

# Why Jerusalem?

“Shalom, Shalom!” This is the greeting used on the streets of Jerusalem. I greet you with the Jerusalem greeting, because this is the beginning of a series of seven messages entitled, “This is Jerusalem.” This place is at the top of the rank in the agenda of the United Nations today, and not without some Biblical reason.

The Prophet Ezekiel makes this statement: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.” Ezekiel 5:5.

Both the Jewish and Islamic sages have taught for centuries that Jerusalem is the center of the earth. Indeed, it has been computer calculated by land mass and the Jewish and Islamic sages are correct.

In this message I ask the question, WHY JERUSALEM? I shall use Zechariah 1:12-17 for my sermon text. As background in preparation for this discussion I refer you to several other Bible passages.

First among these is Genesis 14:18. In this account Abram delivered Lot from five kings who had invaded the Valley of Salt. When he came back from his victorious conquest, he came to the city of Salem. Genesis 14:18 reads: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” Conservative Bible expositors identify Salem with Jerusalem.

Later David, after he was anointed King of Israel and King of Judah, challenged his men to capture the city of the Jebusites, which was called Jebus. “And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David.” I Chronicles 11:4-7. The city of Jerusalem from that day on was known as the city of David.

More than that, it also became known as the city of God. After David's death, King Solomon, his son and successor, built the temple

of God in Jerusalem. The Lord appeared unto Solomon by night. Read II Chronicles 6 and 7 for the prayer of Solomon and the Lord's answer. Note these words in 7:15, 16: "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

You see, Jerusalem is a very important topic for us to consider. Today Jerusalem is in the news almost daily. Dr. Joseph Hoffman Cohen, a great believing Jewish scholar, taught that to keep informed about history, one must watch Jerusalem. It is, after all, the holy city to millions of people: Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and whatever happens in Jerusalem seems to set the stage, or turn the tide of history. So I ask, why Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is not among the largest cities of the world, so it is not size that determines its importance. The 1980 yearbook gives Tokyo as the largest city of the world with 8,179,000 people. Then Moscow is next with 8,100,000, New York with 7,224,000 and London with 6,877,110.

But size does not determine importance. National capitals carry heavy ballast that tilts trends in one direction or another. Basic philosophies of existing governments have great bearing on how important a city is.

God is not silent concerning the important places of history. Of all the cities of the world, I submit to you that one stands out as exerting more influence on the peoples of the world than any other. That city is Jerusalem. In 1980 the estimated population was 389,200, less than 5% of the population of Tokyo. Not a big city, but important according to Zechariah 1:12-17.

*12. Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?*

*13. And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.*

*14. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry*

*thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.*

*15. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.*

*16. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.*

*17. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*

From the words of Zechariah we should be able to extract significant OBSERVATIONS regarding Jerusalem. Zechariah, contemporary of Daniel, wrote his prophecy some 500 years before Christ. I want you to think seriously on the observations I am making regarding Jerusalem. The first points to the mercy of God,

#### As Expressed by the Agony of the Angel.

The angel cried unto the Lord, “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem...?” There seemed to be in the words of the angel, and most likely in the mind of Zechariah, as he looked upon the ruined city, the thought that God was failing in His mercy. But God is revealed as a God of mercy. Surely it would seem that after these seventy years God would pour out His mercy and show His love for this ancient city, His city, Jerusalem.

The Psalmist David spoke about the mercy of God when he wrote the 103rd Psalm. “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.” Psalm 103:8, 9.

It is no wonder then that the angel of the Lord cried out to God to call His attention to the fact that Jerusalem was lying in ruins. For seventy years the Lord’s indignation was against Jerusalem, which means God was hostile against it. So God’s anger laid upon the city.

The Lord answered the angel with good words that were to comfort him. We must remember as the agony of the angel expressed it that surely God is a merciful God, slow to anger and plenteous

in mercy. But the angel saw that Jerusalem was lying in ruins and appealed to the God of mercy to be merciful again to this ancient earthly city.

The second observation points to the feelings of God,

As Explained by the Analysis of the Lord.

God has a lasting emotion about this city. It seems strange in the minds of many people that this city, not so favorably situated, should have such a long and glorious history, and that God would say about Jerusalem as He did in Zechariah 1:14, “I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy.” This jealousy is a deep feeling, a deep emotional feeling. That feeling which God has for Jerusalem is unaltered. It’s a great jealousy.

Seventy years is of small consequence in the great plan and purpose of God. The prophet is assured by the word from God that God is greatly moved at the condition of Jerusalem as it had lain in ruins seventy years. And just because nothing was happening at the moment did not mean that God had forsaken that city.

We see further that the Lord was very sore displeased with the nations round about, with the surrounding nations, with the heathen. He had great displeasure for them, but He had only a little displeasure for Jerusalem. Those heathen nations against whom He had much displeasure had worked the affliction of Jerusalem.

Now the country of Babylon was among them. King Nebuchadnezzar had come in the year 586 BC. He had sacked Jerusalem and destroyed it, had ruined the temple—the great and glorious temple where God said He would place His name perpetually. He had taken the vessels of the temple to his capital city, Babylon.

So God is analyzing the situation: He had sore displeasure with the heathen who had helped in the affliction of Jerusalem. He had only a little displeasure against Jerusalem. By His analysis He has lasting emotion for Jerusalem: a Godly jealousy, a great jealousy for Jerusalem.

The third observation points to God’s response,

## As Expected by the Answer of the Lord.

Mercy is coming. All is not lost. Hear what the Lord says about Jerusalem: “I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies” Zechariah 1:16. All is not lost, not when God turns toward Jerusalem with mercy.

His mercy promises: “My house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.” The Lord’s house lay in ruins. King Nebuchadnezzar had ruined the place and taken the glorious vessels of the temple. But Zechariah lived to see that temple rebuilt. He did indeed! God said, “My house shall be built.” And Zechariah saw it rebuilt in his day.

He promises comfort: “My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.”

No, my friend, all is not lost. When God makes a pronouncement, you can expect that it will come to pass. God never talks idly. God always talks with purpose. God always reveals His purpose with meaning. So we can be confident with Zechariah that there shall yet come comfort to Zion. And God shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Years of distress have lain upon Jerusalem, even until today. It has certainly been much longer than seventy years. We cry with the angel, “How long, O LORD, of hosts?” The Lord’s analysis comes to us, I have a great jealousy for Zion and for Jerusalem. Indeed, the Lord’s answer carries comfort: “I am returned with mercy for Jerusalem.”

Oh, we have lived to see some tremendous days, my friend. In 1967 Jerusalem was united under an Israeli Mayor for the first time in 1,897 years. Mark that. We have witnessed since 1967 a phenomenon about Jerusalem that had been completely passed away. King David urged us in one of his Psalms to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem? Ah, yes, why Jerusalem?

*O God of the patriarchs and the prophets, we approach Thy throne of mercy assured that Thou art a merciful God. We join with King David to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. I pray Thy mercy may continue toward this ancient city where Thou hast placed Thy Name. For this I ask this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

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*This is a sample of “This is Jerusalem” from [heraldsofhope.org](http://heraldsofhope.org).*