

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT-PART 2
ZECHARIAH 9:5-9

Introduction

We can only understand what is happening in Israel's conflicts today with its surrounding neighbors as we look at and consider the Biblical and spiritual background of these conflicts.

The Bible is the Word of God! The Word of God records certain aspects of history that we must look at if we are to understand present day events!

In order to be able to explain the conflict between the Israelis and the so-called Palestinians, we must go right back to the origin of the Jews and their enemies.

THE PHILISTINES IN PROPHECY!

We said that although the **Philistines** no longer exist in their original form, their territories have been partly preserved, **their hatreds for Israel have been passed down** and **spiritually, their lines continue to the endtimes**. There are many prophetic statements about nations that have disappeared which will be fulfilled in the endtimes.

The Bible does not identify them with their current names, but with the names they were known as then.

These are mostly nations today whose people have become Islamic and whose enmity and hatred towards Israel and Judaism have remained and even intensified to the present day.

So, these geographical areas are named in endtime prophecies and play an important part in the consummation of endtime events.

We saw how the **Palestinians** are the spiritual continuation of the **Philistines** of Biblical times. There are many prophecies that predict judgment upon the Philistines.

In prophecy they appear on the scene again right up to the endtimes.

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It is not by coincidence that the Hebrew word for "*Philistine*" is identical with the word "*Palestinian*." The name "**Philistine**" comes from the **Hebrew** word **Philistia**, and the **Greek** rendering of the name, **palaistinei**, gives us the modern name "**Palestine**."

Of course we know that the devil is behind the hatred. And the hatred will cease only when he is bound during the Millennial Reign of Christ! (**Revelation 20:1-3**)

The terrorism carried out by **Palestinian** organizations will be judged and ended by God.

HOW THE PHILISTINES PARALLEL WITH ISRAEL.

In comparing their history, they seem to have a devilish parallel to Israel. The devil always attempts to counterfeit and imitate the true God by creating a similar, yet false, alternative to the truth.

So it is not surprising to discover that the Philistines have certain similarities with the Israelites:

- They came to Egypt just like the Israelites.
- They left Egypt just like the Israelites.
- They came to the land of Canaan just like the Israelites.

IV. CONSIDER THE GREAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PHILISTINES AND ISRAEL. (Exodus 13:17-18)

There is a great difference between **Israel's exodus** from **Egypt** and entrance into the **Promised Land**, and the **Philistines' exodus** from **Egypt** and entrance into **Canaan**, which we must not overlook.

Here we see that God didn't lead the **Israelites** into the **Promised Land** by the easiest route. Instead, He led His people from the Nile delta down through the **Red Sea**, through the **Sinai desert** and finally through **the Jordan River** and into the **Promised Land**.

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The **Jordan** is the "*river of death*" that flows into the **Dead Sea**. **It is a picture of the Cross of Christ, His death, His resurrection and the new birth a person experiences through a conversion to Him!** Here we find forgiveness, redemption and liberation to enter into the Promised Land: Crucified with Christ and risen to eternal life with God the Father! We can only reach this heavenly goal through Jesus!

God wanted the **Israelites** to burn all the bridges to their old lives in **Egypt**; therefore, He led them through the **Red Sea**. **This is a symbol of baptism into Christ's death for us**. The **Egyptian** army that pursued **Israel** drowned in the sea. **This symbolizes that the Lord conquered Satan and the powers of darkness!**

To "*pass through*" the **Jordan River** means **to go through the strait gate on the narrow way, not the wide, comfortable way around the Jordan**.

The **Philistines** didn't take this path through the **Jordan**; they wandered alongside the **Mediterranean** to the **Gaza Strip**. Plus, they have no claim to the **Promised Land**! God gave it to Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob (or Israel).

If we apply this to Christianity, this means that born-again Christians, who make up the true Church, have passed through the Jordan. They have been converted to Jesus Christ and have been baptized or identified with Him!
i.e. They have died with Him and have been raised with him!

On the other hand, nominal Christians merely appropriate a "*Christian heritage*" for themselves instead of going through the Cross of Christ. They don't believe there is a need for conversion.

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As far as they are concerned, it is sufficient to wear a Christian "*cloak*." However, this cloak doesn't give them the right to the Promised Land, and so they will ultimately be cast out.

We find this described in **Matthew 22:11-13**, "*And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

Just as the Philistines (the Palestinians) contest Israel's right to the land and cause much trouble for them, nominal Christianity creates grave problems for true Christianity.

V. CONSIDER THE JUDGMENT UPON THE PHILISTINES.

We have read that the Philistines will be judged in the last days. This judgment seems to be approaching in the form of a war. How long will God look at the activities carried out by the Palestinian terror groups?

We are told in Scripture what will happen in the future, but we are not told exactly when it will take place:

1. The king shall perish from Gaza. (Zechariah 9:5).
2. The land of the Philistines will be given to the Jews, not vice versa as we read in *Zephaniah 2:5-7*—"Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! ...the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they

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lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity"

Will a devastating war take place between the Jews and the Palestinians, from which Israel will emerge as victor?

Will a peace agreement be achieved? It is interesting to note that many Arabs and Palestinians live in Judaea. Will these Judean territories belong to the Jews again? Yes they will!

What could this war be like? **Zechariah 12:2** may be a reference: *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem."*

If Jerusalem was attacked by the Arab nations around her, then war against Israel could also come from Judaea by the hands of the Arabs and Palestinians living there. Then a simultaneous war against an enemy from without and from within would take place.

Zechariah 14:14 says: *"And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem..."*

When we get to **Zechariah 12** we will see more details about this.

The Philistines' enmity against Israel will be punished: *Ezekiel 25:15-16—"Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast"*

Vengeance, spite and hatred for Israel are what drive the Islamic fundamentalists and Palestinian terror organizations!

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Haven't we seen this to be the case since the founding of the PLO by Yasser Arafat in 1964? Terrorism against Israel and international terrorism have been increasing since the Six-Day War in 1967.

How many PLO sponsored terrorist attacks have there been against Israel since then? How many civilians have been brutally murdered? How many suicide attacks have been carried out in complete disregard for human life? Even many of their own children perish because of their blind hatred for Israel!

Luke 21:11—"And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." (Strongs: "A frightening thing")

Haven't these words, penned 2,000 years ago, become extremely relevant in light of the September 11, 2001 attacks?

Zechariah 9:7 could also refer to this—"And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth."

Islamic doctrine says the only way to which you can guarantee yourself to get to heaven is by being a martyr— i.e. if you blow yourself up in pieces to advance Allah's purposes. Isn't that a form of idolatry to the false god Allah?

Hamas terrorist, Jamal Salim, who was killed by the Jews, persuaded hundreds of young Palestinians to blow themselves up in the name of Allah to liberate Palestine during the last months of his life. *"We must sow death in every corner of Israel,"* he said.

VI. CONSIDER THE REMNANT OF THE PHILISTINES THAT WILL BE SAVED.

God will solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the return of Jesus Christ!

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Following the judgment, this will result in unimaginable blessing impossible for human beings to bring about themselves.

***Zechariah 9:7** says this about the Philistines, "...But he that remaineth (of the Philistines), even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite."*

A couple of the Jebusites were already integrated in Israel in those days. **Araunah the Jebusite** was a man who bowed down before **King David** and wanted to give him his possessions so that **David** could use them as a sacrifice to God.

Arauna called David, "*My lord the king,*" in **2nd Samuel 24:18-25**. We read that even the Philistines (Pelethites) belonged to David's bodyguards (2nd Samuel 15:18 and 20:7).

And when Solomon was made king, the Philistines accompanied him together with Zadok the priest, and prophets Nathan and Benaiah to anoint him (1st Kings 1:38-40).

These are all wonderful examples of the future under the rule of Israel's great King, Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

So, the Jebusites and Philistines will see that the God of Israel is the one true God, "*...and Ekron as a Jebusite.*" Ekron was a Philistine city and means "*rooting up.*" They will be uprooted from out of the ground of hatred and will be planted in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of His dear Son.

A note in the Bible by a man named Fritz Laubach says:
"Ekron as a Jebusite in that which is said here of the inhabitants of a Philistine city is a wonderful possibility for all who have fought against God's people. Those who were far from God will be converted to Him through judgment and grace, and will receive

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citizenship among God's people. A hint at what God plans for the completion of the world is that the nations will live in the light of this city and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into her" (Revelation 21:24).

***Zechariah 2:11** makes it clear that many other nations will be added: "And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts bath sent me unto thee."*

***Ezekiel 25:17** concerning the Philistines says: "And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them."*

And ***Psalms 87:4** says, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there."*

In the latter days, a remnant of the Philistines will come to know the Lord, as we see from the Scriptures

The Philistines will come to believe on Jesus the Messiah and will be led into the Messianic kingdom via the Cross: "*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3).

This is an earnest warning to every individual, even if you call yourself a Christian. The Lord will lead NO ONE who avoids the Cross into His Kingdom. Only through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will we enter into the kingdom of heaven!

This means turning to Him—making a clear decision to trust Him and follow Him!