

The Holy Land

...past and future

● God's choice

God's intentions with this land were first revealed at the time of Abraham. This was also the time when Melchizedek (king of righteousness) was king of Salem (old name for Jerusalem*).

Ezekiel describes the Holy Land at the time of Israel's call out of Egypt as **"...a land that I had searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all the lands"** Ezek.20:6, 15

● A unique land and climate in many ways

The term 'Mediterranean climate'** is used to describe climates similar to Israel with cool winters and hot dry summers (low humidity). Low humidity in summer helps reduce the possibility of debilitating tropical illnesses and reduces the incidence of plant and crop diseases.

● Strategically placed

Israel is strategically placed at the 'crossroads' of the world. The Lion Bible Encyclopedia puts it this way: **'But the very fact that Israel was a land to pass through, rather than to stop in, made it an ideal place from which new ideas or revelations could spread'**. What better land to centre the rulership of the Age to come. In fact the population of three great land masses (Africa, Europe and Asia) can travel overland to Israel without the need for extensive sea travel.

● A fully functional land in all respects

- **Highlands** to bring rain and water supply above and below the ground. These include the Judean hills, Central and Eastern Highlands including Mt. Herman to the north.

- **Plains** for crop growing (Sharon and Jezreel).

- **Sea Coast** for trade access and climate control. Provides frost free area for crops.

- **Sufficient latitude** for good seasonal change which is necessary for some crops.

- **Different climatic zones** and rainfall areas. Rainfall varies from 200 mm at Beersheba up to 1500 mm in the mountains north of Galilee. This provides the right conditions for a good variety of food crops. Jerusalem's average rainfall is 500 mm ie 20 ins.

- **Dew** is important in coastal areas for watering the land. Some coastal areas have dew on 200 nights of the year. When Elijah predicted drought he said, **"there will be no dew or rain..."** 1 Kings 17:1

● Israel's forests of the past are now desert

At the time of Abraham the Jordan valley and the area around the dead sea was described by Lot as, **"...well watered everywhere...like the garden of the LORD"** Gen.13:10

The Negev forest

Negev or Negeb means 'South Land'. Read Ezekiel's prophecy about this land (Ezek.20:46-49). The apparent unbelievable nature of this prophecy at the time received the response, **"Does he not speak in parables?"** This indicates the vast extent of the original forest of the Negev. This prophecy is just before Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem so this forest obviously survived the Assyrian incursions. Today this area is one of the hottest places on earth. David is described as, **"dwelling in the wilderness of Ziph in a forest"** 1 Sam.23:15 This forest was in the higher country of the Negev.

Arabia

Read Isa.21:13 This prophecy refers to the north of Arabia, known as Kedar and is now called the Syrian Desert. It is hard to imagine a forest ever existing in this area.

● Wild animals were in abundance

Wild animals from the two adjoining continents including bears, leopards, deer, wolves, crocodile and lions all roamed freely in certain areas of the Holy Land in biblical times. Rome's insatiable appetite for wild animals was responsible over several hundred years for depleting much of the Northern African nations and the Holy Land of wildlife.

*Salem (Heb. 'shalom') is an old name for Jerusalem and similar to the Hebrew greeting 'shalom' which means 'peace and happiness to you'.

** The name 'Mediterranean' comes from the Latin and means, 'sea in the middle of the land'.

The Holy Land

...of the future will be like Eden restored

● The upheaval before the healing

- “The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard; and it shall totter like a hut;...” Isa.24:19-20

All of the changes we will consider have their beginnings at the time of Armageddon when the great earthquake causes drastic changes to the Jordan valley and more than likely to the Aswan Dam in Egypt. There are enormous geological changes overdue for several other parts of the world in this period. We are aware of the ‘overdue’ earthquakes set to occur on America’s West Coast and in Tokyo, but what is in store for America’s east coast? (see note below*).

● The great spiritual regeneration

- “The Gentiles shall come to you from the ends of the earth and say, ‘surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.’ Jer.17:19
- “And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all the people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” Isa.25:7

The word “regeneration” in Matt.ch19 implies ‘spiritual rebirth’ rather than physical change. Once the Jews have been converted back to God’s way then ‘the way’ will be open to the Gentile nations. The references above indicate that the nations will have to first come up to Jerusalem to learn of God’s way. Truth will first be spread from God’s holy mountain. This principle is seen in the healing of blind Bartimeus (“...he rose and came to Jesus” Mark 10:50) and the fact that we ‘hear the voice’ and ‘open the door’ first before God and His Son come into our lives (Rev.3:20).

● The great natural regeneration

- “He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD”

The word “restoration” in Acts ch3 has a physical implication. The following Scriptures describe the areas that will be restored: “the desolate heights”, “The wilderness and the wasteland”, “all her waste places”, “the desert”, “the desolate land”, “the parched ground”, “the thirsty land”, “the dry land” and the dead sea (Isa.35:1-2, 6-7, 41:18-20, 51:3; Ezek.36:34-35, 47:8-11).

● God’s own reforestation project

- “I will plant in the wilderness the Cedar and the Acacia tree, the Myrtle and the Oil tree; I will set in the desert the Cypress tree and the Pine, and the Box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.’ Isa.41:19-20

Seven species of trees indicating the completeness of the work that God will perform. Note that when people witness this great work they will have no trouble realising this as a special work of God.

● Three species to glorify God’s Sanctuary

- “The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, The Cypress, the Pine, and the Box tree together, to beautify the place of my Sanctuary, and I will make the place of My feet glorious.” Isa.60:13

Three very durable timbers. Three is the number of resurrection and new beginning. The timber work in God’s house will have to last at least 1000 years.

Box: Refers to a straight form of Cedar. Strong’s 8391

Pine: Hebrew here refers to the Oak tree which was used for ship’s oars.

Cypress: The Fir tree which was used for musical instruments. Strong’s 1265

* A huge chunk of La Palma, the most volcanic island of the Canaries, is now unstable. Scientists tell us that if this 500 billion ton rock shelf slides into the sea it will create the largest tsunami in history spreading across the Atlantic at the speed of a jet airliner and would still be 65 metres high when it strikes the American East Coast. (See ‘New Scientist’ 7-10-00 edition) It is hard to imagine an event like this happening in the Kingdom Age, so more than likely this disaster will happen during the Armageddon period along with the movement of other major faults worldwide.