

# Two Returns of Israel to the Land in the Last days

*John R. Ecob D.D.*

**T**he Bible teaches two returns to the land of Israel in the last days. To confuse these returns will lead to a wrong understanding of the sequence of events on the last days.

Israel is now back in the Land and has been recognized as a sovereign nation since 1948. Since 1967 Israel has controlled most of the territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. Of course the Palestinians have the West Bank, Gaza and Jericho, but they do not have sovereignty over it and Israel is responsible for national security. Israeli settlements are multiplying in the West Bank making division of the land almost impossible.

The population of Israel in 2007 reached 7.15 million, including 1.425 million Arabs and 0.31 million who are classified as “others”, mainly non-Jewish family members. Of the Jews and non-Arabs, 65% have been born in the land. In 2013 the population had grown to 8.157 million.

The flow of migrants has slowed from the days following the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s but in 2006 there were 18,400 new migrants, just 12% of the population increase.

Excluding the unknown number of the “ten lost tribes” in Central Asia, in 2007 nearly half of world Jewry was in the land of Israel, and at the present rate of return it is unlikely that all Jews will relocate from the dispersed locations around the globe this side of the millennial kingdom. **What we have witnessed is a partial return.**

Ezekiel wrote of the last days when **every Jew** would be saved and located in the promised land.

*“Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there” (Ezek.39:28).*

Such a condition does not exist today. Only a small percentage would acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and that has been the state of affairs since the day of Pentecost when the Church began.

Those who deny any future for Israel in God's plan would cast this fact in our face and comfort their proud Gentile hearts about Israel's spiritual blindness. If they knew their Bible better, they would know that the prophetic Word indicates there will be **two returns to the land of Israel in the last days**. The first is partial and in unbelief, while the second return is complete, as a redeemed people.

The first return in unbelief is to occur **before the Rapture** but the second return will occur **after the second coming of Christ** to the earth.

The first return is due to God's sovereign dealings with His covenant people and is not preconditioned on their repentance. It is part of God's plan to bring them to repentance.

The second return is a fulfilment of God's promise under the Palestinian Covenant (Deut.28 to 30 and Lev.26) in which God has bound Himself to return every Jew to the land upon repentance. He will send His angels to ensure their safe return (Matt.24:30-31) and the "*ships of Tarshish*" (Britain and USA) will bring the first of them back (Isa.60:8-9).

Let us look at the Scriptures that make these matters clear. It will help us to understand much of the prophetic Scriptures. We fear many Christians are applying Scripture to Israel **today** that can only be true in a **future fulfilment**.

A lady once quoted Isa.40:1 saying that she just wanted to comfort the Jewish people. It reads:

*"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."*

However, the next verse states:

*"Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that **her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned**: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isa.40:2).*

Israel's warfare is not yet accomplished, nor is her iniquity pardoned. She is still receiving chastening from the Lord for her rebellion, hardness of heart, and rejection of her King and Messiah. If we know our Bible at all, we will be aware that Israel has yet to experience the "*time of Jacob's trouble*" (Jer.30:7), in the period of seven years called the "*day of the Lord*". Jesus called it "*great tribulation*" (Matt.24:21).

## *Ezekiel's Prophecy of Two Returns*

Ezekiel's amazing prophecy tells of Israel's sin, her punishment at the hands of the Babylonians and, from chapter 34 to the end, how the nation will come to repentance and millennial blessing. It begins with the glory departing from the first Temple (Chs.1-11) and concludes with the glory of God returning to the millennial Temple (Ezek.43:1-9).

Ezekiel chapters 12 to 33 are basically fulfilled prophecies relating to the judgment of God on Israel and the surrounding nations at the hands of the Babylonians. These prophecies are now history.

Details of the millennial Temple which will be built after the second coming of Christ begin in chapter 40, but between chapters 33 and 40 God's FUTURE plan to bring the nation of Israel to repentance is unveiled. The sequence of events is unmistakable.

In Ch.34 the ungodly shepherds of the nation will be punished, and the Lord will be their shepherd.

In Ch.35 Israel's neighbours will be punished.

Ch.36 describes how God scattered them for their wickedness but prophesies that by a sovereign act of God the nation will be partially established in the land, and promises abundant blessing contingent upon their turning to the Lord. Let us follow the text of Scripture.

### *Israel's Sin and Dispersion*

*"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it...Wherefore I poured my fury upon them...And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries... And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name..." (Ezek.36:17-20).*

### *First Return a Sovereign Act*

*"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen...I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned,...and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek.36:21-23).*

## ***Partial Return in Unbelief***

*“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, (1st return) and will bring you into your own land” (Ezek.36:24).*

### ***Conversion, New Covenant and Complete Return***

*“THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land (2nd return) that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezek.36:25-28).*

### ***Why God Does This***

*“NOT FOR YOUR SAKES do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel” (Ezek.36:32).*

### ***Israel Must Repent***

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, TO DO IT FOR THEM; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek.36:37-38).*

The process is perfectly clear. There is a return BEFORE Israel repents, and there will be a greater return to the land AFTER Israel repents.

### ***Chapters 37:1-14 - Dry Bones Revived***

In Ch.37 the vision of the valley of dry bones depicts Israel spiritually dead and scattered among the nations, but as Ezekiel prophesies the nation is revived **in three stages**.

First, there is a **great shaking** and **the bones come together**. No longer are they scattered bones, but scattered skeletons. This speaks of the Zionist Movement beginning in 1881 which brought Jews together around the world and gave hope of a return to the land. The great

shaking of the holocaust dislodged them from their comfort zone in Eastern Europe (Ezek.37:7).

Again Ezekiel prophesied. **Sinews and skin came upon the bones** but they were still dead. They had no life. This speaks of Israel's return in unbelief and recognition as a nation in 1948. There is **still** a diaspora, but they have no spiritual life by regeneration. It is only a partial return in unbelief.

Finally, Ezekiel prophesies and **breath comes into the bodies** and they stand up like a great army. God says:

*"Ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, **And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land:** then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD"* (Ezek.37:13-14).

### ***Prophecy of the Two Sticks*** ***Ezek.37:15-27***

The final return of Israel to the land will include the "lost ten tribes" as indicated by the two sticks of Judah and Joseph. These become **one stick** in Ezekiel's hand. So God says:

*"Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:*

*And I will make them **one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel;** and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations... **I will save them** out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God...**And they shall dwell in the land** that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt"* (Ezek.37:21-25).

The surprise of the Jews in the Land when the "lost ten tribes" return, is expressed in Isa.49:19-22.

*"For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.*

***The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other,** shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me*

that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, **Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?**

Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders."

### ***A New Covenant with Israel and Judah***

"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore"(Ezek.37:26).

### ***A Millennial Temple will be Built***

"**My tabernacle** also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, **when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore**" (Ezek.37:27-28).

Jeremiah prophesied of this **new covenant** that God would make with Israel in the last days. At that time **every Jew will be saved**.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make **a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...**

This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel...I will put my law in their inward parts, ...and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for **they shall ALL know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them**, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:31-34).

### ***Ezekiel Chapter 38 and 39***

These chapters describe a massive invasion from the north into Israel in the latter days. The invaders are named, and include Russia (Magog, Meshech, Tubal and Gomer), Persia (Iran), the House of Togarmah of the north quarters (Turkey), Libya and Ethiopia (Sudan). These are Muslim nations led by Russia. The outcome is that Israel repents and

turns to the Lord and then God destroys those armies and only one sixth escapes to Siberia.

At this time the land of Magog (Russia) is burned and it takes seven months to bury the dead in Israel. They will be burning the debris for seven years.

The timing of this invasion is after the nation has been re-established. *“After many days thou shalt be visited: **in the latter years** thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is **gathered out of many people**, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: **but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them**”* (Ezek.38:8).

Obviously this implies that Jews have been previously scattered but have re-established as a nation and achieved sufficient strength to defend themselves.

This invasion brings the whole of the nation of Israel to repentance: *“So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God **from that day and forward...**Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and **have mercy upon the whole house of Israel...** After that they have born their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.*

*When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; **Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God**, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: **but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.***

*Neither will I hide my face any more from them: **for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD**”* (Ezek.39:22-29).

Obviously Israel must **partially return in unbelief** and be in the land BEFORE this invasion. However, AFTER they repent there will be a complete return and **none of them will be left among the nations any more!** When Christ returns He will send His angels with *“the great sound of a trumpet”* to gather His elect nation (Matt.24:31), and **during the millennial kingdom all Jews will live in the land.**

**There are two returns of Israel foretold in Scripture, and we have already witnessed the first. The second is yet future; at least seven years away at the end of the Great Tribulation.**

The Rapture of the “born again” Christians must come **first** and the Roman Antichrist appear to confirm a seven-year treaty with Israel. During the first half of the seven years **Israel will turn to the Lord** through the preaching of 144,000 Jewish preachers who will proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom in “*all the world*” (Matt.24:14; Rev.7:1-4). During the second half of the seven years Tribulation, Antichrist will move into the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God.

We do not know the day or hour of the Lord’s return **for His Church** but it undoubtedly is drawing near and the Rapture will be one of the signs that God gives to the Jewish people that the “day of the Lord” has come. Jesus said:

*“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

*But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

***THEN shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.***

*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt.24:36-42).*

**The coming of the Lord must be near!**