigger the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom within their lifetime.

So Jesus is confronted with a serious challenge. He must completely reset their prophetic timetable while preparing them for the tough times just ahead. He knows that the Temple will soon be destroyed and that many long centuries of exile await the Jewish people. The Luke version, in particular, sets out two very clear and distinct times of tribulation and judgement – one for Israel in the days when the Second Temple was destroyed and the Jews were forced into exile; and a second one for the nations at the end of the Gentile age. The first would begin in their lifetime, while the latter would only occur after Israel's judgment and exile is over. After all, judgment begins in God's house first, among His people, before the unrighteous nations are judged. (1 Peter 4:17)

Judgment on Israel

The first period of judgment foreseen by Jesus involves God's wrath upon Israel, which began in the lifetimes of his earliest followers and led to the sacking of the Temple and the scattering of Israel. Jesus is speaking straight from the "curse" spelled out by Moses – in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 – should Israel turn their backs on God. He knew that the Father had prescribed exactly how He would punish Israel for her sins, and it is through sieges on their cities that get so bad the Jewish

people turn to cannibalism, and it ends in their exile among the nations. In his farewell message to the Israelites, Moses also warned that “many evils and troubles” would surely befall the people due to their rebellious nature (Deuteronomy 31:17, 21), resulting in long and painful exiles from the Promised Land. He added that this was not a matter of “if” but “when”.

This manner of divine judgment then becomes a common thread throughout the Hebrew prophets. For instance, it appears in Jeremiah chapters 30 to 33, in Ezekiel chapters 5 and 37, and in Zechariah 13.

The Lord describes the severity of the judgment which would come upon Israel in the first century by saying, “I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again...” (Ezekiel 5:9) This prompts Jesus to warn, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matthew 24:21) The Apostle Paul later proclaims that “wrath has come upon them to the uttermost”. (1 Thessalonians 2:16) Again, these passages describe the worst that God would ever do to the Jewish people, and they all pivot around the violent expulsion and long exile of the Jews from their land beginning in the first century.

Yet it all finally ends in a national restoration of Israel back in the land that ultimately gives way to her spiritual restoration as well. History testifies that all this has taken place over the past 2,000 years of Israel’s violent uprooting and scattering to all nations. And the firm promise of God is that we are now in a time of His great favour and restoration for Zion. This is an irreversible process, and nothing can stop or interrupt it. (Jeremiah 24:6, 31:28, 32:41; Amos 9:15)

Judgment on the Nations

The second period of judgment involves God’s humbling and correction of the nations. Here again, Jesus knew that God prescribes in Scripture exactly how He will finally judge the nations at the end of the age. And he points to the Flood of Noah as the model for this, saying, “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matthew 24:37) Yet this global judgment will not be by water but by fire this time! The New Testament is clear that Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as examples of the fiery judgment that awaits the world at the end of the age. (see, for example, Luke 17:28-30; 2 Peter 2:5-6; Jude 7).

Conclusion

When we read the prophetic teachings of Jesus in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, there is a tendency to cram every bad thing spoken of in these chapters into the end times. But we can actually check off the worst things predicted there for Israel, since they have already been fulfilled in their long and difficult uprooting and exile from the land. Instead, the focus of God’s wrath still to come will be on the growing rebellion among the rest of humanity, and Jesus instructed us to look to the “Days of Noah” as the paradigm for what lies ahead. For in it lies the key to unlocking the timing of “the coming of the Son of Man”. (Matthew 24:37-39)

You can read an in-depth explanation on the Flood model in David Parsons’ new book Floodgates. [Order your book today!](#) [2]

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