



THE FOUR CIRCLES

A Spiritual Journey from the
Holy Land

INTRODUCTION

The Land of Israel is a place rich in history, but it is also rife with challenges unparalleled anywhere else I have traveled. *The Four Circles* is a Bible study done from the perspective that Israel in general and the Jewish people in particular play a special role throughout time.

There are Christians who disagree—maybe you're one of them. Whichever way you lean, don't let it be a hindrance to experiencing this study. Our primary purpose is to use the setting of the Holy Land to drive home the personal application of Scripture and the responsibilities God has given to believers.

There is nothing in the Bible about there being “four circles”; it is merely used in this study as a visual to help provide understanding. You have a calling to each of these circles. This is something that we should all be able to agree on.

Each 5 ½-minute video in this four-part series is accompanied by a study guide. In it, you will find verses to read, facts to understand, questions to ask, and thoughts to ponder. Our hope for you with this study is simple: that you may grow closer to God, obey His Word, and do your part to reach the nations for His glory.



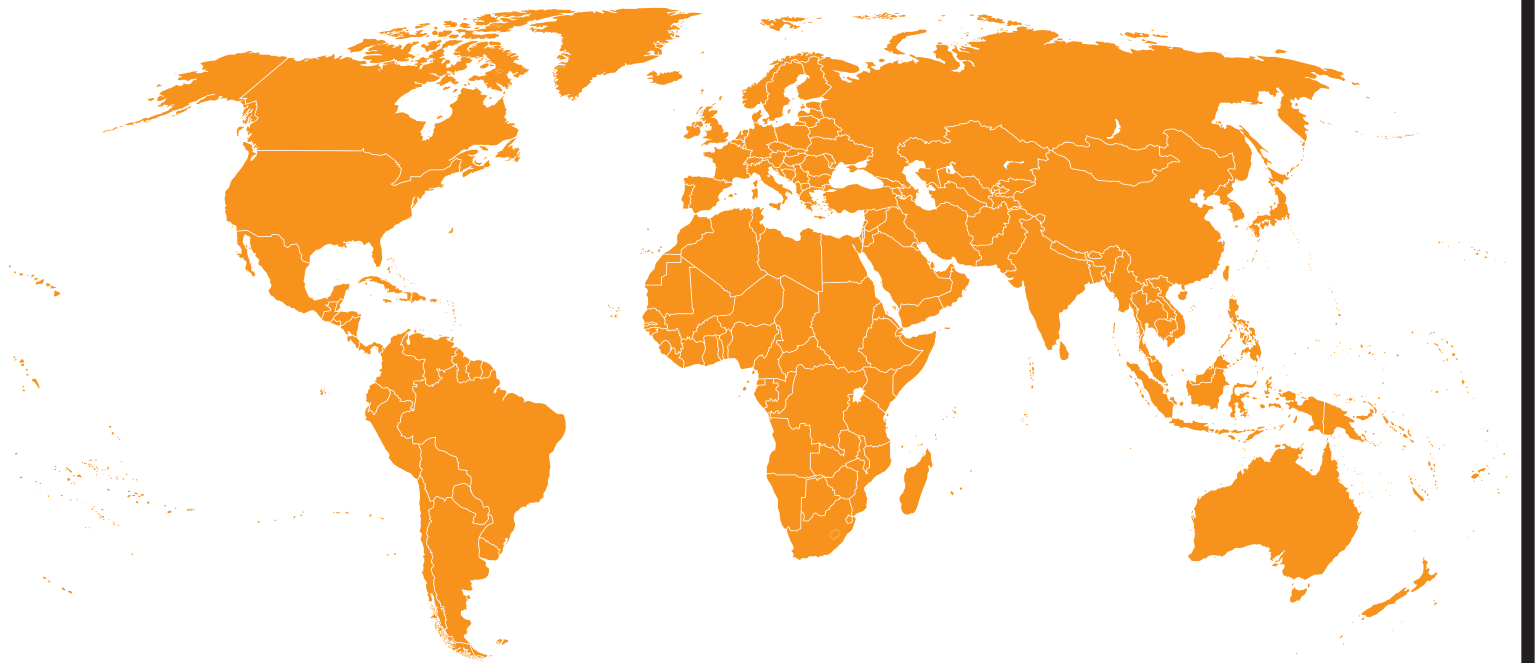


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CIRCLE ONE: THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

This Bible study covers four circles, starting with the widest circle: our planet, or “the ends of the earth.” God loved and loves the whole world, so He sent His Son to bring salvation to everyone. But before reaching the ends of the earth with the Gospel, Jesus focused on one people group in particular. As mentioned, this study is done from the perspective that the Jewish people have a special role to play in the past, present, and future. But, so do you.



For further understanding

When Jesus came, He instructed His disciples to go only to Jewish towns (Matthew 10:5–6). Read [Matthew 15:21–28](#), the story of the Canaanite woman.

- Why do you think Jesus said He only came for the Jews?
- Does it surprise you or even bother you that Jesus said this? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the Jews heard the Gospel *before* it was taken to the ends of the earth?

The widest circle

A transition happens at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Read Matthew 24:14 and Acts 1:8.

The disciples, and especially the Apostle Paul, further advanced the Gospel outward from the Jews to the Gentiles, which includes everyone else (Romans 1:16).

- Did God have to extend salvation to the Gentiles (John 3:16)?
- How does this verse in Matthew 24 say we will know when the Gospel has been “preached in the whole world”?
- Even though these quotes from Jesus in Matthew 24 and Acts 1 were a directive from Him to us, list some reasons why you think so many believers live as if the “Great Commission” is optional? (see *quote below*)

What about you?

- Have you clearly accepted Jesus as your Savior? If so, do nonbelievers see it demonstrated in your life?
- Are you ready at this and any other moment to share the Gospel as the Lord provides you with opportunities? This witness should be done in both word and action—no continual exclusion of one or the other.
- What can you do to help spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth (outside of your nation)?
- How can this be manifested to immigrants and refugees living close to you?

Things to pray for

- World evangelization through both missionaries and the indigenous church
- Your personal role in God's master plan for the nations
- That Revelation 7:9 would be fulfilled soon

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China:

The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.

Additional resources on efforts to reach the ends of the earth:

joshuaproject.net

peoplegroups.org

finishingthetask.com

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CIRCLE TWO: ISRAEL

The Gospel is being preached to the ends of the earth (the widest circle). As this has happened, biblical prophecies regarding the next circle, Israel, seem to have been fulfilled in recent history. Despite most Jews rejecting their Messiah since His First Coming, the last century has seen tremendous and positive change in this ancient land in the midst of incredible challenges, hardships, and atrocities.

For further understanding

- **Palestine:** There are historical references to this name going back before Christ. In the second century, however, the Romans quashed a Jewish revolt and renamed the area of Judea, *Palaestina*. Many believe this was an attempt to separate the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.
- **Balfour Declaration:** On November 2, 1917, during World War I, a letter was sent from Arthur James Balfour, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, to Walter Rothschild, a leader in the Jewish community in Britain. It was to be shared with the Zionist Federation (see excerpt next page).
- **Partition Plan:** After the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, or the Partition Plan for Palestine, on November 29, 1947. It ended the British Mandate over the land and tried to implement separate states for Palestinians and Jews.
- **Israel's Independence:** The Jewish people in Palestine declared independence on May 14, 1948, the day before the British Mandate expired (see excerpt next page). This declaration closed with the leaders declaring that they were "placing [their] trust in the 'Rock of Israel.'" This is a reference to Psalm 19:14, where God is called "my Rock and my Redeemer." The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 then broke out after months of tension and hostilities. An armistice was reached in 1949.



The circle narrows



Read Ezekiel 37:1–14. This passage clearly identifies Israel as the dry bones that come to life (verse 11). The Jewish people are restored to their land once again. The chapter goes on to prophesy that Israel will one day be united once and for all—something that has not been a reality since the kingdom split in two after King Solomon.

- Why do you think God often uses imagery when He communicates through the Bible?
- Do you think there is spiritual significance behind this journey of the Jewish people to statehood? Why or why not?
- If you answered yes, why do you think God waited so long, nearly 1,900 years, to re-establish Israel as a nation?
- If God loves the whole world, what do you think He wants for the Palestinian people?



Read Matthew 24:32–35. This passage uses the imagery of a fig tree to represent Israel. In addition to several other verses throughout the Bible, passages that support this metaphor include Jeremiah 24:1–10 and Mark 11:12–25.

- Why do you think the Lord uses this as one of the trees from nature to describe Israel?
- How might the fig tree (or any plant, for that matter) mirror spiritual health (Matthew 7:16–19)?

What about you?

Whether you believe Israel becoming a nation again is important or not, we can agree that God desires restoration. Just as He restored the Jewish people to their land, He wishes to restore you in areas of brokenness and separation.

- Is there an area of your life where you have a testimony of restoration taking place?
- Is there an area of your life where restoration needs to take place?
- Have you ever prayed for the Jewish people or Israel? Why or why not?
- What can you do to help spread the Gospel to those living in America (beyond your city and state)?

Things to pray for

- Jews still returning from the ends of the earth to Israel
- A spiritual harvest among the Jews, Palestinians, and other people groups in Israel
- Your personal role in God's master plan for America

Excerpt from the Balfour Declaration:

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, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

Excerpt from the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel:

Accordingly we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the state of Israel.

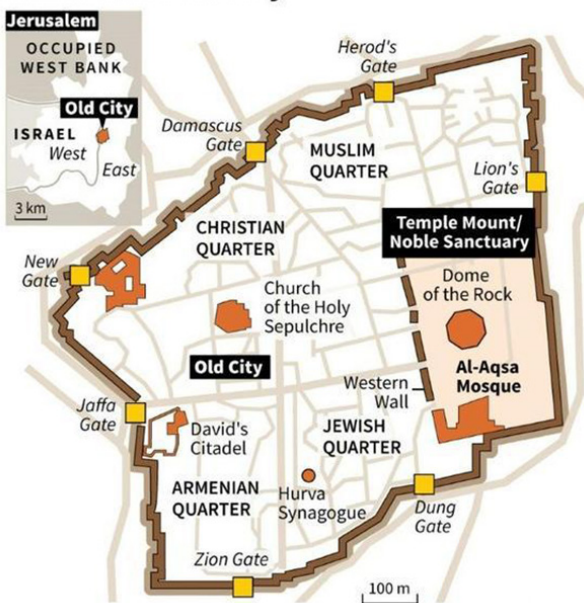
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CIRCLE THREE: JERUSALEM

And so the next circle gets smaller still. Twenty years after its independence and surrounded by many who oppose its very existence, Israel experiences another miracle. Jerusalem is recaptured by the Israeli Defense Forces after thousands of years of foreign rule. This ancient city is mentioned throughout Scripture, so let's learn more about it.

Jerusalem Old City



For further understanding

Jerusalem is called other names like Zion, the City of David, God's city, and His holy mountain:

- *David captured the fortress of Zion—which is the City of David.* (2 Samuel 5:7)
- *... bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from Zion, the City of David.* (1 Kings 8:1)
- *"I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain."* (Psalm 2:6)
- *"Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy. . ."* (Joel 3:17)
- *Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.* (Psalm 48:1)
- *This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."* (Zechariah 8:3)

The Six-Day War: This conflict was fought June 5–10, 1967, between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

Israel defeated the opposing military forces and recaptured Jerusalem (see *quote next page*). A ceasefire was reached at the end of the six days, but Israel would go to war yet again six years later in the Yom Kippur War.

The third circle is a city

We'll look more at the specific holy mountain from the verses above in the next and final session. King David made Jerusalem the capital more than 3,000 years ago, but it has endured all manner of trouble in the millen-

nia since. For today, read Zechariah 12:1–9 and Revelation 21:1–4.

- Why was Jerusalem so important in the past, as recorded in the Bible? (Psalm 132:13)
- Why do you think Jerusalem might be important in the present? In the future? (Luke 21:24)
- What are some characteristics of the New Jerusalem mentioned in Revelation 21?

What about you?

Whether you believe Jerusalem is crucial or not, the Lord loves the people of this city just as He loves those in your city.

- Have you ever prayed for Jerusalem? (Psalm 122:6) Why or why not?
- Just as modern-day Jerusalem is harshly divided, your city is too. What can you do for the Lord in your Jerusalem, the place you live now?
- Paul said we are looking for the city that is to come (Hebrews 13:14). What do you think he means?

Things to pray for

- The peace of Jerusalem
- The peace of your hometown and salvation of those in your city
- God's role for you in your place of residence

Commander Motta Gur in 1967 to the soldiers in his brigade:

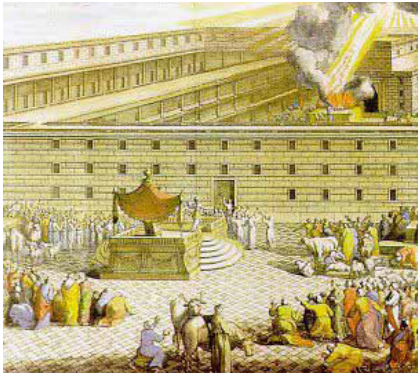
Endless words of longing have expressed the deep yearning for Jerusalem that beats within the Jewish heart . . . You have been given the great privilege of completing the circle, of returning to the nation its capital and its holy center . . . Jerusalem is yours forever.

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CIRCLE FOUR: THE TEMPLE MOUNT

The Gospel is being proclaimed to the ends of the earth as never before. Israel became a nation again after nearly 1,900 years. Jerusalem was reclaimed 20 years later. The Temple Mount was also reclaimed during the retaking of the city, but it was relinquished to maintain peace. To this day, Jews are not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. It is the last piece of real estate, the final circle. You have a final circle too.



For further understanding

Timeline of the Temple Mount (some dates are approximate):

- 1000 BC King David establishes an altar to God (2 Samuel 24:18–25)
- 960 BC The First Temple is constructed by his son, King Solomon (1 Kings 6)
- 586 BC The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, destroys the First Temple (Jeremiah 52)
- 516 BC Zerubbabel, governor of Judah under Persian rule, builds the Second Temple after the Babylonian exile (Haggai 1; Ezra 5)
- 19 BC King Herod (appointed by the Romans) restores and expands the Second Temple
- AD 30 Jesus warns that the Second Temple will be destroyed (Matthew 24:1–2)
- AD 70 The Second Temple is destroyed by Titus, son of the Roman emperor
- AD 691 The Dome of Rock is constructed by Muslims on the Temple Mount
- AD 1967 Israel reclaims the Temple Mount, but cedes control to Jordan
- AD ??? Israel gains control of the Temple Mount, builds the Third Temple*

* There are different convictions among believers as to the actual site of the previous temples in Jerusalem and whether a Third Temple even needs to be built. These differences don't need to divide us, nor detract from the purpose of this study.

The final circle

The Muslim world would be up in arms should Israel try to reclaim the Mount and/or attempt to build another temple. Yet, somehow it seems that the Jewish people will hold this central piece of real estate in Jerusalem once more.

Read Revelation 11:1–2. The Apostle John wrote this a few decades after the Second Temple was destroyed.

- How might this passage be fulfilled literally one day?
- Some view this as figurative. How might it be fulfilled figuratively or spiritually?
- When the Lord returns to establish His kingdom forever in the New Jerusalem, a temple will not be needed (Revelation 21:22). Why is this true?

What about you?

Which viewpoint about the Third Temple turns out to be correct is not crucial to this study. God will reveal the truth in His time and in His way. Our aim is not to get caught up in these differences, but to look at the temple of our heart. We are each the final circle. So, it would be good for us to end this final session with another practical and personal application that we can all agree on.

Read Ephesians 2:19–22 and I Corinthians 6:19.

- What are the two different comparisons to the temple made in these verses?
- How can you specifically become a proper temple for the Lord, both personally and as part of the worldwide church?

Things to pray for

- That you would honor God with your body as His temple
- That the worldwide Body of Christ would be united, instead of divided, by denomination and differences of opinion and practice over nonessential matters
- The Lord returning soon to establish His kingdom forever

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CONCLUSION

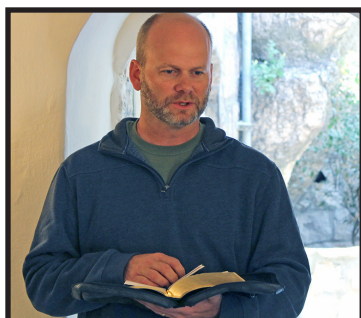
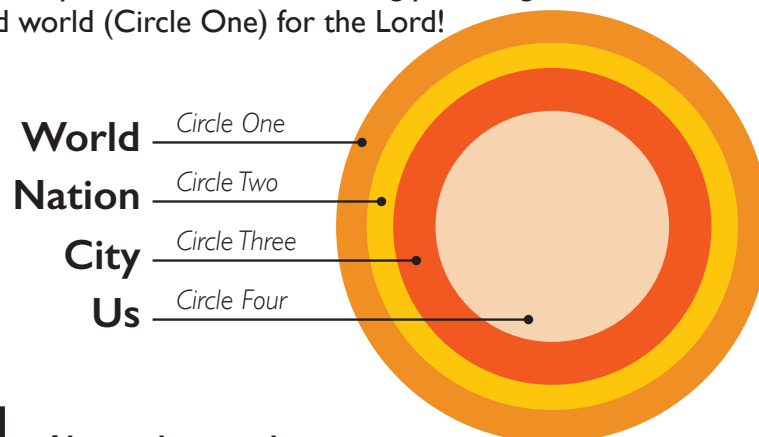
“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.”

Acts 17:26–27

The Bible was clear—Jesus declared it—that the Gospel is to go to the ends of the earth. Whether or not you believe in the prophetic significance of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount, we can all agree that God cares for this nation and city just as He does for America and your city.

He loves the Jews, Palestinians, Americans, and every other people group on earth. He loves the whole world so much that He gave His Son as a sacrifice so that we might be saved. That is cause to celebrate—and to live a life of purpose and meaning for God’s glory.

May you (Circle Four) dedicate yourself afresh to reaching your neighborhood and city (Circle Three), state and nation (Circle Two), and world (Circle One) for the Lord!



About the teacher

Joseph Williams serves as CEO of Feed the Hunger, an evangelical mission organization based in North Carolina. He is ordained and has been in full-time ministry for well over 20 years, traveling for the sake of the Gospel to nearly 40 countries. He has written numerous books and devotionals for the sole purpose of helping followers of Christ grow in their walk with the Lord. All available materials are free upon request.