

# **The Battle for Jerusalem: Finding God's Plan for Israel and the Middle East**

(Study Guide)

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*"It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who list it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it." Zechariah 12:3 (NASV)*

## **I. The Uniqueness of Jerusalem**

*"When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it." Luke 19:41*

Jerusalem is one of the most contested cities in all history. She evokes a wide expression of deeply felt emotions. Jesus the Messiah displayed a divine jealousy concerning the destiny of this strategic city. Yes, Jerusalem holds a distinct place in the heart of God.

In ancient times, maps portrayed Jerusalem as the center of the earth. It is mentioned 881 times in Scripture with vivid descriptions. Let's take a look at a few of the names and characteristics of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future.

### **A. Descriptive Names of Jerusalem in Her Past**

1. David's Capital (1 Kings 15:4, 2 Kings 19:34, 2 Chronicles 6:6)
2. Home of the Levites (1 Chronicles 9:34)
3. Home of the High Priests (John 18:15)
4. Where the Feasts were observed (Deuteronomy 16:16, Psalms 122:3-5, Luke 2:41)
5. Place where God's people prayed (I Kings 8:38, Daniel 6:10)
6. Place where the temple was built (II Samuel 7:2-3, I Chronicles 28:2)
7. Place of ancient gates (Psalms 9:14, Psalms 87:2, Isaiah 60:18)
8. Word of the Lord would go forth (Micah 4:2, Luke 24:47)
9. Place where the Holy Spirit was poured out (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, 2:1-4)

### **B. Descriptive Names of Jerusalem in Her Present**

1. City rebuilt and restored (Isaiah 11:12, Daniel 9:25, Joel 3:20-21)

2. Heavy stone (Zechariah 12:3)
3. Holy City (Nehemiah 11:1, 18; Matthew 4:5, 27:53)
4. City of watchmen (Isaiah 56:7, 62:6,7, Matthew 21:13)
5. City of pilgrimage (Psalms 122:1-9)

### **C. Descriptive Names of Jerusalem in Her Future**

1. Future capital of the Messiah's Eternal Kingdom (Isaiah 2:1-5, Joel 3:1)
2. The Eternal City (Jeremiah 17:25, Ezekiel 37:25, Ezekiel 37:28)
3. Heavenly City (Galatians 4:26, Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 3:12, 21:2,10)
4. The Throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17)

## **II. The Battle Is Over Destiny!**

*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Luke 21:20-24*

### **A. Ancient Foes in Disguise**

From the earliest times our enemy, Satan, has tried to hunt down the Jewish people and obliterate them. He hates Israel, the covenant people of God, and all that they stand for. He wants to erase all traces of Israel.

As a people, Israel has suffered one conquest after another. Families have been torn apart, and faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has almost succumbed under the crusades and pogroms and absorption into foreign cultures. Within our living memory, we have had the Holocaust in Europe as well as catastrophic warfare in the Middle East. Within biblical memory, we know about enslavement and exile, apostasy and attempted genocide. An alliance of hatred has perpetrated these demonic horrors.

### **B. Alliance of Hatred**

*"O God, do not remain quiet; do not be silent and, O God, do not be still. For behold, Your enemies make an uproar, and those who hate You have exalted themselves. They make shrewd plans against Your people and conspire together against Your treasured ones. They have said, "Come and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." Psalm 83:1-4*

Today there is a renewed alliance of hatred. They have been allied in the past in their demonic hatred of God's people and of God Himself.

### **C. The Spirit of Haman**

This brings us to another fascinating connection that we would be well advised to make. In ways too numerous to count, it is as if the genocidal, specifically anti-Semitic spirit of Haman, has stepped from the book of Esther into new death-dealing entities, not the least of which is Hamas.

The similar-sounding names are no accident. Haman himself is long gone, hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai, but it is as if his brother Hamas has risen up in his place. Hamas has its origins in the Moslem Brotherhood, which was founded to protect the purity of the Islamic faith. But by 1987, after the Islamic revolution in Iran, it had developed into a militant political organization.

And once again, as in Haman's day in the court of the Persian King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), it is a Persian "King," the president of Iran who allows Hamas free rein. What is the goal of Hamas? To destroy the State of Israel and to reclaim the land as Islamic territory. Infiltrated by a powerful Hamas, the peace of Jerusalem has become fragile indeed.

The battle rages on. It is a Battle for Jerusalem, ultimately the Battle of the God of the Book and the Book of God! The Battle is about God's Destiny for Israel and the Middle East.

## **III. A Gaze into the Past to View the Future of Jerusalem**

*"This is what the LORD ALMIGHTY says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.'" Zechariah 8:4-5*

### **A. When the Fig Tree Blossoms**

*"Then He told them a parable: 'Behold, the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the Kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away*

*until all things take place.”* Luke 21:29-32

What was Jesus’ message? When the nation of Israel is reborn, God’s timing will have arrived!

### 1. **The Scattering**

Jesus predicted the destruction that would come to Jerusalem (see Luke 21:20,23). The believing community remembered Jesus’ words over three decades later, in A.D. 66, when the Roman General Titus laid siege to Jerusalem. Within four years, the sacred Temple and the entire city were annihilated. Recalling that Jesus had said, *“Let those who are living in Jerusalem flee”* (see Luke 21:21), the believing community escaped across into Jordan.

### 2. **Three Exiles**

- a. By 721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel had been taken captive into Assyria.
- b. By 586 B.C., Babylon had invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the First Temple. This forced exile lasted for 70 years.
- c. The exile of which Jesus spoke was not an exile to one nation, but to all the nations. Descendants of Israel still reside in the four corners of the earth including settlements in China, India, North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

## **B. The Times of the Gentiles**

To what does the “Times of the Gentiles” refer?

1. Stage One: The Early Jewish “Church”
2. Stage Two: The Transitional Church
3. Stage Three: The Gentile Church
4. Stage Four: The Messianic Jewish Movement
5. Stage Five: The Return to Jewish Leadership

## **IV. Our Proper Biblical Response**

*“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”*

Isaiah 62:6-7

#### **A. Prayer for the Peace**

*“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; ‘May they prosper who love you.’”* Psalm 122:6

The Hebrew word for “Peace” is “Shalom,” and this word has a much deeper meaning than the absence of war. It can mean “To be completed” in regard to God’s plans and purposes. It can also mean “To be restored” into the fullness of God’s calling.

Shalom can also mean “Healing.” There will never be true lasting peace without the Prince of Peace being the middle of the process!

#### **B. Character that Endures**

To carry Israel over the long term, it takes endurance. Character that endures is cultivated by calling upon God’s great grace. Circumstances are used to refine our character and to help us grow in God’s strength. Remember, according to Zechariah 12:3, Jerusalem is a heavy stone. This task is not for the faint. This is not a lightweight subject or burden in the Lord. We must develop the fruit of the Spirit called longsuffering to be able to carry Jerusalem with character that endures and does not give up!

#### **C. With Weeping I Will Lead Them**

Remember what Jeremiah said, *“With weeping they will come, and by supplication I will lead them.”* Compassion is a necessary ingredient. We must get God’s perspective and we must cultivate God’s heart of compassion.

I have a question for you: Whose supplications will be heard? Who will lift up their voices to fill up a golden bowl in heaven (see Revelation 5:8)? Will you join me?

### **V. Scripture-Based Prophetic Prayers**

**A. A city of joy in the earth**

*“How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!” Jeremiah 49:25*

We need strong character to carry the burden for Israel and hearts that endure to the end. But—on the flip side of the coin—it is also a blessing and a high privilege to partner with the Holy Spirit in being a watchman on the walls. I consider this one of my greatest joys and honors in this life!

**B. Let’s Pray Together!**

I invite you to pray with me the following prayer, asking for strong character to carry the purposes of God for Israel and the Middle East:

*“Lord, I want character to carry Your burden.  
Like Moses, I want to be a servant for the glory and fame of the Lord.  
Like Solomon, I want to be a steward of wisdom and wealth.  
Like Nehemiah, I want to be a restorer of Israel’s protection and godly practice.  
Like Asaph, I want to be a pursuer of Your presence.*

*Weave these characteristics into my own life  
That I may carry the burden for Israel.  
Strengthen me, Lord; strengthen Your Church,  
For Yeshua’s sake, and for Israel’s sake.  
Amen and amen!”*