

Jubilee

You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, *namely*, forty-nine years. You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. 'You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in *from* its untrimmed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property.

Leviticus 25:8-13 (NAU¹)

Sabbatical (or Sabbath) Years and the Year of Jubilee play distinct parts in the Jewish calendar. These were years of rest and freedom, for the land and the Jewish people. Every seventh year was a Sabbath Year, and the year following the seventh Sabbath Year, i.e. every fiftieth year, was the Year of Jubilee. Despite the Jewish people's exile from Israel, by the Romans in 132AD (70AD from Jerusalem), it seems that God has kept His eye on the clock, so to speak, and watched over His Word to perform it – especially the Year of Jubilee.

From Time Immemorial

From Israel's exodus from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, and their coming into the Land under Joshua, to the destruction of the Temple in **70AD**, the Jewish² people had only been denied access to the Land of Israel for 70 years.

In judgement, God came against the Southern Kingdom of Judah.³ Using the Babylonians – under Nebuchadnezzar – Jerusalem fell⁴ in **597BC**,

And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign. He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said. Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.

2 Kings 24:11-16 (NAU)

¹ NAU – New American Standard, Updated 1995.

² The history of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Promised Land includes a period of tribal nationality under the rule of Judges, to the establishment of a single united kingdom under Kings Saul, David and Solomon. After Solomon's death the kingdom was split into the southern kingdom of Judah (which comprised the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) and the northern kingdom of Israel (comprised of the remaining tribes). Though the peoples of both kingdoms collectively can be called Israel, the name Israel can be used specifically of the northern kingdom (during this period of the divided kingdom). Following the southern kingdom of Judah's exile and subsequent return, the people were generally called Jews (Judeans) because of the major tribal and kingdom ancestry. Hence, the term Jewish people here speaks specifically of those persons of the kingdom of Judah of whom God said they would return to the land, but also in a general way of all Israelites.

³ The Northern Kingdom of Israel (whose capital was Samaria) fell to the Assyrians in 722/721 BC.

⁴ The Babylonians invaded much of the kingdom of Judah, but Jerusalem itself did not fall until 597BC. Under Babylonian control the southern kingdom experienced deportation of its people (in 605, 597 and 586BC).

This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:11 (NAU)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans [Babylonians] -- in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed* as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.

Daniel 9:1-2 (NAU)

Included with the exiles of **597BC** was the priest Ezekiel (who was later called, by God, to be a prophet); also amongst the exiles was Daniel⁵, to whom God gave much wisdom. It was with wisdom that Daniel studied the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, and lamented the sins of his people and nation. And whilst seeking God in prayer, and making supplication for his people, God sent him the angel Gabriel,

He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you*, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision. **Seventy weeks have been decreed⁶ for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.** So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Daniel 9:22-27 (NAU)

Gabriel expounded to Daniel that Israel's seventy year exile has more than one application. Yes seventy years were decreed for Israel's exile in Babylon, but these seventy years also had an application in a Sabbatical sense. Seventy sevens or seventy weeks of years, were decreed for: the "people", the "holy city" and to "bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place". But even more, these seventy weeks were divided into three groupings, of sixty-two weeks, seven weeks and one week.

The question to be asked is, why the division, why not just a single '70 weeks of years' period (i.e. a single 490 year timeframe), rather than being divided into three? The third period of this division, the *one week*, is usually ascribed, eschatologically⁷, to the period of time called the Great Tribulation, also known as the Time of Jacob's Trouble. But what of the other two divisions, and more specifically, what of the 'seven weeks' of years?

Seven weeks of years: this timeframe relates to the Jubilee – for it is the year following the seventh sabbatical year that is the Year of Jubilee.

⁵ Daniel is considered to have been a part of the first exilic group, in 605BC.

⁶ Decreed: In the Hebrew the word means 'divide' or 'determine' and is derived from a root understanding to 'cut', 'cut off', 'decide'. As such the suggested idea seems to be: to cut out of time/history.

⁷ Eschatology: the study of the end times (last times or last things).

But, let us backtrack and consider the 70 year exilic period for a moment. Will God redeem this time for the Israelite nation? From the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt they spent forty years in the wilderness – approximately the same time from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the destruction of the second temple in **70 A.D.**; is this an example of redeemed time? Is the modern state of Israel redeeming the time of the Babylonian exile? Will this redemption draw to a close in **2017 (1948⁸** being counted as the first year)? How does this, if at all, relate to the Jubilee?

Jubilee – 17/67

Whilst in exile in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of a future temple, with the return of Yahweh's glory to His sanctuary.⁹ In his vision Ezekiel is told to describe what he sees and to measure it. In **1867**, whilst the Jewish people were still exiled from the Land of Israel, Lt. Charles Warren, of the Royal Engineers¹⁰, under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund¹¹, travelled to Jerusalem and investigated "the site of the Temple, the line of fortification of the ancient city, the authenticity of the traditional Holy Sepulchre, the position of the Fortress Antonia, and the City of David"¹². Lt. Warren and his team were "able to define the topography of Jerusalem, recognise the work of Herod on the Temple Platform, and explore the ancient water systems"¹³.

(Also in 1867, Austro-Hungarian Jews were fully emancipated [given freedom or liberty], in the passing of laws giving them freedom from their judicial and economic restrictions. The significance of this event can be seen concerning Theodor Herzl ... see the section '*Jubilee – 47/97*' below).

One Jubilee (50 years) later, in **1917**, Jerusalem fell to the British Empire, after being in Ottoman (Islamic) rule since **1517**, when the Ottomans defeat the Mamluks of Egypt – who took control of Jerusalem in **1267**. Also in **1917**, the Balfour Declaration was signed.

... the [Balfour] declaration itself took the form of a letter from A.J. Balfour to Lord Rothschild, dated 2 November 1917. It was to form the basis, once the First World War was over, of an upsurge in Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the 'close' settlement of the Jews on the land. It contained the emphatic assurance that 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...'

... on 7 December 1917, within a month of the Balfour Declaration, the British forces in Palestine commanded by General Allenby drove the Turks from Jerusalem."¹⁴

After another Jubilee, in **1967**, East Jerusalem (and the temple mount) was successfully recaptured by Israel from Jordanian (Islamic/gentile) control, which they held from 1948, following the invasion of Israel after their declaration of independence.

(Following Israel's military success in retaking East Jerusalem and the temple mount, Israel did give the temple mount – occupied by the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque – to Muslim administrators. Nevertheless, this was a concession Israel's government granted and not one that was forced upon them by the United Nations or others. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, passed, in 1967, the *Preservation of the Holy Places Law*, to ensure the protection of all 'Holy Places' against desecration and which provided for freedom of access).

⁸ Israel's statehood was declared on the 14 May 1948.

⁹ Ezekiel chapters 40-48.

¹⁰ "The Corps of Royal Engineers (RE), commonly known as the Sappers, is one of the corps of the British Army. It provides combat engineering and other technical support to the British Armed Forces." Wikipedia, "Royal Engineers". WWW page. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Engineers> (2005, cited 17 October 2005).

¹¹ "The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was founded, in England, in 1865 by a group of distinguished academics and clergymen. The purpose of the PEF is to promote research into the archaeology and history, manners and customs and culture, topography, geology and natural sciences of the Levant the southern portion of which was conventionally named 'Palestine'." Palestine Exploration Fund, "The Palestine Exploration Fund". WWW page. <<http://www.pef.org.uk>> (2005. cited 10 September 2005).

¹² Palestine Exploration Fund, "Explorations at Jerusalem (1867-1870)". WWW page. <<http://www.pef.org.uk/Pages/ProjJER1.htm>> (17 January 2000, cited 10 September 2005).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1998), 34, 35.

Jubilee – 47/97

On 3 September **1897**, following the First Zionist Congress, held in the Swiss city of Basle, Theodor Herzl (Hungarian-born Jew and founder of the World Zionist Organisation), wrote in his diary,

'Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in a word – which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly – it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it.'¹⁵

What a prophetic statement to write, be it publicly or in one's own personal diary. What does history tell us?

On 29 November **1947** in New York the General Assembly of the United Nations debated the UNSCOP proposals. During the debate, the Soviet representative, Andrei Gromyko (later Foreign Minister), astonished the Zionist representatives by his warm endorsement of their desire for statehood. 'The Jewish people had been closely linked with Palestine for a considerable period in history,' he said. 'As a result of the war, the Jews as a people have suffered more than any other people. The total number of the Jewish population who perished at the hands of the Nazi executioners is estimated at approximately six million. The Jewish people were therefore striving to create a State of their own, and it would be unjust to deny them that right.'

When the vote was taken, the partition proposal was accepted by thirty-three votes to thirteen, with ten abstentions. Britain was among those States which abstained. All six independent Arab States voted against the plan, as did four Muslim States – Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey – and three other States, Cuba, Greece and India. Among those in favour of partition were the United States, the Soviet Union, Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and Sweden.¹⁶

So, fifty years after Herzl's prophetic statement the Jubilee cry went out, "*On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property.*" (Lev 25:13). The following year, on 14th May **1948** Israel's statehood was declared.

During the night of the 14th May 1948, Egypt bombed Tel Aviv, and the rest of Israel's Arab (Islamic) neighbours joined in the attack the following day. The ensuing war saw Jordan gain control of and annex East Jerusalem (often called the West Bank and disputed territory). Since her first day, the modern Jewish state of Israel has been under siege.

By modern Israel's first Jubilee, in **1997**, Israel's population had grown from around 600,000 to 6,000,000.¹⁷

This Generation

Another point to consider is Jesus' statements in Matthew 24,

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. Truly I say to you, **this generation will not pass away** until all these things take place.

Matthew 24:3,32-34 (NAU)

¹⁵ Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1998), p.15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 618.

Of what incident was Jesus' statement that "this generation will not pass away" referring? Was it concerning the destruction of the temple, which He had mentioned to His disciples, or was it to do with His "coming, and of the end of the age"? Maybe it was both?

'Generation' in Greek is the word 'genea' (Strong's Reference 1074), which means or pertains to one's birth or origins. The uses of this word include: race, clan, descendants – as an ethnic group; generation, contemporaries; a time span, age, generation, period; or origin, posterity, descendants.¹⁸

❖ **This Generation – A Timeframe**

To those who were Jesus' audience it may well be 'that generation' – in regard to the destruction of the temple. To the generation born into the future state of Israel, could it not also be to them? I believe we can see in Jesus' statement a midrashic dual application. Jesus', "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place", is both the generation of the days of His earthly ministry, and – I believe – the days of the end times.

If we liken Israel to the fig tree of Matthew 24, with her branches tender and putting forth leaves – growing like a fig in spring – Jesus' statements have future relevance. Based upon a generational life span of 70 years (as it is generally considered to be) we have the same timeline as that of redeemed [Babylonian] exilic time.¹⁹

❖ **This Generation – A Nation**

But the Greek word 'genea' can also mean race, family or nation. From this perspective, Jesus' words can be understood to mean that the Jewish people will NOT pass away until all is fulfilled. Obviously, and despite the temptation to some, this should not be interpreted to mean that once all these things have been fulfilled the Jewish people will pass away, for Jeremiah 31:31 shows that the New Covenant, in to which gentiles have been grafted, is a covenant with the Jews; and as Paul says in Romans,

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11:25-29 (NAU)

Since the destruction of Jerusalem (70AD) and exile in 132AD, the Jewish people have had to endure physical hardship and threats in Catholic, Protestant and Islamic lands. Threats against property, threats against lives, being second-class citizens in many of the countries in which they dwelt and enduring the pressure of cultural assimilation. In spite of all these things, the descendants of Jacob survived; Jacob's family did not pass away.

1867

In 1867, eighty years before the modern state of Israel came into existence, and one hundred years (2 Jubilees) before the Jews again controlled all of Jerusalem, J. C. Ryle (the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool) wrote,

But time would fail me, if I attempted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the future history of Israel is revealed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah all declare the same thing. All predict, with more

¹⁸ Friberg, Friberg, Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 97.

¹⁹ That is, the span of one's life, and not the time between generations.

or less particularity, that in the end of this dispensation the Jews are to be restored to their own land and to the favour of God. I lay no claim to infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture in this matter. I am well aware that many excellent Christians cannot see the subject as I do. I can only say, that to my eyes, the future salvation of Israel as a people, their return to Palestine and their national conversion to God appears as clearly and plainly revealed as any prophecy in God's Word.²⁰

How is it that Ryle was able to see Israel's future so clearly, and yet today, many a Christian and Christian denomination decries Israel's very existence?

It is interesting to note the eighteenth century French philosopher, and deist²¹, Voltaire's²² mocking comments concerning the Bible and Israel,

Who would ever believe that this little barren country could ever again be occupied as a homeland by Israel?²³

1967 ²⁴

Let us consider that it was not until the 1967 "Six Day War" that Israel again controlled Jerusalem, and this a Jubilee from its first release from pagan (Ottoman/Islamic/gentile) control (1917). A jubilee on from 1967 we come to 2017. Could the Jubilee – the release, the freedom – the return of Christ – to the Mount of Olives occur at this time? (Such date setting being purely speculative.)

"But we are told that we will not know the day or the hour" many will say. Yes, that is true. And yet Jesus uses the illustration of Noah in this context. God gave instructions to Noah, and after the ark was completed Noah was told to go into the ark for 'time was up' and the rain was at hand. Noah knew, not precisely, but he did know. The context shows that those who were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, etc that these people "did not understand" until it was too late. In this manner, I believe we know – or should know – the times and seasons. We may not know the exact hour, day or year, but we should be able to know when things are nearing completion, or when the end is nigh.

I agree that we shouldn't set dates; I don't propose that 2017 is any way definitive, but it poses an interesting scenario in light of the above Jubilee "coincidences" and current world events. What I will say for sure is that the Lord could return today, tomorrow, next year, 2017 or even some other time (subject to God's timetable and requisites). I don't claim to be a prophet, but considering a year

²⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready for the End of Time?* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 152-153 .

Ryle's forward is dated August 1867. The book was previously published as "Coming Events and Present Duties, and Prophecy."

²¹ Deism: "the view that reason, rather than revelation or tradition, should be the basis of belief in God. Deists reject both organized and revealed religion and maintain that reason is the essential element in all knowledge. For a "rational basis for religion" they refer to the cosmological argument (first cause argument), the teleological argument (argument from design), and other aspects of what was called *natural religion*. Deism has become identified with the classical belief that God created but does not intervene in the world, though this is not a necessary component of deism." Wikipedia, "Deism". WWW page. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism>> (2006, cited 18 April 2006).

²² Voltaire: pen name of François-Marie Arouet. Considered to be one of the greatest French writers. Born 21 November 1694, died 30 May 1778.

It is also worth noting the following statements, sourced from <<http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/thebibles-proof.html>> (cited 26 January 2006), "In the 1700s the atheist [actually he is a deist] French writer Voltaire said, 'within 100 years, the Bible and Christianity will be swept out of existence, and pass into history.' Well, within **50 years**, Voltaire was swept out of existence and passed into history, and the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire's house and printing press to print and distribute thousands of Bibles. This ironic twist of events should not have surprised anyone, because God had promised that 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (Matthew 24:35). The very year that Voltaire said '**50 years from now, the world will hear no more of the BIBLE,**' the British Museum paid \$500,000 for an old manuscript of the BIBLE, while at the same time in Paris, one of Voltaire's books sold for eight cents."

Amusingly and ironically, in a **1767** letter, Voltaire wrote, "I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: 'O Lord, make my enemies ridiculous.' And God granted it." Letter to M. Damienville (May 16, 1767), Quotesplace.com, "Voltaire". WWW page. <<http://quotesplace.com/i/b/Voltaire>> (nd, cited 26 January 2006).

²³ Voltaire, quoted in George Wood, "What Israel means to me as a Christian", *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 18, 1996), 7. Accessed from <<http://www.streamload.com/johnhuntley/Articles/293.pdf>>, cited 22 January 2006.

²⁴ As an interesting side issue, in 1967, England's Praemunire, statutes introduced in the fourteenth century designed to protect rights claimed by the English crown against encroachment by the papacy, was repealed in its entirety.

(and not a specific date or time) does do one thing, it tends to give a greater anticipation of the Lord's return, even though this should not be so.

So far, readers may be saying that what I have written is all speculative (and in many ways I agree). But if that is the case, what does one do with Luke's account of Matthew 24:24.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; **and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. 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. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 21:20-36 (NAU)

Again, from 70 A.D. Jerusalem was not completely under Jewish/Israeli control until 1967: but went from²⁵ the Romans to the Byzantines, to Arabian Muslims to Crusaders to Egyptians and others and then to the Turks (Muslim) and the British (under the mandate) and then to the Jordanians (Muslim) following the Israeli 'War of Independence' in 1948. But now, since 1967, Jerusalem is no longer under gentile control²⁶ – despite the entire (western) world, and especially the Vatican – seeking to make Jerusalem an "international" city, let alone the Muslim world desiring to bring it under Islamic control. In this context it is interesting to note what Jacob Prasch says in his 2005 article, *Who are the Jews?*

The time of the Gentiles is coming to a close. Fifteen years ago, the American College of Rabbis issued a statement saying that more Jews have come to believe in Jesus as their Messiah in the last eighteen years than in the last eighteen centuries.²⁷

Until 1967 Jerusalem was under gentile control. Is the "time of the gentiles fulfilled"? I believe that since 1967 God has changed His focus. No longer do the western-supposed-Christian nations see any true widespread revival. But it is those of the Jewish, Islamic and other faiths; peoples from African and Asian nations who God seems to be drawing to the Gospel. True discipleship and true faithfulness in the face of persecution is found in these persecuted saints. The comments by the American College of Rabbis identifies 1972 (2005 less 15 years less 18 years) as an approximate point in time that we can identify the significant return of God's grace upon the Jewish people. Is this just another coincidence?

²⁵ This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but just indicative.

²⁶ That is to say, Jerusalem is part of the Jewish nation and not part of a Muslim or pan-Arab nation. I am not denying that there is non-Jewish ownership of land in Israel and Jerusalem, nor am I denying that the temple mount is anything but under the administration of Muslims. That Israel and Jerusalem will remain contentious issues in the Middle-East and for the World until Christ's returns is not being disputed.

²⁷ Jacob Prasch, *Who are the Jews*, Moriel Quarterly No. 22 (March/June 2005), p.5.

Obviously God's reconcentration upon the Jewish people would be a progressive increase, just as the decline in His grace to the already "Western/Christianised" world would be. This can be seen by looking at the manifold increase in false revivals, compromise, ecumenism and false prophets²⁸ appearing in the western, and especially Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, in the last half century.

If Christ were to Return to the Mount of Olives in 2017, to bring true and complete freedom to Jerusalem and Israel, then the Rapture of those who are In-Christ (both dead and alive) is (assuming that pre/mid tribulation rapture theories are correct) before this; and, based upon Scriptures which support pre/mid tribulation theories, an approximate window of 2010 and 2014 might be suggested.

In the light of current world events and the exponential increase in apostasy, heresy and false prophets in the church – it certainly seems possible. And it's not the apostasy, heresy or the false prophets that are disturbing – they've always been there. It is the degree at which they seem to be growing, and the degree to which they are becoming commonplace, and the degree to which they are becoming acceptable, and the degree to which traditional Evangelical/Pentecostal ministries and denominations are embracing them and ecumenism.

The Jubilee Years: 47 / 97	
1897	- Theodor Herzl "prophecy"
1947	- UN votes in favour of the Jewish State of Israel.
1997	- Israel's first modern Jubilee. Population has grown from around 600,000 to around 6,000,000.

The Jubilee Years: 17 / 67 ²⁹	
1267	- Mamluks of Egypt control Jerusalem.
1517	- Ottomans (under Salim I) control Jerusalem.
1867	- Lt Charles Warren maps the temple mount and the City of David.
1917	- Jerusalem liberated from Ottoman/Islamic rule. - Balfour Declaration
1967	- Jerusalem liberated from Jordanian/Islamic rule by Israel.
2017	- <i>What, if anything, will happen?</i>

70 Years – This Generation	
1948	- Israel's Independence Declared
2017	- <i>What, if anything, will happen?</i>

These jubilees identify a pattern, a pattern which – if coincidental – mimics design. That two³⁰ distinct jubilee timeframes (timelines) exist, shows, I believe, God's Hand in the matter. I suggest they exist to highlight God's ever present oversight on history. One thing I must stress is that the Jubilees I've mentioned are based on today's calendar (i.e. the Gregorian) and have not been evaluated according to the Jewish/Biblical calendar. (The difference between the calendars, essentially, results in months and days being different. Generally speaking, the number of years

²⁸ For example, in 1937 Kenneth Hagin became an Assemblies of God minister, and in 1950 he became an itinerant healing evangelist (after what Hagin said was an appearance of Jesus). In 1963 Kenneth Hagin started the Kenneth E. Hagin Evangelistic Association, and from here the rise of his infamy. After hearing Hagin's preaching in 1967 (whilst at Oral Roberts University) Kenneth Copeland started his own ministry in 1968. From these two ministries alone we can see the plethora of ministries spawned. And it is with these two ministries that we can illustrate the increase in heretical teachings and the resulting apostasy of the end times. Though I have used Hagin and Copeland to illustrate my point, numerous other "ministers" and "ministries" could have been used.

²⁹ In 1816, by decree of the Ottoman Empire's reigning sultan, the Jews were allowed free entrance to Palestine (Israel).

³⁰ I have endeavoured to investigate and highlight only two obvious timelines.

remains the same). As such, I am merely showing an observable pattern. Also, I must emphasise that I am not trying to set dates for future events. Christ's return could happen today, tomorrow, twenty, fifty or even a hundred years from now (again subject to God's timetable and requisites). God is in control, and it is in His timing that Christ will return.

Conclusion

History, in many ways, has repeated itself down the centuries. And the turmoil we see in the world today is not all that new. Many generations have thought that they were in the last of the last days, and wondered how the world could go on for much longer. And yet the years and centuries kept on rolling by. We are in the last days – but how long before the Lord returns? We do not know. We, like our forebears, have a duty to uphold: remain faithful to God and His Word; run our race and not become complacent whilst waiting.

In 66 A.D. the Roman commander Gessius Florus' troops looted the temple's treasury, slaughtering worshippers and priests. This touched off the revolt of the population of Jerusalem. Then in 70 A.D. Titus captured, sacked and destroyed the second temple. Concerning the temple's destruction, F.F. Bruce in his book, *Israel and the Nations*, quotes from "a historical fragment preserved by Sulpicius Severus (c. A.D. 400). This account says that:

Titus himself, expressed the opinion that the temple ought most certainly to be destroyed, in order that the Jewish and Christian religions might more completely be abolished; for although these religions were hostile to each other, they had nevertheless sprung from the same founders; the Christians were an offshoot of the Jews, and if the root were taken away the whole plant would soon perish."³¹

God preserved the root, and now the fig tree has become tender and put forth its leaves. The Year of Jubilee is near and God will indeed free His people and give them rest. On the Day of Atonement in the forty-ninth year, the Shofar, the Ram's Horn, is blown to proclaim release and to consecrate the fiftieth year (Lev 25:9,10). The cry will go out, and the trump shall shout.

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (NAU)

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Revelation 22:17, 20, 21 (NAU)

³¹ F.F. Bruce (1963) (Revised David F. Payne), *Israel and the Nations* (Paternoster Press, 1997), 226.