

By Nils Ibstedt, Broby, Sweden

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www.nils-ibstedt.com

Appendix 2

Jerusalem

– earth's belly button

Why is Jerusalem called "The Holy City"? What makes it so special? This essay highlights the role of Jerusalem from an eschatological perspective.

Jerusalem – a burdensome stone for all peoples

"This is Israel's fate, as it were spoken by the Lord who made heaven and earth and created man's spirit that is in her, I will make Jerusalem and Judah to a poisoned chalice for any neighbors who send their armies to surround Jerusalem. Jerusalem will become a heavy stone that becomes a burden to the whole world. And though all nations of the earth unite in an attempt to lift it, they must be crushed." Zech 12:1-3, TLB.

So runs an over 2,500 year old prophecy about Jerusalem. This prediction of Jerusalem has been realized repeatedly during its long history. Few cities have been so contested and coveted as Jerusalem. Not less than thirty times, Jerusalem has been besieged by foreign armies and was more or less destroyed, but the city has nevertheless always been rebuilt. Thirteen of these sieges are depicted in the Bible. Twice, Jerusalem has been burned and completely razed to the ground, in 586 BC and the year 70 AD. The whole area has resembled a plowed field and remained deserted – like a desert – for long times, but the city has reinvented itself and is still a metropolis of great importance.

Here is a TT (Swedish New Agency) message from Paris, August 31, 1993: *"Jerusalem is the major stumbling block. There will be no agreement between Israel and the Palestinians unless Israel agrees to discuss the status of Jerusalem."*

So said the head of the Palestinian negotiating team in an interview published on Tuesday.

"I can not accept that Jerusalem is not being discussed in two years. We must now discuss, publicly and in secret," said Faisal Husseini in the paper Libération.

Why Jerusalem?

Why is Jerusalem so often the focus of media? It has become something of the world's political belly button – a city that attracts all the world's attention to itself and often is the subject of heated political debates. Rabbi Robert L. Wolkoff in the Swedish paper "Sydsvenska Dagbladet", May 27, 1994 quotes the following from a speech by Yasser Arafat:

– *"You must come and fight and start a jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your third holiest sanctuary? Jihad will continue. Jerusalem is for the entire Muslim nation – our main battle is Jerusalem."*

Nicosia on 5 June 1996: – *"No one can stop the Palestinians from establishing their own state with Jerusalem as its capital."* So said Yasser Arafat at the meeting in Aqaba in Jordan with King Hussein of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt.

TT-DPA June 8, 1996: – *"No independent Palestinian state, more Jewish*

settlements and an undivided Jerusalem.” These are some of the key points of the political program that the new Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his future government coalition will work for. So said several Israeli newspapers on Friday.

Editor Leif Snare of the Swedish paper ”DAGEN” April 30, 1998: *”A few days before the signing of the Oslo Agreement,”* Yasser Arafat said: *”This will provide a basis for a Palestinian state in accordance with the Palestine National Council resolution,”* which was adopted in 1974 in Cairo. This so-called *”phase plan”* means among other things that the whole area of Palestine is to be liberated in phases. The last phase, means that Israel is obliterated, by an armed attack by other confrontational states.

According to Bible prophecy, Jerusalem will be *”a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around.”* One conflict will replace the other. The tension will be between the countries around the Euphrates and Israel – between a modern Babylon and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem’s history is written in the Bible

Why, then, has Jerusalem become the most controversial and coveted city in the world? The Bible has the answer. Jerusalem is God’s chosen city above all other cities and the Jews are a people who are different from all other people. Biblical prophets say that the living God, who created heaven and earth, has been pleased to select this people and this city on earth for His specific purposes. To find the cause for this we have to go far back in time. The Bible has in brief the following story:

Idolatry began in Babylon

The Jews’ ancestor, Abraham, a Hebrew, came from Ur at the river Euphrates in Babylonia. There stood the cradle of our civilization and the world’s first city, Babylon (in Hebrew: Babel). During the period immediately after the great Flood people were monotheists. They worshipped only one God, namely the God of the righteous Noah, Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord God, the same God that Jews and Christians worship today. But over time Babylon became a center of astrology and the worship of heavenly bodies and the forces of nature. Babylon was the first place on earth where people begun to worship a man, namely Nimrod, who was the founder of Babylon. The temples gradually became places where they practiced child sacrifices and debauchery.

Abraham forwarded the revelation of God

As the falling away from the Lord grew, it became a high risk that the monotheistic belief in one God would drown in all sorts of human inventions and polytheism. The Bible tells us that God then called out to Abraham from Ur in Chaldea, so that He through him in a different country could create a nation that would bear the true revelation of God. This happened about 2000 BC. The country that Abraham came to was Canaan, the current Israel.

Jerusalem became an antithesis to Babylon

In the city of Salem, on the slope of Mt Mori in the middle of Canaan God established a base on the earth by a priest named Melchizedek, who worshiped God the Most High. According to Jewish tradition he was identical with Noah’s eldest son

Shem. In the beginning was the city called Salem, but later it was named Jeru-salem, an antithesis to the sinful Babylon, which was a nest of idolatry and worship of humans on earth. Abraham's monotheistic faith in God was passed on to his children, and by his grandson, James, the Israeli nation was founded, which have Jerusalem as its capital.

In the Bible, Jerusalem became God's chosen place on earth, while Babylon symbolizes the humanity that turned away from the true God. Although the old Babylon long ago has been ruined, the name of Babylon still remains as an indication of man's wickedness and godlessness. And still the tension remains between the area around the river Euphrates and Israel. According to the Bible, these contradictions will deepen as we approach the end of this age.

Jerusalem and the end of time

Bible prophecy also says that Israel in the end times shall have returned to their nation and its capital Jerusalem. With "the end of time" the Bible means the end of the current age, also called "*The times of the Gentiles*". Jesus said in one of his speeches, that "*when you see the fig tree beginning to bud, then you know that summer is near*". The parable of the fig tree refers to the Israelites' return to Palestine and the revival of Israel as a nation. The prophet Jeremiah has a prophecy of the returning of the Jews from the *diaspora*, which reads:

– Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, then you do not more say, "As the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt", but: "As the Lord lives, who brought seed from the house of Israel out of land in the north and got them from all countries whither I had driven them away." So shall they dwell in their own country. Jer 23:7-8 SBM.

Before our very eyes we see how this old prophecy is coming true, that not only the tribe of Judah, but all twelve tribes of Israel, are returning to their ancient homeland from around the world,

The current situation

Israel was established again as a nation in 1948. At the 1967 "Six Day War" they captured Jerusalem and in 1980 they declared Jerusalem as their capital. But very few nations dare to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's national capital and establish embassys there in view of the neighboring countries' reactions. Bible prophecy predicts that Jerusalem will be the center of major political entanglements that will touch the whole world. This will eventually lead to Armageddon – a battlefield – from which Jerusalem will be besieged by hostile armies surrounding the city at the end of time.

Messiah

The Jews are still waiting for their Messiah. The Christians are waiting for Christ's return to Earth. Jesus calls Jerusalem "THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING". Jerusalem will play an important role, not only at the end of this time period but in a future Kingdom of peace, as a world capital, according to the prophecies.