

Jerusalem, past, present and future

A Drama in Three Acts

by Derek Prince

It was the summer of 1974—forty-five years after the events related in this book. Lydia and I were looking out across Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, picking out places where we had lived.

“There’s Abu Tor,” I said, pointing to a hill across the Valley of Hinnom at the southern end of the Old City, “where you brought Tikva to Miss Ratcliffe’s basement.”

“Yes,” Lydia replied, “and over to the right there is Musrara, and somewhere beyond that must be Mahaneh Yehuda.”

“And straight across there,” I said, “is the house where we were living the day the State of Israel was born.”

We continued reminiscing for a while about Jerusalem and all that it had meant in our lives. Then Lydia, being Lydia, grew impatient with thinking about the past.

“But what about the future?” she said as she often does. “What’s going to happen next in Jerusalem?”

There was only one place to find the answer to that. We sat down on a stone wall and I pulled out my pocket Bible. For nearly two hours we turned its pages, pausing frequently to gaze at the city spread out before us, marveling at the special place it had held in God’s heart through the centuries.

At last, Lydia turned to me with that determined look I knew so well. “Derek,” she said, “for months now you’ve been making me wrack my brains to remember all sorts of tiny details about things that happened forty-five years ago.” It was true: Getting Lydia to dwell for very long on the past had required a certain amount of pressure on my part.

“I’ll go on doing it,” she continued, “but with a condition. That you also put in the book what we’ve seen today about the next forty-five years.”

And so, to keep my side of the bargain, I have....



In the unfolding revelation of God to man, Jerusalem fulfills a double function. It provides both the stage upon which truth is enacted and the center from which it is disseminated.

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For Act I, we go back to the days of David and Solomon—the beginning of Jerusalem’s history as a city of importance. The theme of Act I is the blessedness of a nation united under God. The climax of the revelation is Solomon’s temple, with its unimaginable splendor, set in the midst of a people enjoying peace, well-being, and abundance without parallel in human history.

We can think of this revelation as a drama in three acts, spanning three millennia, of which God Himself is the Director. Each act has its special theme and each is set in Jerusalem.

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Yet God’s purpose in sending such prosperity—as in all His dealings with the Jews—was not for their sakes alone. He designed that the testimony of this blessedness, and the reason for it, should go forth from Jerusalem to all nations. In making preparation for the building of the temple, David said:

The house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries.

(1 Chronicles 22:5)

At the apex of Solomon’s reign this purpose was fulfilled. Royal visitors from all lands, the Queen of Sheba among them, came to Jerusalem to marvel at the glory of the temple, the wealth and the wisdom of Solomon, and the prosperity of all Israel.

However, the glory of Solomon’s kingdom was short-lived. Upon his death, disobedience and division undermined the whole structure. The northern part of this divided kingdom, known as Israel, was uprooted by Assyria and scattered among the surrounding nations. Later, the southern part, known as Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital, was defeated by Babylon. Jerusalem and the glorious temple were destroyed; Judah was removed to exile in Babylon.

In due course a remnant of Judah came back to reoccupy Jerusalem and the surrounding territory. For the next five centuries the Jewish state that was thus restored struggled along in the shadow of various pagan empires, culminating with Rome.

And the stage is set for Act II....



The theme of Act II is reconciliation—between God and man, between God’s love and God’s justice. Speaking as a Father to children who had turned away, divine Love called, “Come back!” But speaking as a Judge, divine Justice declared, “You are guilty; you are not fit to come.”

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All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Then Love was able to make the offer of full and final pardon, expressed also by Isaiah: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

Once again, Jerusalem was to be the center from which the testimony of divine truth—this time the fact of reconciliation—should go forth. Speaking to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus explained that His death had fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture and opened the way for the message of pardon and peace to be proclaimed to all nations:

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

He also promised to endue His disciples with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to make their testimony effective:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

From Jerusalem as its center the message of reconciliation was to go forth in an ever expanding circle—to Judea, to Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. For nineteen centuries this has been the central thrust of Jesus’ disciples.



At the close of the nineteenth century, God began to set the stage for Act III. The theme this time is the government of the nations. The issue is stated by David:

For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations. (Psalm 22:28)

The God of Israel has declared that His authority extends over all nations. Furthermore, He has appointed a King of His own choosing, of whom He has said:

Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:27)

In the face of earth's opposition and rejection, He has declared,

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Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. (Psalm 2:6)

To earth's rulers He has given solemn warning that He requires their submission to this King whom He has chosen:

Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth....Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. (Psalm 2:10, 12 NASB).

By the end of Act III God will have vindicated His authority and established His King and His kingdom over all the earth.

The stage was set for Act III by a decisive intervention of God in history: the regathering of the Jews in their own land.

On May 14, 1948, after half a century of struggle, the modern State of Israel was born. Of the countless prophecies in Scripture that refer to the close of the present age, all without exception assume one thing: the presence of Israel as a nation in their own land. Until Israel was thus restored as a nation, none of these prophecies could be fulfilled. Now the way is open for the fulfillment of them all.

Out of all these prophetic visions of the end time, one of the most complete is found in the last three chapters of Zechariah—12 through 14. We will therefore use these three chapters as a frame of reference to make a phase-by-phase outline of the main events that are yet to take place in Jerusalem.*

In the opening verse the Lord gives three reasons why He is able both to predict and to control with perfect accuracy the events that are to follow. It is He who “stretcheth forth the heavens,” who “layeth the foundation of the earth,” who “formeth the spirit of man within him” (12:1). From the height of heaven to the depth of earth, the Lord is in complete control of the physical universe. In addition, He knows and

controls “the spirit of man”—the innermost attitudes, motives, and purposes of every man on earth. Therefore His predictions are infallible.

Viewing Jerusalem as the stage set for Act III of the divine drama, let us divide up the prophetic vision that now follows into nine successive “scenes,” each representing a phase of the unfolding vision. Some scenes may partially overlap; between others there may be a considerable interval.

Scene 1: The Arab Reaction

Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. (12:2 NASB)

Here is the first, immediate outcome of the formation of the State of Israel: a violent reaction by “all the peoples around,” resulting in a siege directed against both Jerusalem and Judah (the Jewish people). Who are all the peoples around the State of Israel? Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Arabia, Egypt.

Clearly this first phase of the prophecy has already been fulfilled. As soon as the State of Israel came into being, all these nations immediately declared war on it and set out to annihilate it. For two months, Jewish Jerusalem was besieged and was almost forced to capitulate through starvation. Upon this siege hung the destiny of all Judah (the Jewish people in Israel). Had Jewish Jerusalem fallen, the State of Israel would never have survived.

Scene 2: The Heavy Stone

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God has issued a warning to any nation, any government, any politician who would seek to impose a merely human solution on Jerusalem. All who attempt this will be “severely injured.”

And it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. (12:3 NASB)

The scope of the prophecy is extending. Now it speaks of all the peoples—not merely all those around the State of Israel. All peoples of the earth are to become involved with the problem of Jerusalem, yet none will be able to solve it.

In a measure this, too, has already happened. In 1947–1948, Great Britain tried to lift the stone, but was “severely injured.” (How significant it is that the disintegration of the British Empire can be traced back to this very point in history!) When Britain laid the stone down, Count Bernadotte of Sweden sought to intervene as a mediator—but was assassinated. The stone was then handed over to the United Nations (representing “all the peoples”) and has become the most intransigent issue in international politics.

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Scene 3: All Nations against Jerusalem

And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. (12:3 NASB)

At the time of this writing, this has not yet happened. But the possibility that it could happen is by no means remote. Indeed, with the international oil crisis, a conceivable rationale for such a universal gathering is provided—a crisis unimaginable in the days of Zechariah or in fact until the advent of the internal combustion engine in this century.

In 1947, when the United Nations first voted to bring into being the State of Israel, they also adopted a resolution to put the city of Jerusalem under international control. This resolution has never been implemented; but neither has it been rescinded.

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Suppose that the United Nations were to revive this resolution and then demand that Israel hand over to them, as the international authority, the control of Jerusalem. And suppose that Israel should refuse to do this. What then? If the United Nations should gather an international army to enforce its decision, against the resistance of Israel, the result would be just what Zechariah has predicted.

Of course, this is only one of various possible ways in which this final, universal attack against Jerusalem could come about. The permutations and combinations of international politics are so intricate that only the infinite wisdom of God Himself can foresee with absolute certainty the course that events will follow. But at this point there lurks in the wings, waiting his cue to appear on stage, the sinister figure of a false messiah. Zechariah calls him “the worthless shepherd” (11:17 NASB). The New Testament writers call him “the man of lawlessness..., the son of destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB), “the antichrist” (1 John 2:22 NASB), and the “beast” (Revelation 13:1-4). (This last word means specifically a fierce, wild beast.)

It is equally difficult to predict the precise role that this antichrist will play in this phase of the drama. A man of unique intelligence and personal charisma, he will rise, through strange and dramatic events, to a position of dominance in world politics. With his uncanny ability to manipulate men and nations, he will negotiate some kind of treaty with Israel, which will enable them to build a national temple in Jerusalem. (See Daniel 9:27.) This will gain him overwhelming favor in the eyes of millions of Jews. In fact, it will be sufficient to cause many of them to acknowledge him as their messiah—although this identification will have no basis in Scripture.

Before the treaty with Israel has run its course, the treacherous deception of this antichrist will be laid bare. Breaking his word to Israel, he will demand that he himself take his place in this temple and be worshipped there as God. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:4, 8.) Every sincere Jew will totally reject this blasphemous demand. In revenge, antichrist will turn against the whole Jewish nation with a ferocity that will fully justify the title of “wild beast,” and he will use his worldwide influence to stir up war against the State of Israel and persecution against Jews in all nations.

Without attempting to unravel all the subtleties and deceptions of antichrist's diplomacy, we move on to its final outcome, which, as we have already seen, is clearly stated:

All the nations of the earth will be gathered against it [Jerusalem].

The defenders of Jerusalem will eventually be brought to the verge of total disaster:

The city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled. (14:2 NASB)

Indeed, grim disaster will confront Israel throughout the whole land. Two out of every three Jews in the land will be killed. But the remaining third, spared by divine mercy, will emerge to acknowledge the Lord as their Savior and Deliverer. (See chapter 13, verses 8–9.)

This will mark the climax of the period called by Jeremiah “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). The angel Gabriel told Daniel, concerning this period,

There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [of Israel] even to that same time. (Daniel 12:1)

However, both Jeremiah and Daniel promised Israel ultimate deliverance. Jeremiah said,

But he [Jacob] shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:7)

Gabriel told Daniel,

And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)

Those who are “written in the book” are those foreknown and foreordained by God, corresponding to the one-third remnant of Zechariah.

Scene 4: God Intervenes

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. (14:3)

At this point something will take place that is almost unthinkable to modern, sophisticated man. When all hope is gone for Israel’s survival as a nation, God Himself will intervene. The purpose of His intervention will be twofold: to bring judgment on the nations attacking Jerusalem and to show mercy upon Israel. (See chapter 12, verses 9–10; chapter 14, verse 3.)

This intervention of God against the army besieging Jerusalem will not be “mili-

tary” in the normal sense. It will be a supernatural plague, affecting both the minds and the bodies of the attacking forces. Ultimately these will turn in total confusion against one another and will bring about their own destruction. (See chapter 12, verse 4; chapter 14, verses 12–15.)

At the same time the Lord will also move supernaturally by His Holy Spirit upon the hearts of Israel, revealing Himself to them as the One whom they have rejected and crucified:

And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. (12:10 NASB)

The result will be a time of deep mourning and repentance for all who survive in Israel, such as the nation has never yet known. (See chapter 12, verses 12–14.)

Scene 5: The King Appears

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east.... Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! (14:4–5 NASB)

Apparently, up to this point, the Lord’s intervention—both against the attacking nations and on behalf of Israel—will be achieved by spiritual power. But, at some moment never exactly revealed, the most dramatic event in all history will take place. Accompanied by innumerable hosts, both of angels and of resurrected believers, Jesus Himself will descend from heaven and His feet will light upon the Mount of Olives.

God will thus redeem the promise given by the angels to the disciples at the time when Jesus ascended to heaven:

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11)

He went up in a cloud; He will descend in a cloud. He went from the Mount of Olives; He will return to the Mount of Olives.

Scene 6: Earthquake and Upheaval

And the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. (14:4 NASB)

As a result of the Lord's descent on the Mount of Olives, tremendous geological changes will take place in the whole area. An earthquake will split the Mount of Olives in two, separating the northern part (Mount Scopus) from the southern part (the Mount of Olives proper). The whole of Jerusalem will be lifted up and leveled off, becoming the dominating mountain height in this area. (See chapter 14, verse 10.) This agrees with the prophecy given both in Isaiah and in Micah:

In the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills.
(Isaiah 2:2 NASB; see also Micah 4:1 NASB)

Meteorological changes will also occur that will make the day that these events take place unlike any other day in earth's history:

And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. (14:6-7 NASB)

Through all the centuries of its history, Jerusalem has never had an adequate water supply of its own. But as a result of these geological upheavals, Jerusalem will become for the first time a source of water. Artesian fountains will be opened there and will flow forth in rivers to the east and to the west. (See chapter 14, verse 8.) To the east a river will flow through the valley formed by the earthquake in the Mount of Olives, descending through the Judean wilderness to the Dead Sea. This river will bring life and fruitfulness wherever it flows. It is described in detail in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

Scene 7: "In the House of My Friends"

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?
Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (13:6)

After His personal descent to earth, the Lord will enter into intimate fellowship with the survivors in Israel. He will make Himself known to them, in the full reality of His humanity, as their Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. (See chapter 13, verse 7.)

Beholding with wondering awe the marks of His crucifixion, they will ask, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" He will reply, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (13:6).

There is a special graciousness in the Hebrew word here translated "my friends." It means not "those whom I love," but "those who love me." After two millennia of estrangement and rejection, the Lord assures His people that He sees the love in their hearts for Himself.

Scene 8: Cleansing and Renewal

In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. (13:1 NASB)

In addition to the geological changes, there will be a period of spiritual cleansing and renewal for the land and its people. All forms of idolatry and religious deception will be banished. Thereafter, anyone seeking to practice such things will be put to death. (See chapter 13, verses 2–5.)

Out of these purging processes Jerusalem will emerge as indeed “the holy city”—not merely in name, but also in reality. The long-standing distinction between sacred and profane—or between kosher and nonkosher—will no longer apply in Jerusalem. Everything in the city will be kosher—no matter how humble or mundane its use. As it says in Zechariah 14,

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO THE LORD.” And the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts....And there will no longer be a Canaanite [a merchant] in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day. (14:20–21 NASB)

No one will be allowed any longer to exploit the service of God’s house for personal profit.

Final Scene: One King over All the Earth

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. (14:9 NASB)

God’s original pattern of theocratic government will be extended over all nations. With Jerusalem as His earthly center, Christ will rule as King over the whole earth. Following the pattern of Melchizedek—the king-priest who ruled Jerusalem in the days of Abraham (see Genesis 14:18–20)—Christ will unite in His own Person the two sacred functions of king and priest.

As King, Christ will also be the supreme Judge. One of His first acts will be to summon all nations before Him for judgment:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. (Matthew 25:31–33 NASB)

There will be one clear principle of separation between the “sheep” nations and the “goat” nations—the way they have treated the Jews during their period of persecution under antichrist.

To the sheep, those who have showed mercy to the Jews at this time, Christ will say:

Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.... Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me. (Matthew 25:34, 40 NASB)

To the goats, those who refused to show mercy to the Jews, Christ will say:

Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.... Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. (Matthew 25:41, 45 NASB)

The sheep nations will then be permitted to take their place in Christ’s kingdom; the goat nations will be banished from it.

Christ’s kingdom, thus established, will far excel that of Solomon both in the measure of its glory and in the extent of its blessings. As the great drama in three acts comes to its close, we see all the nations that are left on earth coming regularly to Jerusalem to share in the blessings of the kingdom and to join with Israel in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. (See chapter 14, verses 16–21.)

What These Prophecies Mean for Us Today

Concerning the Old Testament prophecies of the Lord’s return, the apostle Peter wrote to the early Christians,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)

For the unbeliever, the world around is getting darker. In the face of multiplying pressures and problems, world leaders grope in vain for enduring solutions. For the believer, however, the light of prophetic revelation, like a lamp, shines more brightly by contrast with the surrounding darkness.

Peter compared the effect of these prophecies to the rising of the “daystar” within our hearts. He took his metaphor from the action of the planet Venus. At certain seasons, the daystar, or morning star, rises in the eastern sky immediately before the sun itself comes up over the horizon. At times this “star” is so bright that it partially dispels the surrounding darkness. It thus becomes the sun’s forerunner, giving assur-

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ance—to all who understand its message—that the sun is ready to appear.

So it is with us as we give careful heed to prophetic truth. Like the “day star” arising in our hearts and dispelling the surrounding darkness, there comes an unshakable inner assurance: the Lord will soon appear.

Faith of this kind is not a mystical escape from reality. On the contrary, it is based on proven experience. At a conservative estimate, more than half the prophecies of Scripture concerning Israel and Jerusalem have already been exactly and literally fulfilled—often in defiance of all human estimates of probability. Only unreasoning prejudice would reject, without very careful examination, the thesis that the remaining prophecies will be fulfilled in like manner.

The 1911 edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* contains an article by a German professor called Nöldeke on the pronunciation of Hebrew. In the course of the discussion he utterly discounts “the possibility that a Jewish empire will ever again be established in the Middle East.” Within less than fifty years, of course, the very thing that the learned professor had dismissed as an absurd improbability was an accomplished fact of history!

The divine commentary on this is given by Isaiah:

[The Lord] turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; [He] confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; [He] saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof. (Isaiah 44:25-26)

Likewise the psalmist David said,

The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. (Psalm 33:10-11 NASB)

In the face of all unbelief and opposition, the Lord’s plan for the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem will be fulfilled—phase by phase—just as He has revealed it through his prophets.