

God's Living Proof

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1948 - A MOMENTOUS YEAR

The old man stood resolute beneath the bright new flag, blue and white in the spotlights. To a roar of approval, Ben Gurion declared the formation of the State of Israel, and signed the Constitution.

Outside, thousands of ill armed Jews, untrained for war, danced and cheered in the streets of Tel Aviv, then prepared to fight for their lives against the Arabs as they vowed to destroy the infant country at its birth. It was May 14th, 1948.

To many Bible students, the events of that day were nothing short of a miracle. For nearly 2000 years, the Jews had been without a government, without a capital, without even a land. Forced from their fatherland, first by the Assyrians and Babylonians, then by the iron might of Rome, they had wandered among the nations, persecuted, tortured, despised and cursed. Now they had come home.

Half a century has gone by since that momentous beginning, and the state has grown up like a tree amongst the nations. The population has exploded, as waves of immigrants from areas as far apart as the steppes of Eastern Europe and the torrid heat of Ethiopia, have been housed, clothed, educated and set to work. The oranges and grapefruits that in the early years filled the holds of the ships tied up at Haifa have been replaced by aeroplane loads of cut flowers, swimwear, high tech lasers and medical equipment, bringing a new prosperity. Everywhere there are new houses, roads and factories. The morning traffic jams into Tel Aviv resemble the motorway north of Birmingham. Walk down a shopping street, and men bump past with shoulders hunched over their mobiles, unseeing, arms waving, shouting to their neighbours a phone cell away. Israel has arrived. Yet even to the holiday visitor, and there are plenty of them, too, there is something extraordinary about this people, and their land. Take a trip on an Israeli bus, for example. It is like a tour of the United Nations. Pale, high cheek boned faces from the Ukraine sit alongside swarthy ones with hooked noses from

the Yemen. Fair haired European Jews strap hang with curly black haired immigrants from Africa. But they are chit chatting away in a common language, the same Hebrew their forefathers spoke in the same land 3000 years ago. Drive south from the wide streets and skyscrapers of modern Jerusalem, and the road winds down to a vision from another era, a film set frozen in time, Old Jerusalem, the city walls and ramparts where David reigned, and Jesus preached, and the Saracens fought the Templars of the Crusades. The sense of continuity is overwhelming.

One thing has not changed, only mellowed. Israel's Arab neighbours still keep alive what the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel called 'the ancient hatred' (Ezekiel 35:5). Israel survived the 1948 War of Independence. In 1967 she repulsed the combined attacks of Syria, Egypt and Jordan, gaining the Golan heights, the Sinai, and the crown jewel of Old Jerusalem. Yom Kippur, the 1973 war, caught the Israeli Mossad secret agents napping, and only heroic fighting drove the Egyptians back across the Suez canal. After that, exhausted by conflict, Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt and gave them back the Sinai. The battle front turned instead to a weary conflict in Lebanon. In recent years, assiduous shuttle diplomacy by the Americans has brought Jew and Arab together under peace accords. These were intended to give the Palestinian refugees from 1948 self rule in their territories inside Israel, but this move has brought greater tension inside Israel, and the assassination of president Rabin, viewed as too "dove" like by right wing Israeli settlers. Both sides would benefit from lasting peace, the Arabs from the high technology products of Israel's factories and kibbutzim, and the Jews from a huge market place, right on their doorstep. But relationships are still strained, and the Palestinians are not going to go away.

Two obvious questions spring to our attention as we look back over fifty years. How did the Jews get back to base after so long away, and against all the norms of history? And what does the future hold for them, now they are back?

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The right of the Jews to settle in the land of their forefathers has been debated ever since the formation of the State of Israel. Fifty years on, the families of the Arabs displaced from their villages in the War of Independence still complain that the land belongs to them, and bullets and beatings mar the uneasy peace. Who does own the land known for so many centuries as Palestine? Do the recent centuries of occupation by Israel's Arab enemies count for more than the Jews' prior claim of 1500 years under their own leaders? For a clear and unequivocal answer to this question, and at the same time, an explanation for the return of the Jews from their dispersion, we need to turn to the Bible.

This great handbook for human life states emphatically that all lands belong to God. He, the Creator, decides who occupies a particular country, and for how long. Consider these powerful passages:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”
(Psalm 24:1)

and

“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to me” (Jeremiah 27:5).

“God”, confirms the Apostle Paul, “has made from one blood every nation of men . and has determined their pre - appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

This is a different approach to history than the one we were taught at school, where the rise and fall of empires was due such mundane factors as changes in climate, population pressure and technical advances in warfare. It means that moral standards are far more important - whether a nation abides by God’s rules, and pleases him.

Where, then, does the Bible say the Jews have a right to the land of Palestine? For answer, open the book of Genesis at chapter 15. Here you will meet another old man, a devout and faithful servant of the Lord, named Abraham. He was living in a tent in a field outside Hebron. Some ten years before, at the call of God, he had emigrated from Mesopotamia, where he had been brought up. The decision to leave was a great act of faith, for he was already approaching retiring age, and the book of Hebrews makes it plain that when he left Ur of the Chaldeans, “he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). It was to the land of Canaan, the country we call Israel, that he was eventually led. As soon as he arrived, God promised to give the land to him, and this promise was repeated several times. As Genesis 15 begins, the angel of the Lord comes to his tent. “I am the Lord”, he said, “who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.” (Genesis 15:7). Abraham immediately voices his concern that God was taking a long time to fulfil the promise. “Lord God,” he enquired, “how shall I know that I will inherit it?” For answer, God removed any further doubts by adopting a custom of the times, used to solemnify a promise. Abraham was instructed to sacrifice animals and birds, to cut the carcasses in two, and to lay the halves on the ground with a gap between them. Next night, after dark, Abraham watched great lamps of fire passing between the pieces. It was the Lord, making a covenant with Abraham. “To your descendants I have given this land”, he said (Genesis 15:18). There we have the precise words of God himself.

In the years that followed, Abraham had a baby boy, Isaac, born when both parents were very old. Isaac in turn had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. It was Jacob, whose name was changed to ‘Israel’, who became the forefather of the nation of Israel. He and his family migrated to

Egypt to avoid a famine, then stayed on, for hundreds of years. Around the 12th century B.C. (the precise date is debated), the 12 sons of Jacob had grown into a mighty people, and began to be oppressed by the Egyptians. God sent them a deliverer, Moses. As he was being commissioned for his task, the angel of the Lord said to Moses “I will bring you (the Israelites) into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob , and I will give it to you as a heritage” (Exodus 6:8). God was keeping his promise.

On the way to the promised land, in the Sinai desert, the angel appeared to the nation on Mount Horeb. He gave Moses a remarkable Law for the people to keep when they arrived in their inheritance. It was designed to create a humane, healthy, happy society, where each family had a plot of land to grow their food, and where God was at the centre of life. Three times the people agreed they would keep the commandments of the Lord, and to confirm their promise, they too made a covenant, sealed by the blood of animals. God was pleased. “If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant”, he said, “then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people”. Then he added “for all the earth is mine” (Exodus 19:5). Their enjoyment of the land was his gift, and they must respect him in return.

Sadly, in the years that followed, the people of Israel reneged on their promise. They began to worship the gods of the Canaanites, and violence, oppression of the poor, and sexual immorality, stained their history. God sent prophets to remind them of their duty. For a while, they would amend their ways. Then they slipped back again. After 800 years (God is patient), he drove the Northern half of the nation into captivity. The Southern Kingdom followed, in the time of the Babylonian empire (around 586 B.C.). Some of them returned, in the time of Cyrus king of Persia, and it was their descendants who were in the land in the time of Jesus.

In the words of one of Jesus’ well-known stories, the parable of the Vineyard, God gave them one last chance. Having sent his servants to remonstrate with the tenants of the vineyard, the Owner decided at last to send his son. “They will respect him ...”, he reasoned. But the tenants put the son to death. Transparently, the Son was Jesus himself, and in rejecting his last call, the tenants forfeited all rights to the land. As Jesus himself sorrowfully predicted in Luke 21, “They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). His words came true. In A.D.70 the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem. A century later the land was empty of her ancient people.

So that, you might have thought, was that! If we had been in charge, it would no doubt have been the end of the Jews. Our patience would have been exhausted. But God’s ways are higher than ours. “For the Lord is good”, writes the Psalmist. “His mercy is everlasting, and his truth endures to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

The Apostle Paul considers the position of the Jews, in his letter to the Romans. Their hardheartedness, he argues, has given the Gentiles (non Jews) the opportunity to share the gospel call. But the casting off of the Jews, he insists, is only temporary. "... hardening in part has happened to Israel", he says, "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." He continues, "And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written (and here he quotes from the book of Isaiah): "The Deliverer will come out of Zion (Jerusalem), and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (Romans 11:25-27). Then he concludes with a masterly statement: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable".

We need to tease out the thoughts in that short sequence of phrases. Hardening (lack of response to the gospel) has happened in part to Israel. It happened in part, because a small minority of Jews did respond to Jesus' call. Eventually, the hardening has an end - it continues "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in". That point has not yet been reached, for the call is still going out to all nations. But when the last of the Gentiles has been called into God's family, the "hardness" is taken away with an act of high drama, because God sends a Deliverer to the Jews. That Deliverer, of course, is Jesus himself, who is to return to Jerusalem, the place where he was crucified, to bring to the Jews the merciful forgiveness of God. As the last book of the Bible prophesies: "Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, and they also which pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him" (Revelation 1:7). If the Jews, who pierced Jesus, are to see him, he must have returned to the earth. This New Testament passage is based on an earlier one in the book of Zechariah, which goes on to describe how "a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). The same mercy and forgiveness we can enjoy today, will be experienced by God's ancient people. And the promise that this will happen, is guaranteed by God himself. "This is my covenant unto them", Paul quoted. Once God has said he will do something, it is irrevocable.

So, the Bible insists that the Jews must survive through the centuries, in order to be saved by the Deliverer. It says there will be Jews in Jerusalem, who will look upon Jesus. It describes their restoration to God's favour, with the forgiveness of their sins - grafted back again, to use Paul's powerful imagery, into their own olive tree.

A WITNESS TO THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

It is time to consider the implications of what we have been reading. It is obvious that God's reputation stands or falls by the survival of the people of Israel. Or, to put it the other way round, the fact that the Jews are still here, as a nation, after centuries of scattering, is a remarkable proof of the existence of God.

The great prophet Isaiah lived around 700 B.C., at a time when the Israelites faced invasion by the Assyrians and Babylonians. His people were about to go into captivity, for their sins. However, to an impartial observer, it was going to look as though the reason for Israel's defeat was that the gods of the nations who were taking them away were stronger than the God of Israel. Isaiah tackled the task of preserving the morale of the faithful few who still believed in Israel's God.

In his 43rd chapter, he brings them a promise that, one day, they would return to their land. "Fear not", says God, "for I am with you. I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north 'Give them up!' and to the south 'Do not keep them back!' (Isaiah 43:5-6). It must have seemed unlikely, as they filed sadly away in chains with Jerusalem a smoking ruin, that they would ever come back. Yet God's promise sat there in the Bible for 2,700 years.

In the next verse Isaiah begins to paint the picture of an imaginary court case.

He sees the nations of the world and their gods, in dispute with the God of Israel. "Let the nations be gathered together", he cries, "and let the people be assembled" (Isaiah 43:9). We see the benches filling up with the united nations; all colours and languages are there. Now the hearing begins. Israel's God calls on his adversaries to justify their trust in their own, man made, gods. "Let them bring out their witnesses!" he challenges (Isaiah 43:9). There is a pause. Nothing happens. There is a great silence from the other side of the court, and people begin to fidget. No witnesses come forward. Now it is God's turn. "Bring out the blind people", he cries, "who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears!" The officer of the court opens a door, and there is a gasp from the public galleries. A long thin file of men and women climbs slowly into the witness box. Some have white sticks. Others carry ear trumpets. They are God's people, battered but alive. They have been blind to his warnings, and deaf to his entreaties, over the years, but nevertheless, they are still alive! God stretches forth his hand. "You are my witnesses", he cries, "that I am God!" (Isaiah 43:12). He goes on to describe how he will forgive and restore them - "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions", he declares. Then, in the chapters that follow, he returns to his theme. Again he urges on the opposition. "Tell and bring forth your case!" he insists, "Yes, let them take counsel together!" We can see the white wigged barristers putting their heads together. But it is in vain. "Who has declared this from ancient time?" is God's vital challenge. "Who has told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? And there is no other god besides me."

The point Isaiah makes is irresistible. There is one unique test of the supernatural power of God, inspiring his ancient prophets. He says he will do something, thousands of years ahead. And it happens. No man, or idol, can do that. The people of Israel are a living proof that God exists, and that he is in charge of the world.

But Isaiah does not stop there. “Look to me and be ye saved, all you ends of the earth!”, he continues (Isaiah 45:21-22). God will save the Jews - forgive them and restore them to their land. But he also offers to save those who are not Jews. In fact, he foretells, with the same authority, that “to me every knee shall bow, every tongue (i.e. a representative of every language) shall take an oath - he shall say ‘Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength’” (Isaiah 45:23-24). It does not take much imagination to see in this statement the Bible hope of the Kingdom of God, the new world that God will bring where his will shall be done here, on earth, as it is now in heaven. And the gospel is calling people, today, from all nations, to find strength, and righteousness, in the God of the Bible.

1848 - ANOTHER MOMENTOUS YEAR

The foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 was a turning point in the history of the Jews. Almost 100 years before, one of the first Christadelphians, Dr John Thomas, published a book. It was called, in the classical style of those times, “Elpis Israel”, which means, in Greek, “the Hope of Israel”.

John Thomas had emigrated from England to the United States. His ship had been caught up in a violent storm, and on reaching land, he realised he had come close to death, but without having any clear idea about what would have happened to him, if he had drowned. Was there an after life? What do you have to do to be saved? He set about reading the Bible to find out. After joining a religious group known as the Campbellites, he was asked to give public talks for them, and found he had to study hard to organise his material. He soon discovered that many of the traditional teachings of the churches were at variance with the Bible, and, conversely, that there were passages in the Bible which nobody seemed to talk about.

Foremost among the differences he found, was the fact that God had promised the people of Israel that he would never forsake them, and that, one day, he would restore them to their land. None of the churches, including the Campbellites, paid any attention to these prophecies, although, as we have seen, they are to be found in the New Testament as well as the Old. He set out his findings in his book, the first of many Bible studies. The fascinating thing is that he lived at a time when the Jews were still despised and persecuted, without a national home. The suggestion that they would be regathered from their dispersion would have appeared politically impossible, even ludicrous. Yet his simple faith that the Bible means what it says, led him to assert firmly that it would happen. Here is what he wrote, 150 years ago:

“There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of the Jews before the manifestation (he had been speaking of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ), which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The pre - adventual (i.e. before the return of Christ) colonization of Palestine

will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus.

John Thomas never lived to see the growth of the Zionist movement, the founding Conference in Basle in 1890, and the slow trickle of pioneering agriculturalists who bought land in Palestine and settled there before the Great War. He would have been particularly thrilled to know that it was Great Britain who drove the Turks from Palestine, and carried out the League of Nations decision to make Palestine a national home for the Jews. He had already concluded, in “Elpis Israel”, in 1848:

“I know not whether the men who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews”. “The finger of God”, he continued, “has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded.”

He wrote his book, not because he claimed to be a prophet - he would have been appalled at such a suggestion - but because he had become convinced that if the Bible says God will do something, he will carry it out. Bible prophecy may be a long time coming true. People may laugh because it seems unlikely. But John Thomas was justified by subsequent history, and his predictions were remarkably accurate.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Can we, with the help of the Bible, work out what lies ahead, in our future?

Trying to piece together the order of events in prophecy is rather like assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle. There are hundreds of pieces. As time goes by, more and more of them fall slowly into place. The Return of the Jews was a major event, equivalent to the four corners, or one or two of the sides. Are there any other really clear ‘shapes’ out there, waiting to happen?

We have already discovered the most significant prediction of all. That is, that the Jews, who, as John Thomas wrote, mostly reject the idea that Jesus saves, are going to meet him, face to face. They are going to be forced, by his appearing, to recognise that the one they pierced, was the son God sent to deliver them from sin.

One disturbing fact that occurs over and over again in the prophecies of ‘the time of the end’ is that when this happens, the Israelis will be facing disaster. Dozens of Old Testament passages portray Jerusalem surrounded by enemies, and the Jews facing the ruin of their precious State. “I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem”, cries Zechariah, “the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished” (Zechariah 14:2). “When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem”, writes Joel, “I will also gather all nations,

and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (east of Jerusalem)”. But he adds that God will act to save his people - “I will enter into judgement with them there on account of my people, my heritage Israel” (Joel 3:2).

Isaiah sees the nations fighting Jerusalem dispersed with a fiery overthrow. “With thunder and earthquake and great noise”, he declares, “with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire, the multitude of the nations who fight against Ariel (Jerusalem) ... shall be as a dream of a night vision” - like waking from a nightmare, to find a bad dream has gone away (Isaiah 29:6-7).

Zechariah describes the Lord’s feet standing on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and a great earthquake dividing the hill into two. “Thus the Lord my God will come”, he concludes, “and all the saints with you” (Zechariah 14:4-5). Israel’s enemies are destroyed with a fiery ‘plague’ that burns them up on their feet (Zechariah 14:12).

These passages are describing a scenario that has not yet happened. It lies in our future. But we can appreciate how such an overwhelming invasion would leave the Israelis demoralised and shattered, and ready to accept the appearing of Jesus on the mount of Olives as the long promised Deliverer.

The second Psalm is a vital link in the assembly of the jigsaw. Here David writes “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed (Christ means anointed)”. The besieging forces, then, resent the appearing of Jesus! But God laughs them to scorn. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion (Jerusalem),” he insists. “You are my Son, today have I begotten you ... I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession” (Psalm 2:6-8). Now, add to Psalm 2 a New Testament passage, - the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary before Jesus was born, and you have the whole picture: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give unto him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

This promise that Jesus will reign as king over all the earth is an essential Christian doctrine. It has been watered down or eliminated by many of the mainstream churches, mainly because so much time has gone by without Jesus appearing. But, as we have seen, God keeps his promises, even after thousands of years. “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”, the apostles asked the risen Christ. He did not say “No! you’ve got it wrong, there is not going to be a kingdom”. He replied, gently, “It is not for you to know times or seasons” (Acts 1:6-7). Shortly afterwards the angels in white told the sorrowing disciples, as Jesus ascended to heaven, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go.” (Acts 1:11). Significantly, they were standing on the mount of Olives, the place to which Zechariah said the Lord would return, in the day of

earthquake and fire. So we need have no doubt that Jesus will return; Old Testament and New require it.

In this Kingdom of God, favourite subject of so many prophets in the Bible, the Jews are to be restored to their land in even greater numbers than we see today. Isaiah draws a picture of two waves of immigration, one from the north crossing the Euphrates, and another working north via the land of Egypt (Isaiah 11:12-16). Cleansed and obedient, they enter into another, better covenant with God, one based on the blood, not of bulls and goats, but of Jesus himself. They come to see him as their Saviour, not just from hostile armies, but from their sins. Jeremiah writes: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah (the two halves of the ancient nation) ... I will put my laws in their minds, and write it in their hearts ... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The new style Israel becomes a nation of priests, carrying God's word to the other nations of the earth, just as they should have done when they were God's holy people in Bible times. A system of worship is set up, based on Jerusalem as the international centre where people will go to be taught the commands of God. Here Jesus, set, as God promised in Psalm 2, on his throne in Zion, administers justice with wisdom and power. "At that time", Jeremiah rejoices, "Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it" (Jeremiah 3:17). "Out of Zion the law shall go forth", adds Micah, "and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks ..." (Micah 4:2-3). What a wonderful prospect for this unhappy, war torn, grief stricken earth! A strong, incorruptible, humane, world-wide ruler, who will never die, and who has a proven 'track record' as the greatest teacher the world has ever known, is the answer to all our prayers. "Men shall be blessed in him", writes the Psalmist, "all nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 72:17).

WILL YOU BE THERE?

We have seen God choose the people of Israel as his special people. We have followed their national fortunes through the centuries, - their ancient possession of the Holy Land, their scattering for disobedience, and, in our own lifetimes, their restoration in mercy. We have observed Isaiah's imaginary court case, where the continued existence of the Jews proves that God always keeps his word. We have discovered Bible prophecy that still lies in the future, including an earthshaking event - the return of Jesus Christ to be King of the Jews.

It is time to look at ourselves in the mirror. Where are we going, with our lives? The Bible has been there for centuries, giving us God's point of view, his promises, and his commandments. Are we letting the years drift by, too busy to bother with God? The Bible calls us to action. As we saw in the 'Israel' passage in Romans 11, God is calling Gentiles as

well as Jews into his family, today. But that window of opportunity comes to an abrupt end, when “the fulness of the Gentiles has come in”. Once Jesus comes, it will be too late to run round and make peace with God. The stark truth is, we have to act quickly.

There is a sense in which we have to become ‘Jews’, now, in order to be saved from death and destruction. “To Abraham’s seed”, writes Paul, “were the promises made”. But he concludes “... as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ ... if you are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:16,27,29).

Those promises God made about the new world that is coming, we can make our own, but only if we join ourselves to Jesus, the King. In New Testament times, every believer was baptised in water, to link him or her self to Jesus, the Seed of Abraham. In this act of obedience, we become the children of Abraham. “It is of faith”, Paul declares in Romans 4, “that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written ‘I have made you a father of many nations’” (Romans 4:16). We can have the promise made “sure” to us - so sure, that even if we die, we shall, like Abraham himself, be raised from the dead to inherit the land for ever with Jesus, his Seed. Conversely, if we sit on the fence, or turn our back on God’s forgiveness and mercy, we will remain outside the covenant. “You”, Paul writes to the Ephesians, “... were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”. It sounds desolate, putting it like that. That is how we all are, until we join ourselves to Christ. “But now”, he continues, “in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Dear reader, consider your position. The same mercy God shows to his erring people, is yours for the taking, today. The door to the Kingdom of God stands open. Eternal life, in the company of Jesus, and citizenship of Jerusalem, the City of the great King, can all be yours. Please, do not leave it too late. Get down the Bible. Start reading, with new zeal, either on your own, or with others who have read it before and can help you. Give yourself no rest, until you have made God’s promises your own.

D.M.P.

<http://www.cbm.org.uk/cbm.htm>

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