

THEME: The Middle East, Israel, and Jerusalem – Prophetic History to the Present Day

LOOKING BACK

- What was the most important thing you did or heard from the last session?

CONNECT The Center of the World

Resources

Bibles

1st Icebreaker Activity - Biblical Trivia

Things to Prepare:

Two large signs: YES and NO

20 papers with the following biblical events written on them:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Abraham took his son to Mount Moriah. | 11. Jesus healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda. |
| 2. David established a capital city for his kingdom. | 12. Jesus healed a blind man at the Pool of Siloam. |
| 3. The Tabernacle of David was established. | 13. Jesus made a triumphal entry riding on a donkey. |
| 4. King Solomon built the First Temple. | 14. Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples. |
| 5. King Hezekiah built city walls and an underground water tunnel. | 15. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. |
| 6. The Babylonians destroyed the First Temple and the city. | 16. Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha. |
| 7. Zerubbabel built the Second Temple. | 17. Jesus was buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. |
| 8. King Herod renovated the Second Temple. | 18. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. |
| 9. Jesus called it the City of the Great King. | 19. The Romans destroyed the Second Temple. |
| 10. Jesus said the Temple would be a house of prayer for all nations. | 20. The Romans destroyed the city and scattered the Jews to all the nations. |

Activity – Which Events Are Linked to Jerusalem?

Work together to place the twenty biblical events under one of two categories: YES (linked with Jerusalem) or NO (not linked with Jerusalem).

Discuss

- We are going to go over the answers now. Does anyone want to make any final adjustments before we get to the answers?
- Your answers are correct if you placed them in the YES category. ALL of these biblical events are connected to Jerusalem! Hands up if you are surprised by this. Hands up, but no comments.
- What does this tell us about Jerusalem? Jerusalem is a very significant city in the Bible.
- Jerusalem is a very important city to God, in the Bible, and now in our day. Israel is also very important to God. We're going to have a second Icebreaker Activity today!

2nd Icebreaker Activity - Four Corners

Activity: Have everyone gather in the middle of the room to begin and then run to the corner they think is the best answer to this question: **Who is Israel?**

Corner 1: Israel is a man.

Corner 2: Israel is a family.

Corner 3: Israel is a nation.

Corner 4: Israel is a land.

- **ANSWER:** All are correct! Israel is a man (God changed his name from Jacob), a family (Jacob's family), a nation (all of Jacob's descendants), and a land (the land given by God to Jacob's descendants).

Discuss

- Did you know that the land of Israel was given to Abraham, Isaac, and his descendants to have forever? Israel was given by God in an unbreakable promise called The Abrahamic Covenant.
- What are Abraham's descendants called in the Bible and the modern day? The Israelites – we now call them the Jews.
- We will look at some important biblical prophecies today about the land of Israel. Many have been unfolding in our generation thousands of years after they were prophesied!

TRUTH TO KNOW

Faith Focus: Seeing God's Hand

Introduction

We want to help you know the Truth and will do our best to tell you what is true, but you don't just need to take our word. You need to read it in the Bible for yourself. So we will open the Bible and read the Truth each time we meet. This week's "Truth to Know" is found in **Ezekiel 36**.

Did you know the Bible has some very specific prophecies about the land of Israel? Some of these are being fulfilled now!

Background to This Bible Passage

The book of Ezekiel was written by a prophet with that same name. The people of Israel had not been living according to God's ways, so God would have to discipline them. Ezekiel wrote to the people to warn them of coming judgment if they didn't change their ways. He also wrote about future blessings that would come to God's people one day. These were revealed specifically in chapter 36, where we will be reading from today.

The Unfolding Story - Your Interactive Teaching

Read **Ezekiel 36:1; 8-11; 34-35**.

In **Ezekiel 36:1**, God tells the prophet Ezekiel to speak to the mountains of Israel. God had Ezekiel say to the land that it would one day be restored and that He would bring the people of Israel back to the land. Why would God need to bring them back to the land? You may recall from our first Icebreaker Activity that the Romans destroyed the Second Temple and the city of Jerusalem, and they scattered the Jewish people to all the nations of the earth.

This happened in 70 AD. But, hundreds of years earlier, before the scattering even happened, the prophet Ezekiel was already saying they would be brought back. Isn't that amazing!?

Look at this map (MAP #1: from the time of Jesus, around AD 30). The areas colored in blue represent the Jewish population in the land. At this time, the land was well cultivated, and the cities were not desolate. They were populated with Jews under Roman occupation.

After the Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed in 70 AD, the Jews were forced out of the land of Israel. By 130 AD, they were banned from even entering Jerusalem. Look at this map (MAP #2: from the time of 135 AD) and see that there are hardly any Jews remaining there. There is no longer any blue on this map - the Jewish people were all but gone (only a few remained in the land). The Roman Emperor Hadrian renamed the land Syria-Palestina (which included surrounding areas).

For nearly 2,000 years, the map stayed like this (though different empires ruled over it), with no blue, because there were virtually no Jews living in the land that was once called Israel. Eventually, in the 1850s, a tiny number of Jews started coming back to the land. They believed the prophecies of Ezekiel and other prophets in the Old Testament that said one day, God would gather His people, the people of Israel, and bring them back to their land. But how could this come true? Jews were living all over the earth, and now there were other people groups living in the land that was once called Israel.

Fast forward to 1948, and we discover that a miracle happened! The Jewish people were given their land back so that they could live there once again! The United Nations decided that Israel could be a nation again and that they could come back and live in their land. Israel had been reborn as a modern nation! The Jews were pleased that they could go back to their ancient ancestral homeland that had been given to them by God. Other people, though, were not happy that the Jewish people were back. One day after Israel was reborn, the Jewish people were attacked by all the surrounding nations. After more than a year of defending their nation, a peace agreement was reached, and many more Jewish people began to come back and settle there. God was gathering His people back to restore the land, precisely as He had promised in **Ezekiel 36**.

Look at this map (MAP #3: Israel in 1948 after the State of Israel was reborn) and see that many parts are now Jewish again. Unfortunately, the city of Jerusalem was not part of that area, but the Jewish people were still delighted to be back in their land after nearly 2,000 years away.

Just a few years later, in 1967, there was another attack by several neighboring nations, and Israel had to defend herself once again. In just six days (this is called the Six Day War), God intervened, and miraculously, Israel won back more land than before the war – they got all the land of that region. Most importantly to the Jews, Jerusalem was now part of Israel once again. Recall from the first Icebreaker Activity how important the city of Jerusalem is to the Jewish people. They consider it to be their eternal capital.

Look at this map (MAP #4: Israel in 1967 after the Six Day War) and see that all parts of Israel are blue and purple! Isn't it incredible that Israel could regain all her land in a war of self-defense, a surprise attack by all her neighbors, and in only six days? There is no way that this could happen naturally. This was God's hand upon this land and upon His people there. God fulfilled His prophecy from Ezekiel 36 to restore the land and gather His people back.

You might be wondering what happened next. After the Six Day War, Israel was persuaded to give land away in exchange for peace with her neighbors – today, it looks more like MAP #3. Unfortunately, peace never happened. Israel desperately wants peace and a chance to live securely in her land, but not everyone in the area wants peace. Some people don't want to share the land with Israel, and they don't

want Jewish people to even be in the land. As a result, since 1967, there have been many conflicts that continue to this day.

How do you think God feels about His people being back in the land again? (*He is happy because this is part of His plan. He was the one who gathered them back to the land. He has a purpose for this.*) In our next session, we will discuss God's purposes for bringing His people back to Israel and restoring the land.

Activity Suggestion - A Very Long String

Aim: To create a visual of what God did with His land and people over 2,000 years of history.

Things to Prepare: (Note: Keep these materials for the review activity in Session 12.)

- A very long string or ribbon. It should be long enough to reach from one room to another if possible.
- Five clips
- Five small papers with dates: 30 AD; 135 AD; 1948; 1967; current year
- Four maps of Israel from different periods (30 AD, 135 AD, 1948, 1967), color-coded as detailed in the lesson.

Activity - Seeing the Big Picture

Explain that the string represents the time from Jesus to the present day. Get the group to work together and decide where to place the dates on the string. Then, talk together about what happened at each of the four dates listed up to the current time (*Time of Jesus; Jews Scattered; Israel Reborn as a Nation; Israel Wins Back All the Land*). Use the long string to demonstrate just how long the Jewish people were away from their land before being regathered. If helpful, place the maps under each relevant part of the string to connect the event with what the land looked like at that time. Notice how close to the current year 1948 and 1967 are. This is very recent history.

Discuss

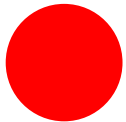
- What does this activity help to show about the land of Israel? It shows how the land was left without the Jewish people for nearly 2,000 years. Yes, it is blue at first, but then there is no blue for a very long time. And then, suddenly, there was blue again. It shows how God scattered then regathered His people, just like He had promised.
- What else do we see from this activity? The regathering has happened relatively recently, in the last generation. In our day, we get to witness a miracle that people have wanted to see for centuries.
- Have you ever heard of a group of people who were scattered from their land, sent to every other nation of the earth, and then gathered back again to that same land, where other people are now living, after nearly 2,000 years? Besides Israel, there is no other people group. It is impossible for a group of people to do this on their own, but it is not impossible for God. He used the United Nations international agreement to make it happen.
- The reestablishment of Israel and Jerusalem is a long-awaited fulfillment of prophecy accomplished by God's hand for His sovereign purposes. In our next session, we will find out why God did this.

READY TO GO

Thinking about how this affects our lives and our response to the signs we see.

Think about what you will do to respond to God's prophetic fulfillment in restoring the land of Israel in our generation.

TIME FOR ACTION



1. **"STOP & THINK" Action Point**

Take two minutes to think about your own life. If God was faithful to keep His promises to the land and people of Israel, He will be faithful to you. Are there areas of your life that you want to entrust more fully into God's hands? If so, say a prayer now and ask Him.



2. **"PAUSE TO PRAY" Action Point**

Have a conversation with God about today's lesson. Ask Him why the land of Israel is so important to Him, especially now in our generation.



3. **"GO & DO" Action Point**

Whatever the Lord showed you as you prayed, go and share with one or two others and compare what you heard with what they are understanding from God.

SPRINGBOARD

This session is linked, and we recommend that you use the following connected session next:

- The Middle East, Israel, and Jerusalem: Prophecies to Be Fulfilled

DEEPER STUDY

For those who would like to study further the themes raised in this session.

For Study

1. Look into the following scripture passages: **Zechariah 10:8-10; Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 31:1-14**. How do these passages connect to today's lesson?
2. Look carefully at **Zechariah 2:8**. Some Bible translations say "pupil" instead of apple. What does this convey about God's heart for Israel? How does this connect to today's lesson?

For Memorizing

1. **Jeremiah 31:10** (NASB): "Hear the word of the Lord, you nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and He will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.'"
2. **Isaiah 66:8** (NASB): "Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be given birth all at once? As soon as Zion was in labor, she also delivered her sons."

For Observation

1. Look through this booklet, Israel Environment: Turning Challenges into Opportunities, and see how Israel is being restored. In what ways has God's prophecy, through Ezekiel, come to pass?
(https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/46fc49_f19dfcdd75d0472d935c89a9b2e2f9eb.pdf)

For Action - Middle East Research

1. Study this leaflet, Evolution of the Middle East, to investigate more deeply what happened to Israel between World War I and the 1947 UN Partition Proposal. (https://46fc49e4-0bd9-4e5a-bf63-78204b4a07c9.usrfiles.com/ugd/46fc49_682a39860880446e9c7df9bb4dc9bfba.pdf) Write a mini-report on your findings.
 - a. What was the 1947 Partition Plan proposing, and who accepted this proposal?
 - b. Compare the 1967 map to the map for today. Which areas did Israel either give up or withdraw from to try and achieve peace?
 - c. Why do you think a security zone is needed between Israel and Lebanon and a UN disengagement zone between Israel and Syria?
 - d. To delve even deeper (into a complex situation), you may wish to involve your parent(s) and see if they can briefly summarize the current situation in the West Bank. You may want to consult this booklet, West Bank: Judea and Samaria (https://121a6a94-37d0-4344-8957-8394c526443e.filesusr.com/ugd/46fc49_a0ee5fea377a41328d85394ea4794675.pdf).

Before the Next IN:Tribe

1. Spend some time looking through this booklet, Israel Timeline: A Journey Over 3000 Years, and write down five interesting facts you learned and three questions you now have. Bring these to share with others at the next IN:Tribe meeting. (https://121a6a94-37d0-4344-8957-8394c526443e.filesusr.com/ugd/46fc49_cda9a0ee701944f69a4d5df5b95e1b2c.pdf)

