





A Personal Reflection on Israel

By John H. Munro

I AM THANKFUL THAT AS A WEE BOY I WAS TAUGHT to love the land of Israel and the Jewish people. The earliest stories I ever heard were located in Israel and were about the Israelites. So my heroes were men like Joseph, David, and Daniel — all Israelites. Most important of all, I knew that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and died on the cross in Jerusalem. Since then as I have studied the Bible, the more I have loved the land of Israel and the people of that nation. The Messiah, Jesus the Christ, is from the nation of Israel “according to the flesh and is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:5).

FRIENDS

I can't remember meeting a Jewish person until my family moved to live in Gibraltar when I was 13. My brothers and I attended Gibraltar Grammar School, which was a boys-only school. There I was delighted to find that two of my classmates were Jewish: Solomon and Isaac! “Solly” and I played midfield on the school's soccer team. We became good friends. As the sun was setting on a Friday evening, I learned that this was the beginning of the Sabbath for Solly and Isaac. Our Sabbath was Sunday, but whether Jewish or Christian we all came from families where the Sabbath was a special day!

WHERE JESUS WALKED

Even a cursory reading of the Bible makes it clear that the Israelites and the land of Israel are central to the story of the Bible. The Old Testament prophecies made it clear that the Messiah was going to come from Israel and would be the Savior of the world. After years of studying the Bible, you can imagine the excitement of Gudny and myself when, in December 1987, we had the opportunity to visit Israel for the first time. It was a quick visit, but unforgettable! The intifada broke out the day we left Israel, but while we were there we were able to visit Bethlehem and Hebron, and were even able to enter the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount! Since then we have made several trips to Israel and have been privileged to take many from Calvary Church. I never tire of visiting the sites and seeing the enthusiastic response of people who love Jesus Christ, love His Word, and love the Jewish people.

CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Israel is a very small country, but it is situated in the middle of the world. My two favorite sites in Israel have remained the same over the years: the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee. Much of the ministry of our Lord took place around the shores of the Sea of Galilee. One can almost see Jesus walking and calling His disciples to follow. We can picture Him in the storm on the sea, feeding the 5,000, and teaching in the synagogues. While much has changed over 2,000 years, the topography is unchanged. It is humbling to think that in the tiny country of Israel, the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14).

Walking on the Temple Mount is an unforgettable experience. It was there on Mount Moriah where the great temple of Solomon stood. It was there where Herod's temple was built, which was visited by our Lord during His ministry. As we stand on the Temple Mount, we know that once the Messiah returns, a new temple will be built, and our Savior will reign from Jerusalem — the very center of the universe — the most famous city in the history of the world.

GOD'S PLAN

I firmly believe both from the Old Testament prophecies and the teaching of the New Testament that there is “an ethnic, national, territorial Israel in the consummate plan of God, and what we are witnessing today in the nation of Israel is a pre-consummate work of God in continuity with the divine plan for Israel and the nations” (Craig Blasing, *The New Christian Zionism*, ed. Gerald R McDermott [IVP Academic, 2016], 79). Scripture makes clear, “And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob;’ ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (Romans 11:26–27). ☞



ABOVE: *The Gibraltar Grammar School U15 soccer team, with forwards John Munro (front, second from left) and Solomon “Solly” Garson (front, second from right)*



RIGHT: *Three Munro brothers in Gibraltar — Jim, John, and George (left to right)*