

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

The Resurrected Lord

After he had been risen from the dead, Jesus met with his disciples. Among the questions that they asked was this one from Acts 1: 6.

His reply was significant. He did not deny that it was his intention to restore the Kingdom of Israel. After all, he was born to be the king of Israel.

He simply told them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority".

The Kingdom of Israel

Israel will be restored and Jerusalem will become the "city of the great King". The fig tree nation is blossoming now, and soon all these things will be fulfilled.

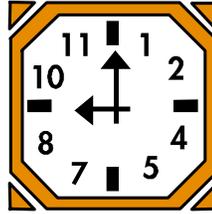
Prophetic Times

The Master has told us that we will not know the exact date of his coming. However, there are many clues to the general time period when he will return.

Bible prophecy supports the concept of a 7000 year plan, including a 1000 year Sabbath rest for the people of God.

We are on the brink of the 7th day. The servants of God will soon live and reign with Christ for 1000 years on this earth.

Christ and the Apostles taught us to watch and pray. To be ready always, for **in an hour when you think not, the son of man will come.**



Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

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"Behold the Fig

Jesus often spoke to the people in parables. Parables are stories taken from natural life that illustrate a spiritual lesson.

One of his parables was about a fig tree. We read about this in Luke 21: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near".

This parable is important to us because it relates directly to the time when God's Kingdom will be on this earth.

What signs was Jesus telling us to consider? To understand his parable, we must first learn something about how trees are used in the symbolic language of the Bible.

Trees are often used to represent a **king or a nation**. An example of this is found in Daniel 4:20-26.

In Romans 11, we are told about a wild olive tree and a good olive tree. The good tree represented Israel, and the wild tree was a symbol of the other nations.

ISRAEL AS TREES

Israel is symbolized by three different types of trees in the Bible; the olive, the vine and the fig tree. (Ref- Jer. 24)

We believe that Jesus taught us his parable of the fig tree to show us that when the Nation of Israel begins to bud again in the earth, the Kingdom of God will be near.

Israel has returned to their own land in our lifetime. They were a people that was scattered throughout the earth, but God has brought them back to their country and formed them into a prosperous nation.

After centuries of wandering, the re-birth of the fig tree nation is **our sign** that God is ready to send Jesus back to this earth.

Israel has blossomed, even as the fig tree buds in the spring. We now know that **God's Kingdom will be established soon and this earth will be filled with His glory.**

ISRAEL OUR EXAMPLE:

When we look at the history of the Nation of Israel, we understand that they were a special people. God chose them and gave them many precious promises. They were to be a "Kingdom of priests and a holy nation". Along with the promise of blessings, there was also responsibility. God expected them to follow his commandments and to glorify His name in the earth. They failed many times and were punished seven times for their iniquities (see Lev 26).

These things were recorded in the Bible for our example. We have an opportunity for salvation and a responsibility to honor God in our lives. We should not sin as Israel did. We know that God will restore them through his mercy. However, we would be presumptuous to assume that He is obligated to extend the same measure of mercy unto us.

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Hope and Comfort from the Scriptures

One of the wonderful stories of comfort from God's word is found in a consideration of the Nation of Israel.

Israel was God's chosen people. Centuries before the birth of Christ, Abraham was called out from among the nations and given great and precious promises. He was told that his descendants would inherit all of the land of Canaan (the promised land).

Blessing & Cursing

Their history has been filled with highs and lows. They received all of the blessings and the curses that were prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 28. They went from slavery in Egypt to a glorious Kingdom in the days of David and Solomon. Then they were overthrown and scattered for their sins.

The Holocaust

Because of their continual disobedience to God's Law, they were subjected to great punishments. We are aware of the most severe of their trials, known as the "holocaust".

The terrible sufferings that they experienced, as six million of them perished during World War II, will remain as the extreme example of human abuse and suffering.

Comfort for Zion

Fortunately, the story has a happy ending. God has promised that he would not make a full end of his people. He promised to bring them back into their own land again and would comfort them.



Consider some of the beautiful words that have been written by the Prophets concerning the future joy of Israel:

"The LORD will surely **comfort Zion** and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing." (Isa 51:3)

"Comfort ye, **comfort ye my people**, saith your God. 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 40:1-2)

For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and **you will be comforted** over Jerusalem." (Isa 66:12-13).

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

"It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain". (The Apostle Paul)

Paul's Faith

The Apostle Paul was raised in the Jewish religion. He was converted to a follower of Christ after a very dramatic visit from the Lord himself.

After his conversion, he became very zealous for the gospel. He was confident in the faith and not afraid to speak out concerning his new belief.

He stated boldly: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek".

Paul's Hope

It is interesting that Paul did not view his new hope in Christ as all that different from the faith that he had learned as a Jew.

Paul was placed in bonds and in prison for preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation in Christ. In his captivity, he spoke the words written in our heading, which is a quote from Acts 28:20. "For the **hope of Israel**, I am bound with this chain".

The Hope of Israel

Paul's experience teaches us that the New Testament hope for the followers of Christ is simply an extension of the original hope of Israel, outlined in the Old Testament.

The Promises

The promises that were made to the Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the OT, are the same promises that are the hope for the servants of God today.

Galatians 3: 26-29 confirms these promises and assures us that **our hope is the hope of Israel**.

Old Testament

It is for this reason that we should consider the entire Bible as the scriptures of truth. We can learn much about the gospel message from the OT.

Paul told Timothy that these OT scriptures were given by the inspiration of God and that they were profitable for both teaching and instruction in righteousness.

The OT scriptures are filled with information about the Hope of Israel. This was Paul's hope, and it should certainly be ours.



God's Promise

"And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; 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, neither