

# War and Peace

What is it about Jerusalem that makes it so special, such an attention magnet for the whole world? It has no coastline, no harbor, no navigable river, no geographic reason for its global eminence. Economically, it's insignificant; from the standpoint of the arts - a 'yawn'. Natural resources? Nope. Startling beauty? Not exactly. But from its earliest mention in the scriptures, we observe its totally unique status in the eyes of God.

In Genesis chapter 14, we find its first mention - when Abraham returned from rescuing his nephew Lot, he stopped to present a tithe to Melchizedek, King of Salem, who many including myself consider a Christopheny, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. Salem means "peace" and so in this fellow we see pictured Christ (or at the very least, a person who is a type of Christ (Hebrews 7:1-3) reigning as the King of Peace.

However, somewhere along the time line of history, that changed, for when Joshua and the hosts of Israel entered the promised land some 600 – 650 years later, Jerusalem was under an Amorite king who organized a large coalition of opposition and oppression. And although the children of Judah later took the city, it somehow again became or remained under the control of the Jebusites who were Amorites.

Next, King David, just four generations later, finally conquered "the stronghold of Zion", made it his

capital, and it became known as the city of David. However, in the following centuries, Jerusalem was conquered and/or ruled by the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Caliphs of Damascus and Baghdad, the Crusaders, the Mamluks, the Ottomans, the British and most recently, the Israelis. And this is the city whose name is Peace?!

Jerusalem is an enigma, a conundrum, a city named for peace that has been the worldwide focal point of war and conflict, a relatively 'backwater' locale yet revered by the billions of three major faiths, a place famous for religious fervor but which has slain all the prophets of God sent to her (Luke 13:33,34), the place where the Shekinah glory of God was manifested but which the Lord later referred to as a spiritual Sodom (1 Kings 8:10,11; Jer 23:14).

"What inconsistency! What incongruity!" you say. Yes, but let's look again – in scripture, this place was first governed by Christ, then somehow it fell into iniquity and was ruled by a king (Adonizedek) whose name basically implied 'My way, my lord is righteous'. Then, it was taken back by a man "after God's own heart" (David) but for many years afterward it goes through trial after trial after trial until finally it experiences true peace under Christ's rule – "Hey, that sounds like the saga of the redeemed!" you say.

Yes, and that's no accident! You see, the conflict over Jerusalem is indeed a picture of the war over the grand redemptive plan of God – over His chosen people, over

mankind and over creation. You see, just as this world and mankind were initially in direct fellowship with the Lord, the King of Righteousness and King of Peace, so was Jerusalem.

But mankind fell into iniquity and everyone went their own way (Isa 53:6) just as Salem became a tremendously iniquitous place ruled by Adonizedek ('my lord is righteous' i.e. 'I'll do my own thing').

But as David conquered the city, so the Son of David took possession of the fallen creation after paying for it on the cross of Calvary.

And as Christ is Lord for the believer yet doesn't force His Lordship on us, so it has been with Jerusalem -- a long period of ups and downs -- times of faithfulness in submitting to God's ways, times of discipline, times of anguish, times of joy, times of trial, times of celebration, times of rebellion, times of divine intervention.

God even included the backslider in the picture as we recall that Jerusalem rejected, for a time, her Savior. She had become so legalistic, so materialistic, that she ceased to recognize Him. But then we know that she will repent when she realizes her blindness (See Psa 22:16 and Zech 12:10). God never gives up on her just as He never gives up on us.

Here's the deal – He has chosen Jerusalem, to place His Name there (see 1 Kings 11:36, 2 Kings 21:7, 2 Kings 23:27, 2 Chron 6:6, 2 Chron 12:13, 2 Chron 33:7, Zech 3:2) just as Christ has chosen us (see John 15:16).

Of Jerusalem, the Lord says she will be called "sought out, a city not forsaken" (Psa 62:10-12). Of the believer, He says He will search out

the one who is lost (Luke 15) and that He will never forsake us (Heb 13:5).

Of Jerusalem, He says she was, at times, even in whoredoms, sinning grievously (Jer 13:27, Lam 1:8). In the New Testament, we find the great apostle Paul confessing toward the end of his ministry this realization, "I am the chief of sinners." (1 Tim 1:15) Of course, that's not to say Paul was grievously sinning but rather understanding the true depravity of his own sin nature as we all do as we grow in the Lord.

Of Jerusalem, we read that it will be "trodden underfoot of the Gentiles" until the times of the Gentiles are complete. And in like manner, Jesus warned us that, "...*if the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*" (John 15:18) and, "*If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*" (John 15:20) In addition, Paul wrote, "*As it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'* Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:36, 37) We are sometimes 'trodden underfoot' by unbelievers as well.

As Jerusalem was broken down, so the Lord, because He loves us, chastises us and breaks down our stubbornness and self-reliance. (Heb 12:6)

As Jerusalem has glorious promises to look forward to (God's personal presence, His comfort, her full redemption) so do we as believers in Christ.

As all nations in the end will gather around Jerusalem and defeat it, (Zech 14:2) so our bodies will, in the end, succumb to the effects of sin and die (unless we're raptured! Heb 9:27, Romans 6:23).

Just as Jerusalem is really two cities (Isaiah 64:10), so we are a composition of two natures – the flesh and the spirit (see Romans 7:15-25, Gal 5:16,17).

In many ways, Jerusalem, as depicted in scripture, can be thought of as analogous to the believer's flesh and Zion to the spirit. As a matter of fact, when David conquered this place, it says specifically that he took the "stronghold of Zion" rather than Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:7). In like manner, Jesus, when He conquered sin and death on the cross offered new life to our spirits while our flesh is still under sin. (Romans 8:6-11)

And this is wonderful – Jerusalem (and Salem) is mentioned 815 times in the Bible and in them we see an almost fleshly inconsistency in her relationship to the Lord. However, of the 160 mentions of Zion (and Sion), although we see an occasional negative effect stemming from the failures of Jerusalem, there's an overall blessed, special, consistent relationship with the Lord. It's very much like our 'inner man' so to speak.

David not only conquered the stronghold of Zion, but he also paid for it (see 1 Chron 21). Likewise, the Son of David, Jesus, conquered or overcame the stronghold or barriers of sin and death – that which separated Him from us. And in

doing so, He also paid the price for our redemption.

Just after David took the city, he moved the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat into Zion. This is where God met with man – above the Mercy Seat and as such, it represented the presence of God. Likewise, after Christ rose from the dead, He began moving His presence via His Holy Spirit into us when we are born anew by faith.

Just as we read in Revelation of a New Jerusalem coming down from God, we individually have new immortal bodies ready for us in heaven. To tie the linkage even tighter, we hear the New Jerusalem described by the Apostle John as appearing like a bride and to confirm it, the heavenly messenger with him says, "*I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife...and [he] showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem.*" (Rev 21:2,10)

'Wait, I thought we as believers were the bride of Christ!' We are – that's the point. Through Jerusalem, God is teaching us about His own character, His peace. In fact, the Hebrew for Jerusalem means just that, "teaching of peace".

Today, just as the world's attention is zeroing in on the struggle over Jerusalem and Zion (physically, the temple mount) so the whole population of the invisible eternal realm is zeroed in on the struggle over God's children, the redeemed. That's not vanity; it's simply because God is using us as His 'blackboard', His 'vis-aid', His 'lesson-plan' for all creation. "Class," He could say, "evil is doomed. Satan is a goner. Even

though it may look like the devil has won, even when it looks like I have let him have his evil way, My Son will come back." Yes, He's coming!

Finally, just as Jerusalem is the 'stumbling block' and 'a cup of trembling' (Zech 12:2,3) for the whole world so are you and I to the hoards of hell – they can't figure out God's love for us. Why would the Son of God care enough about a city that doesn't recognize Him to weep over it? (Luke 19:41,42) The same reason He cares so much about His children who often fail to recognize Him even now – love.

Consider Jerusalem. God's faithfulness to her is God's faithfulness to us; God's love for her is God's love for us. Her story is our own saga of war and peace with eternal consequences.

Through her, our Father is teaching that His peace is not dependent upon the circumstances of our own 'Jerusalem', that is our own outward state, whether we're celebrating or tribulating. Real peace is only dependent on the fact that Christ reigns in our hearts.

Through her, we learn that:

- *no matter the number or severity of our earthly trials*
- *regardless of whether our defenses have been torn down and rebuilt multiple times*
- *even though we may feel like we've failed at times to recognize our King and that as a consequence enemies surround us*
- *despite being 'trodden down by gentiles'*
- *although it seems like the glory of the Lord has departed...*

Hold on to this promise – the New Jerusalem is coming. And it's too

beautiful, too awesome to adequately describe. John tried – he wrote, "*...and [he] showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them... The construction of its wall was of jasper and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones... The twelve gates were twelve pearls...The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*" (Rev 21:10-23)

However, Paul didn't even try. He wrote, "*...I know...a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*" (2 Cor 12:3,4)

And this speaks not only of the beauty of the heavenly city but of the spectacular transformation that will one day be ours! Too awesome to describe! "*O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children.*" (Isa 54:11-13)

So hold fast to your faith, dear friend. Be at peace.