

JERUSALEM – THE CITY OF GOD

(Dr. Rick Yohn)

The title may at first startle you when thinking of Jerusalem as the City of God. When we watch the news, Jerusalem seems to be a place of unrest. Hostility reigns between the Palestinians and Jews. Stones, tear gas, and rubber bullets are the weapons of choice when it comes to settling arguments. So what's with this statement that Jerusalem is the City of God?

A CHOSEN LAND - To answer that question, we must turn back the pages of Scripture to the Book of Genesis. Let's first capture the 30,000-foot perspective by focusing on the country in which Jerusalem is located. It is a land chosen by God and not by man. He chose the land of Israel for a specific purpose, and then He called a man from present-day Iraq to go to the place He would show him – *"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you'"*. (Genesis 12:1) In other words, the land of Israel was not Abraham's idea, but God's. The Bible informs us that Abraham left all that he knew to travel to a location of which he knew nothing.

One member of his family, by the name of Lot, accompanied Abraham to Canaan and both men became wealthy with flocks and herds. In fact, their livestock grew to such a point that they had to separate. Abraham allowed his nephew Lot to choose first. As Lot looked over the Jordan Valley that was lush with all kinds of fruit and vegetables, he chose to leave the central mountain range and live in the lower elevation near the Dead Sea. So, Abraham remained in the mountains at a place known as Hebron.

After Lot left Abraham for Sodom, God appeared to Abraham and said, *"Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever"* (Genesis 13:14). Since God is the Creator of all things, it is His land to give to whomever He chooses, and He chose Abraham to be the possessor of the land, but not in his lifetime. It would be his offspring who would possess the land.

As time passed, four kings collaborated and joined forces to battle against five kings in the Dead Sea area. The four defeated the five, carried off Abraham's nephew Lot, and went north. When Abraham learned about his nephew's plight, he gathered 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit of the four kings. He eventually defeated the four and brought his nephew back to the central mountain range. On his way back from battle, he stopped at a place known as the King's Valley. It was there that a king named Melchizedek came out to meet him. This man was the King of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Abraham in return gave a tenth of everything he had acquired from the defeat of the four kings.



Figure 1 - Abraham gives a tenth to Melchizedek - www.iamthewordthecomforter.blogspot.com

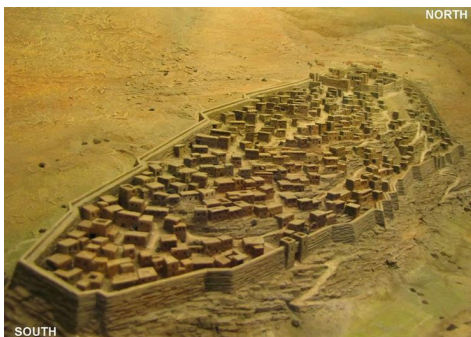


Figure 2 - The City of Jebus - www.pinterest.com

You may ask, what does this have to do with Jerusalem? Good question. When Melchizedek met with Abraham, they were both standing outside of Salem. That name means "peace." Today, whenever someone in Israel says, "Shalom," that is the same as saying "Salem." It is the same word. Also, we do not call that city Salem anymore, but rather Jeru-Salem, the city of peace.

Over the years, this city's name changed from Salem to "Jebus," and the people living in the city were known as Jebusites. We first learn about them when Israel accepted David as their King. Earlier, he was King of Judah, and his capital was Hebron, one of the two major places where Abraham lived. However, now that the house of Saul (the first King of Israel) accepted him as their king too, David had to find a new location for a capital.

A CHOSEN CITY - David was aware of Jebus and realized that it was centrally located in the land, so he gathered his army and marched up to Jebus, conquered it, and then renamed the city "The City of David." Another name for the city was "Zion" – *"Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David"* (2Samuel 5:7). So how does the Bible describe Zion? Consider the following descriptions:

"For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling." (Psalm 132:13)

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells." (Psalm 46:4)

"I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name" (1Kings 11:36).

So, how can Jerusalem be the City of God with the three world's great religions claiming it for themselves as well as the constant fighting between the Palestinians and the Jews? It is the City of God because God declared it as such and chose to place His Name there. No matter who was living in the city, or whether there was peace or war, it remains the City of God.

A CHOSEN DESTINY - Though it is difficult to explain, when you visit Jerusalem, you become aware that it is like no other city. Visualize yourself on a bus ascending to Jerusalem, and the driver plays "The Holy City." As you enter the city you hear, *"Jerusalem., Jerusalem, lift up your voice and sing, Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to our King."* When you get off the bus, you are on the Mount of Olives. You look across the Kidron Valley and gaze upon the City of God spread

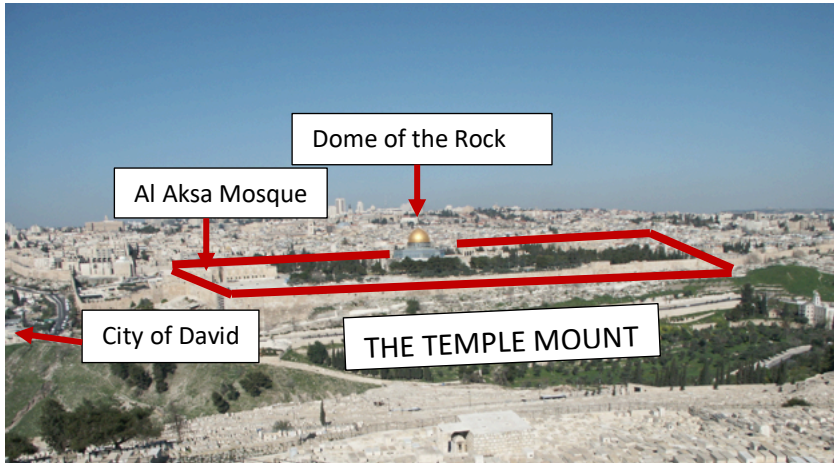


Figure 3 - Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives - Photo by Rick Yohn

out before you. To your left is the city of David. However, directly before your eyes lies the 36-acre Temple Mount, housing the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Also, in addition to this, an unexplainable feeling penetrates your body, and you begin to sense the Presence of God. That is the uniqueness of a Jerusalem visit compared to traveling to any other metropolis in the

world. However, that is not the end of the story. Jerusalem is also the City of God because God has plans for its future. Moreover, those plans include both good news and bad news. Let's consider some prophetic statements concerning Jerusalem's future.

THE BAD NEWS – A day like no other day will descend upon Jerusalem. It is known as the Battle of Gog and Magog. The prophet Ezekiel speaks to this issue when he writes, *"Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of Man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.'" (Ezekiel 38:1-2)* Where are Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal? Most likely Rosh is not a place, but rather refers to more of a title or position, such as "head" or "chief." Magog seems to be in Russia, while Meshech and Tubal are in Turkey. Scripture informs us that Gog is of the land of Magog (Russia), but also the prince or head of Meshech and Tubal. So there seems to be a coalition between Russia and Turkey. Other nations will join the coalition such as Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, and Togarmah. In addition to these armies will be Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish (possibly the lands of the far corners of the known world at that time (Ezekiel 38:15).



Figure 4 - The Battle of Gog & Magog
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Though these armies will believe they are going to invade Jerusalem due to their plans, God planned the invasion millennia ago. Listen to these words, *"In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy before their eyes."* (Ezekiel 38:16) The invasion of Jerusalem is God's object lesson to the nations around the world, many of whom will be cheering for the invaders. However, the invaders will be destroyed. A great earthquake will cause total confusion so that the invaders will turn on each other, and God will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur. He will also destroy Magog and those living in safety in the coastlands (Ezekiel 38-39). So what about

Jerusalem? The prophet Zechariah picks up that part of the story and writes, *"I will gather the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city."* (Zechariah 14:2)

Are we getting closer to that period? Just recently, the leaders from three of these countries met and developed a collaborative alliance over Syria as a challenge to the U.S. influence in this part of the world. The prophet continues, saying, *"Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. . .*

Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him." (Zechariah 14:3-5). These events will probably occur somewhere in the first half of the Tribulation (a seven-year period that will be like no other time, due to the severity of God's judgment on humanity). These events will probably surface after the Antichrist makes a peace treaty with Israel and they sense they are living in safety (Ezekiel 38:11,14). By this time you may be wondering, *"What is the good news?"*

THE GOOD NEWS – When Jesus returns and steps on the Mount of Olives, God promises to put His Spirit into the people of Israel and give them a new heart. *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my law."* (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Today there is partial blindness on the people of Israel. They do not recognize that their Messiah arrived on earth over 2,000 years ago or that He is the one who paid for their sins by nailing those sins to the cross. Like many other religious people, as well as those who are not religious, they are basing their eternity upon a "works" system, hoping that their good deeds will be sufficient to get them into heaven.

Jerusalem, the City of God, is a great city with a beautiful future. However, as the old TV sports program opened with, **"the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat"**, so first on Jerusalem's agenda will be **the agony of defeat**, but later will be followed by **the thrill of victory**, thanks to the grace and love that God has for that City and His chosen people – the Jews.