

ISRAEL

4. God's Purpose for Jerusalem



Introduction

Whenever we think of Israel, we think of Jerusalem! The name of this city is mentioned over 700 times in the Old Testament alone. How did this city come into being? Does God still have a purpose for it? How should we pray for Jerusalem? These are some of the questions we will look at in this study.

1. What are the origins of Jerusalem?

The original inhabitants of the area called Jerusalem were the Jebusites. They are first mentioned in Genesis 10:16.

- ✧ Who were these people descended from? Genesis 10:15, 6, 1
(They were descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah.)
- ✧ Who did God promise to give this land to? Genesis 12:7, 15:18, 28:13
- ✧ When the Children of Israel entered the Land they failed to destroy all the inhabitants of Jebus. How was Jebus finally conquered? 2 Samuel 5:6-10

The reason the Jebusites thought no-one could conquer their city was because it was built on hills and surrounded by valleys on three sides. It was a natural fortress. The only possible entrance was the water shaft, which was the way David entered the city. Two of the hills that form Jerusalem are well known. One is Zion and the other is Moriah.

- ✧ What can you learn about Mt Zion from the following scriptures? 2 Samuel 5:7, 9, 1 Chronicles 15:1, 2 Chronicles 5:2
(Mt Zion was captured by King David and he lived in the fortress there. It became known as the City of David. This is where he made a tent for the Ark of the Covenant, and it remained until Solomon moved the Ark to the new temple.)
- ✧ What happened on Mount Moriah to make it so significant? 1 Chronicles 21:15, 18-19, 25-26, 2 Chronicles 3:1
(After David had sinned, by numbering the people, God sent judgment. Many died, but then an angel of the Lord appeared and told David to build an altar there. King David insisted on buying the land that belonged to a Jebusite, not wanting to offer a sacrifice that cost nothing. When he offered sacrifices, the judgment of God lifted. David provided this place for the temple site.)

Not only was this the site David purchased, but they believe this is also the place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac, his son. Today a mosque is built in this place, sheltering the rock where they believe that sacrifice was made.

- ✧ Consider what happened on Mt Moriah during Abraham's time, and then in King David's time. What lessons can we learn about God's salvation? Discuss.

When Solomon had completed the temple he took the ark from the tabernacle David had made on Mt Zion, to the Holy of Holies in the new temple on Mt Moriah. Both places were in the City of Jerusalem. Sadly the temple and the city were destroyed around 600BC, and later rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah. Before the birth of Jesus this temple was enlarged by King Herod.

✧ What did Jesus prophesy concerning that temple? How was this fulfilled? Mark 13:1-2

From history we know this was fulfilled in 70AD when the temple and city were destroyed by the Romans. The city was later rebuilt, but not the temple. For almost 1900 years the Jewish people were scattered across the earth, but the religious Jews still faced Jerusalem when they prayed. They have never forgotten Jerusalem.

2. What is the significance of Jerusalem today?

We have seen how Israel became a nation again in 1948. It was a miracle! Then in 1967 when the surrounding nations attacked her, she regained Jerusalem.

✧ What must happen before Christ returns? Acts 3:20-21
(God will restore all things as he promised through the prophets.)

✧ Part of this restoration includes God's plans for Jerusalem. See Joel 3:1, Psalm 102:13, 16, 21

Conclusion

As we look at the history of Jerusalem and how it has emerged on the world scene, we realise the time for Christ's return is near. In our last study we will see what the Bible says about the future of Jerusalem and how to pray for it. However, as we understand the time in which we are living, we need to be earnest about preparing ourselves. Will you be ready when he comes?