

# Jerusalem – City of Peace

IT IS a most unlikely proposition – I mean, that Jerusalem is a city of peace. Everything up to now seems to deny it. It is a city that has been so often the centre of war, dispute and bloody conflict. Nebuchadnezzar ravaged it twice, the Romans besieged it in the most awful siege of all time. It was captured during the Crusades and then, up to 1917, dominated by the Turks. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, it has been synonymous with conflict.

Jerusalem stands at the crossroads of the great power routes of the world – the border between east and west – the place of triangulation from which so much

provocation emerges and towards which all the destiny of the nations seems to be drawn. So, on the face of it, Jerusalem is far from being a place of harmony but more likely a focus of war. Why then do we proclaim in this article that Jerusalem is the city of peace?

## A Bible Teaching

We ought to make it clear right at the start that our argument is a biblical one, not political. It is on the evidence of Bible teaching that we have this unalterable conviction about Jerusalem. So let us begin the case in the Bible. Think of the Sermon



on the Mount – in the record in Matthew, Jesus said:

*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King (Matthew 5:33–35).*

Notice what Jesus said – Jerusalem is important, comparable to heaven and earth, because it is associated with a great king. Many kings have reigned in Jerusalem at different times – some were ordinary, some were bad, a few were great. But Jesus speaks of some king who is great in an extraordinary sense: “the great King”.

## Old Testament Prophecy

In order to understand what Jesus was getting at, we shall need to go next to the Old Testament to the prophecy of Ezekiel, the Hebrew prophet. He lived just at the time when the last king ever sat on the throne of David in Jerusalem. His name was Zedekiah – he was a puppet king installed by the Babylonians and he was an unworthy man in the sight of God. In fact he was deposed by God, as the prophet explained:

*The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel' (Ezekiel 21:1–2).*

Notice that the words are being addressed towards Jerusalem.

*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand'. Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord GOD: 'Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him' (Ezekiel 21:24–27).*

Notice the words carefully – the throne of Judah centred in Jerusalem, was to be taken from Zedekiah and at some future time was to be given him whose right it was, whenever

he came to claim it. It is a matter of history that Zedekiah was deposed and there has never again been a king from the line of David on the throne of Israel in Jerusalem.

## New Testament Explanations

The next step is to turn to the New Testament as we answer the question why Jesus said, ‘the city of the great King’.



Before Jesus was born, an angel came to his mother.

*Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:30–35).*

You do not have to be a genius to discern to whom Ezekiel was referring in the prophecy we quoted. That is why Jesus quoted the Psalms to describe the real destiny of Jerusalem.

*Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King (Psalm 48:2).*



The great King is Jesus, the man from Nazareth, just as the angel said. If you think we may have inferred too much from this passage have a look at another.

*Then Peter answered and said to him, “See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?” So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:27–28).*

So according to Jesus the day will come when he reigns as king in Jerusalem. In other words a fulfilment of the words of Ezekiel. This has never happened. He has never reigned. The last time he was there he was treated like a common criminal. What does it mean – is it an empty promise? There is an explanation and we must now come to it.

## **A Vision for the Future**

The Bible contains many visions of the effect of divine government over the world. Jesus will return from heaven to be the great King, ruling on behalf of God, his Father.

*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He*

will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Zechariah has a picture of peace in the city:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.' Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If it is marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvellous in My eyes?' says the LORD of hosts... 'I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.' (Zechariah 8:4-8).

Jerusalem will then be the capital of the new world – the centre of the kingdom of God on earth. It will be the seat of the government of Christ the King, and the place from which perfect law and perfect rule will issue to all the nations of the world.

For this superlative reason, Jerusalem is called the city of peace, because it is going to be the city of the great King.

The great news is that this state of peace will extend to the whole world. It is worth reading the whole of Psalm 72 and Isaiah 11 to get a feel for just how wonderful this will be. Here are some highlights:

*Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice... They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations... He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth... His name shall endure forever; his name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed (Psalm 72:1-2, 5, 8, 17).*

*With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:4, 9).*

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