

# The Greatest Event of the 20th Century

(A Sermon by Dr. David R. Reagan)

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century was full of momentous events that no one could have foreseen in 1900. Looking back on that century, what would you identify as its most important event?

There are a great variety of opinions in response to this question, due mainly to the fact that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century contained many stupendous events. When I Googled the question, I was presented with many lists. Some of the events that were mentioned on almost every list were the following:

World Wars I and II.

The Lindbergh transatlantic solo flight in 1927.

The invention of television in 1927.

The discovery of the first antibiotic --- Penicillin in 1928.

The first computer in 1936.

The first heart transplant in 1967.

The first man on the moon in 1969.

The invention of the Internet in 1969.

The first test tube baby in 1978.

The demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1991.

As I studied this list, I noticed that many, if not most, of the events that were identified as the most significant were dependent upon prior developments that were often more important. Consider, for example:

The Lindbergh transatlantic flight resulted from the Wright Brothers' invention of the airplane in 1903.

The first man on the moon was dependent on the development of rocket propulsion in 1926, the invention of the computer in 1936, the launching of the first satellite in 1957 and the first man in space in 1961.

The destruction of the Berlin Wall was due to a more important event --- namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The many marvelous developments in the health sciences were dependent on biological discoveries that dated back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, like the development of the germ theory of disease in the 1860s.

The event that was named on the Google lists more than any other as the most important event of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan in August of 1945.

But this event was also dependent upon many theories, experiments and tests that preceded it, like the first human-made, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, which occurred on December 2, 1942 on a squash court located under the bleachers at Stagg Field --- the University of Chicago's abandoned football stadium. It was an incredible accomplishment which marked the advent of the Nuclear Age.

That football stadium has long since been demolished, but a statue by Henry Moore marks the spot where the chain reaction took place.

A monument in south central New Mexico marks the site where the first atomic bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945. It was named The Trinity Site.

### **The Greatest Event from a Spiritual Viewpoint**

Well, we have a long list of momentous developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but from a biblical viewpoint, none of these constitute the greatest event of that century.

All the evaluations I have presented up to this point have been from a humanistic or secular viewpoint. But if we shift to a much more important spiritual viewpoint, then I would argue that there was an event in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that was far more important than the development of nuclear weapons. In fact, I would argue that it was more important than all the other stupendous events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century put together.

#### **That event was the re-establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948.**

But like many of the great events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century which were preceded by equally great or greater foundational events, the miraculous re-establishment of the Jewish state was possible only because of two greater miracles God performed,

The first was the preservation of the Jewish people for more than 2,700 years despite the fact that they were dispersed worldwide and were severely persecuted almost everywhere they went. (The dispersion began in 722 BC when Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.)

The second miracle is the regathering of the Jewish people from the four corners of the world, which started in the late 1800s and continues to this day.

And both of these events --- the preservation and regathering--- were fulfillments of Bible prophecy.

#### **The Preservation of the Jewish People**

Let's take a look at the prophecies about the preservation of the Jewish people. Their preservation has to be one of the greatest miracles of history. It is so remarkable --- so historically stunning --- that its uniqueness has been noted and commented on by a great variety of people.

Consider, for example, the great historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975). He fully recognized the unusual nature of the Jewish experience. In his ten volume work, *A Study of History* (1934-1954), he traced the rise and fall of 26 civilizations, developing a scheme of history which only the Jewish people did not fit. Toynbee ended up classifying the Jews as Afossils of history@ because they seemed to be frozen in time, refusing to assimilate into the soup of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the great Russian novelist, expressed his awe over the preservation of the Jews with these words:<sup>2</sup>

What is the Jew? . . . What kind of unique creature is this whom all the rulers of all the nations of the world have disgraced and crushed and expelled . . . persecuted, burned and drowned, and who, despite their anger and fury, continue to live and to flourish . . . The Jew is the symbol of eternity.

To get a feel for how preposterous the preservation of the Jews is from a human perspective, consider this illustration by Rabbi Dov Greenberg who is the Executive Director of Chabad (the Jewish Hasidic Movement) at Stanford University:<sup>3</sup>

Imagine we could travel back in time and say to the great Pharaoh [of Moses= time],  
 AThere is good news and bad news. The good news is that one of the nations alive  
 today will survive and change the moral landscape of the world. The bad news is: it  
 won=t be yours. It will be that group of Hebrew slaves out there, building your glorious  
 temples, the Children of Israel.@

Nothing would sound more outrageous. The Egypt of Pharaoh=s time was the greatest  
 empire of the ancient world, brilliant in arts and sciences, formidable in war. The  
 Israelites were a landless people, powerless slaves. Indeed, already in antiquity, those  
 in power believed that the Israelites were on the verge of extinction.

The preservation of the Jewish people throughout their 2,700 years of dispersion is mind-boggling.  
 Keep in mind that they were dispersed to over 130 nations worldwide, and they were brutally  
 mistreated wherever they went.

Will Varner, a professor at The Master=s College, has expressed it this way: ANo nation in the  
 history of the world ever has been exiled from its land, lost its national existence and language,  
 and then returned as a people to that identical homeland and even revived its ancient tongue. No  
 nation, that is, except one --- the nation of Israel.@<sup>4</sup>

### The Supernatural Nature

Many naturalistic explanations have been given to explain the survival of the Jewish people, but  
 they all fall short, because there is only one true answer to the question, AHow did the Jews  
 survive?@ And that answer is: ASupernaturally.@ Psalm 124 sums it up best:

- 1) AHad it not been the LORD who was on our side,@ let Israel now say,
- 2) AHad it not been the LORD who was on our side when men rose up against us,
- 3) Then they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us;
- 4) Then the waters would have engulfed us, the stream would have swept over our soul;
- 5) Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.@
- 6) Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.
- 7) Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; the snare is broken and  
 we have escaped.
- 8) Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Although this passage probably speaks specifically about the survival of the Children of Israel  
 during their wilderness wanderings under the leadership of Moses, it expresses an eternal principle  
 concerning God=s relationship with the Jewish people.

The author of Psalm 121 put it this way: ABehold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor  
 sleep@ (Psalm 121:4).

### God=s Promise to Preserve His People

The Hebrew prophets were very precise about the fact that God would always preserve the Jewish  
 people. Consider, for example, this symbolic prophecy of Isaiah who wrote 2,700 years ago, 700  
 years before the birth of Jesus (Isaiah 49:14-16):

14) But Zion [the Jewish people] said, AThe LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.@

15) [God answers] ACan a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

16) ABehold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands . . .@

Speaking more specifically, Isaiah wrote these words about the preservation of the Jews (Isaiah 41:10-11):

10) ADo not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

11) ABehold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.@

Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah, who wrote about 70 years after Isaiah, declared that God would preserve the Jewish people (Jeremiah 30:11)

AFor I am with you,@ declares the LORD, Ato save you; for I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly and will by no means leave you unpunished.@

A more graphic prophecy by Jeremiah concerning the preservation of the Jews can be found in Jeremiah 31:35-37 ---

35) Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name:

36) AIf this fixed order departs from before Me,@ declares the LORD, AThen the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.@

37) Thus says the LORD, AIf the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,@ declares the LORD.

So, when will the Jewish people cease to exist? When the sun stops coming up and going down, when the seasons of the year cease to come, and only after all the heavens and the depths of the oceans have been explored. In short, the Jewish people are here to stay.

Do I need to inform you that these prophecies have been fulfilled? Despite their dispersion, their persecution and the murderous pogroms leading up to the Holocaust, 6.8 million Jews live in Israel today (slightly more than the number killed in the Holocaust), with another 7.5 million in other countries.

I want to share with you a powerful music video about the preservation of the Jewish people. It features an American Orthodox Jewish singer by the name of Yaacob Swekey. The title of the song is AWe Are A Miracle.@

**Swekey Video**

## God's Promise to Regather the Jewish People

Let's take a look now at the second miracle that enabled the re-establishment of the state of Israel --- namely, the promise that in the end-times God would regather the Jewish people in unbelief back to their homeland from the four corners of the earth.

There are many such prophecies. In fact, their regathering in unbelief is one of the most prolific prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures.

### The First Prophecy

Let's take a look at just three of the most important of those prophecies. The first is found in Jeremiah 16. It is mind-boggling. Read it carefully:

14) Therefore behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no longer be said, As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,=

15) but, As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.= For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.@

Now, you cannot fully appreciate what is said in these verses unless you know something about Judaism. The one event that all Jews consider to be the greatest miracle in their history is the deliverance of their ancestors from Egyptian captivity under the leadership of Moses. But this scripture passage asserts that a time will come when the Jews will look back on their history and proclaim that their regathering from the four corners of the earth --- the event that began in the 1890s and continues to this day --- was a greater miracle than their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. In other words, the regathering that began in the 20th Century and continues today will eclipse the Exodus!

This means that you and I are privileged to witness one of the greatest miracles of history. And yet, most Christians have no appreciation for what is happening because they are ignorant of Bible prophecy and have been taught that God is finished with the Jews. Therefore, the current regathering is simply viewed as an accident of history.

### The Second Prophecy

The second regathering prophecy I want to bring to your attention is found in Isaiah 11:

10) Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples . . .

11) Then it will happen on that day that the LORD will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12) And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Some have tried to debunk any modern application of this prophecy by claiming that it was fulfilled about 500 years before the time of Jesus by the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. But that cannot be.

First, the passage begins with the words, *Ain that day.*@ This is a phrase that is used over and over throughout the book of Isaiah, and every time without exception it refers to the end-times.

Furthermore, the passage refers to a *Asecond*@ regathering. The first was from Babylon.

Third, the passage states this will be a regathering *Afrom the islands of the sea,*@ which is a Hebrew colloquialism for the whole world, as is made clear in verse 12 where it states that the regathering will be *Afrom the four corners of the earth.*@

Finally, verse 12 says that *Athe banished ones*@ of both Israel and Judah will be regathered. The return from Babylon was a regathering primarily of Jews from Judah.

### The Third Prophecy

The third regathering prophecy is found in Ezekiel 37. This is the famous prophecy of the Valley of the Dry Bones. The prophet was placed in a valley full of bones and told to preach to them. As he did so, the bones began to come together, flesh grew back upon them and they came to life, becoming *Aan exceedingly great army.*@ At that point, the Lord explained to Ezekiel what he was witnessing:

11) Then He said to me, *ASon of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, >Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.=*

12) *ATherefore prophesy and say to them, >Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.=@*

This is a symbolic prophecy. The dry bones represent the Jewish people in their end time dispersion, with no hope of ever existing again as a nation. The resurrection from their graves represents their regathering from the nations where they had been dispersed.

We can be assured of this interpretation because it is the one that God Himself provides later in the chapter:

21) *ASay to them, >Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;*

22) *and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.*

23) *They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.=@*

Again, those who are determined to argue that God has no purpose left for the Jewish people, attempt to invalidate these verses as an end time prophecy by arguing that they were fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. But that simply cannot be.

The entire chapter has an end-time context. Further, it speaks of a regathering from *Athe nations,*@ and not just from Babylon (verse 21). It says this regathering will result in a union of Jews from both Israel and Judah (verse 19). And it says that following this regathering, the Jewish people will

turn their hearts to God and will become AMy people@ (verse 23). This is yet to occur.

### **Introduction to Shust Video**

Folks, I was talking with a friend recently about the life of Jesus, and he said to me, AWouldn=t it have been exciting to live in biblical times?@

My response: AWe are living in biblical times because we are being granted the privilege of seeing the fulfillment of some of God=s greatest biblical promises --- and certainly one of those is the regathering of the Jewish people.

In 1900 there were only 40,000 Jews in Israel. At the end of World War II, there were slightly more than 600,000. Today, the total is approaching 7 million, representing more than one-half of all the Jews in the world.

I want to share with you another remarkable video. It focuses on the miraculous re-gathering of the Jewish people to their homeland. It is simply titled, AZion,@ It is performed by Aaron Shust, an American contemporary Christian music artist.

### **Shust Video**

#### **Summary**

Let=s pause for a summary ---

I have pointed out that God performed two great miracles among the Jewish people that made possible the greatest event of the 20th Century --- their preservation and their regathering.

These two miracles made possible the greatest event of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century --- namely, the re-establishment of the State of Israel, which took place in a building in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948 when David Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence in a small room before about 150 people. And 11 minutes later, the United States of America became the first nation to grant recognition when President Harry S Truman signed a declaration to that effect.

#### **Why the Regathering?**

A very important question emerges at this point --- a question that relates to the future: Why is God regathering the Jewish people from all over the world back to their homeland?

The answer is that it is part of God=s plan to bring a great remnant of the Jews to salvation.

His promise to save a remnant of the Jewish people is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah spoke of it in chapter 10:

20) Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them [Aallies@ who seek to destroy them], but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

21) A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.

22) For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return; a destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.

Notice that last phrase: AA destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.@ I believe this refers to the fact that the book of Revelation reveals that two-thirds of the Jewish people will

be killed by the Antichrist during the last half of the Tribulation, but that this devastation will bring them to the end of themselves, forcing them to turn to God for their deliverance, rather than some other nation, as has been the case throughout their history.

In biblical times, they often turned to a nation like Egypt for their protection. In modern times, they have relied on the United States.

The Apostle Paul quotes this scripture from Isaiah in Romans 9:27 where he states that Although the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved. And Jesus Himself referred to this remnant on the day He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He stated that He would not return to this earth until the Jewish people were willing to say, ABaruch Haba B=Shem Adonai! or ABlessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! (Matthew 23:39)

So, God=s purpose in regathering the Jewish people in unbelief is to place them in the pressure cooker of the Tribulation in order to bring them to the end of themselves. As Isaiah put it in chapter 26, verse 9: A . . . when the earth experiences Your judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

### **The Significance to Us**

So, what is the significance of all this to you and me and the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which is composed mainly of Gentiles?

Why should we be concerned about what God is doing among the Jewish people?

**1 First, it is evidence of God=s sovereignty.** It is proof that God is on His throne and actively directing the affairs of Mankind. In Psalm 2, written by David 2,000 years before Jesus, the psalmist declares that while the political leaders of the world are shaking their fists at God and proclaiming that they will do as they please, God sits on His throne and laughs --- not because he does not care but because He has the wisdom and power to orchestrate all the evil of Man and Satan to the ultimate triumph of His Son.

**2 Second, it is a testimony to God=s faithfulness.** God=s fulfillment of prophecies made over two thousand years ago testifies to His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. And thus, we can be assured that He will fulfill all the promises He has made to the Church concerning the Rapture, our Resurrection, our participation in His Millennial Reign, and our eternal life in new bodies in a new Jerusalem on a new earth.

**3 Third, it is a demonstration of God=s grace.** God=s regathering of the Jews back to their homeland and the re-establishment of their state is something they do not deserve, for they have not repented of rejecting His Son. This emphasizes the fact that none of us have earned our salvation. The only thing we deserve is death. But God in His grace has supplied us with a Savior. It is also an overwhelming refutation of the evil of Replacement Theology that says God has washed His hands of the Jewish people and the Church has replaced them and garnered all their promises.

**4 Fourth, it is evidence of God=s unfathomable love.** Only the God revealed in the Bible could continue to love the rebellious Jewish people and Gentile rebels like you and me. Any God created by the mind of Man would have dispensed with all of us long ago, but God so loved the world that He sent His only Begotten Son to die for our sins in order to make it possible for us to be reconciled to our Creator.



**5** Fifth, what God is doing among the Jewish people today is proof positive that we are living in the season of the Lord's return.

### The Message

My friends, as I said at the beginning of this presentation, we are once again living in biblical times --- the end of the end-times prophesied in the Bible when the Lord will return to reign in glory and majesty from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. That means that each of us must prepare ourselves for the Lord's soon return.

The message for unbelievers is a call to repentance.

The message for believers is a call to holiness and a call to evangelism.

And the crucial question for each of us is: Are You Ready?

I am because in 1950 when I was 11 years old, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and He has kept me to this day. So, each morning when I awake, I cry out in my soul, AMaranatha! Maranatha! Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus. @

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