

THE FOUR CIRCLES

A Spiritual Journey from the
Holy Land

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

- **Palistine:** There are historical references to this name going back before Christ.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.