

Jerusalem, the Beloved City
(pre-millennial)
by
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We often hear about Jerusalem, don't we? But what is Jerusalem?

Well, Jerusalem is a city. But it's a very special city! Oh?? How is Jerusalem special? Well, let's talk about that now, all right?

Okay then. To start with, Jerusalem is the city -- on which the Lord God said that He had put His name forever!

Jerusalem! It's the city that has been dear to the hearts of Jews for 3,000 years! Why, in Psalm 137, the author said that if he were to forget Jerusalem, why, it's like he'd rather have his right hand forget how to work!

Jerusalem! The beloved city!

Yes, but just what is Jerusalem? Why is Jerusalem so important? Why does God especially love Jerusalem? And where can we find out more about Jerusalem?

Why, as I just said, Jerusalem is a city, isn't it? Yes, it's a city, the capital city of the land of Israel. In fact, we hear about Jerusalem in the news now-a-days, don't we?

But we also hear about the city of Jerusalem in the Bible -- from the beginning of the Bible to the end of it! From Genesis to Revelation!

What? Genesis to Revelation? Where in Genesis does it say anything about Jerusalem? Well, it doesn't say much about Jerusalem in Genesis, but it is mentioned. Do you remember Melchizedek? I've told you about him before, haven't I? Well, Melchizedek was the king of Salem -- which 1000 years later was called -- Jeru-salem, Jerusalem! (Remember, in those days often cities had kings.) And Melchizedek was not only the king of what would later be called Jerusalem, but he was also a priest of God, wasn't he? And Melchizedek blessed Abraham after Abraham had chased Chedorleomar who had captured Lot. Do you remember that exciting true story?

So, Jerusalem is a very old city, isn't it? Yes, it was a city way back in the time of Abraham -- 4,000 years ago! In fact, Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the whole world!

By the way, the word "Salem", the name of the city when Melchizedek was its king,

translates into the word "Peace" in English. I don't know what the first part, "Jeru-", means. But that is still calling Jerusalem the "City of Peace", isn't it?

We don't hear anything more in the Bible about Jerusalem for several hundred years after Abraham. And then we hear about Jerusalem in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy when the children of Israel are in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. (Now we call the children of Israel "Jews", don't we?)

Now, we don't actually find the word "Jerusalem" in Exodus through Deuteronomy, but Jerusalem is referred to (though not by name) quite a few times in those 4 books. How? Well, to start with, it is referred to as the city where the Lord would put His name -- forever! Imagine that! A city where God put His name! Jerusalem is the only city in the world that God says that about it! Also, in those books of the Bible, Jerusalem is referred to as the place where the Jews were later to go 3 times a year to celebrate special times, offer sacrifices to the Lord, and worship Him.

After that, Jerusalem is mentioned lots and lots of times in many of the books of the Bible. The first place in the Bible where the actual word "Jerusalem" is found is in the very next book after Deuteronomy, in the book of Joshua.

Let's see, now. The book of Joshua tells us that right after the children of Israel leave the wilderness and cross the Jordan River into the promised land of Canaan, that the Lord began having them take Canaan. Right? And there they conquered Jericho (where Rahab lived; remember the Lord had the walls of Jericho fall down?), they conquered Ai, and then the Gibeonites had tricked Joshua into making peace with them. And at that point the Amorite king of Jerusalem got other Amorite kings to help him try to fight Gibeon. (The Amorites were Canaanites, descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah through his son Ham. And the Canaanites all worshipped idols and did many other very wicked things.) But the Lord let Joshua rescue the Gibeonites from the King of Jerusalem and the other Amorite kings. And it was during that battle that Joshua asked the Lord to make the day longer so they could win against the wicked Amorites. Hey, wait a minute! Make the day longer?? Yes! The Lord had the sun stand still until Joshua and the children of Israel could win! That is the only time in the history of the whole world that this ever happened! A miracle!

And this happened as Joshua fought the king of Jerusalem. Yes, at that time, the Jebusites (who were Canaanites) owned Jerusalem. However, the children of Israel owned the land around Jerusalem. This went on all during the time of the Judges and the reign of King Saul, the first king of the Jews.

Then about 500 years after Joshua, in the book of I Chronicles in the Bible, it tells us

that David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites. And then David lived in Jerusalem and made Jerusalem the capital city of all of the land of Israel. And King David brought the Lord's ark of the covenant into the city of Jerusalem and put it in a special tent that he had made for it there in Jerusalem.

About 40 years after that in the book of II Chronicles in the Bible, it tells how David's son, King Solomon, built a big, beautiful temple for the Lord in the city of Jerusalem, and the ark of the covenant was put in this temple of the Lord. (Jerusalem was pretty much a city of peace for a while then, wasn't it?)

Yes, Jerusalem was the capital city of the land of Israel, and the temple of the Lord was there. And that is why Jerusalem was the city of God and why Jerusalem is so important. The Lord God had put His name in the city of Jerusalem, and that is where His temple was and where the people were to go and worship Him.

And 3 times a year all the men of Israel were to gather in Jerusalem to celebrate and have a happy time worshipping the Lord. Of course, often the whole family went along with them. They would go to Jerusalem in the early Spring for Passover; they would go to Jerusalem in the late Spring for the Feast of Weeks; and then they would go to Jerusalem in the Fall for the Feast of Tabernacles. (I've told you about those special, happy times before, haven't I?) Yes, the city of Jerusalem was very important then, wasn't it?

And this went on for about 500 more years. All the kings of Judah lived in Jerusalem. But -- the Jewish kings began worshipping idols, didn't they? And many of the Jews themselves began worshipping idols. How sad! And how wicked and how foolish, too! After all, an idol is just something people make! Only the Lord God should be worshipped, right?! So finally the Lord let Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, come and conquer the Jews. And Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem. And Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the beautiful temple. (That is when the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel were taken to Babylon to live.)

Many of the books in the Old Testament part of the Bible that are written by the prophets talk about Jerusalem. Some of them were written before Jerusalem was destroyed, and they warn the Jews what will happen if they don't stop worshipping idols. And some of the books written by the prophets are written after Jerusalem is destroyed, and these encourage the Jews, telling them that the Lord hasn't forgotten them and telling about what will happen in the future.

Well, after Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel, the city of Jerusalem and the Lord's temple lay in ruins for years. Jerusalem doesn't sound very much like a city of peace then, does it? And Jerusalem belonged to the Babylonian empire then. But way off in Babylon,

the Jews became sorry that they had been so wicked, and they turned back to the Lord God, the only real God. And they never worshipped idols again. And there in Babylon they thought about Jerusalem, their beloved city, God's special city.

And that's when the 137th Psalm was written. It starts out talking about Zion, which is the place inside the city of Jerusalem where the temple had been. The Psalm says, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion." And then the Psalm goes on, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember Jerusalem and if I don't like Jerusalem more than my biggest joy." Yes, the city of Jerusalem with the temple was very precious to the Jews, wasn't it?

Well, after a while the Persian empire conquered the Babylonians, so then the Persians owned Jerusalem. And the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem were still in ruins. But the Lord had prophesied that the Jews would be able to go back to Judah in the land of Israel and rebuild Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. So, of course, that was going to happen, wasn't it? After all, anything the Lord God says will happen always does happen, doesn't it?! Yes, the Lord always keeps His promises, doesn't He? We can trust Him to do that. But let's go on about the city of Jerusalem.

So, then in the Old Testament part of the Bible in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, it tells when the Jews were finally allowed to go back to Judah, and there they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, and they rebuilt the temple. It was just a rather small temple, but once again they could go to the beloved city of Jerusalem and worship the Lord there at His temple. This made them very happy. The Persians still owned the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, but the Jews could live there. And they worshipped the Lord there at His temple in the beloved city of Jerusalem.

Well, various things happened to the city of Jerusalem after they rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. The Greeks conquered the Persians, and then the Greeks owned the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. But the Jews could still live there, and they worshipped the Lord at His temple there in the beloved city of Jerusalem.

Then the Romans conquered the Greeks. The Roman Emperor (Caesar) owned many lands, including Israel and the city of Jerusalem. But the Jews could still live there, and they worshipped the Lord there at His temple in the beloved city of Jerusalem.

Now, the Roman emperor Caesar owned so many different lands, that he had various men be kings under him. And who do you think became the king in Israel and had his throne in Jerusalem? Why, it was King Herod! You've heard of Herod, haven't you?! Yes! And now we're getting up to the New Testament times, aren't we?!

Now, King Herod loved having big, beautiful buildings made. So Herod had the Lord's temple in Jerusalem made to be very big and very beautiful. He had it worked on for many years. And Herod had his throne in the city of Jerusalem.

Hmmmm, Let's see, now. Herod. Herod? Yes, this is the Herod who was the king when Jesus was born in Bethlehem! (We especially talk about this at Christmas time, don't we?) And Bethlehem is just a few miles away from the city of Jerusalem.

Yes, Jesus, the Son of God, came as a tiny human baby to earth, didn't He? (But He was still God, too.) Why did He come? So that He could make a way for us to be able to be with Him someday in heaven. But I'm getting ahead of the story! We were talking about the city of Jerusalem, weren't we?!

Okay, then. Now there was this magnificent temple to the Lord in Jerusalem, the temple that Herod had built, And it was to this temple in the city of Jerusalem that Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus, and the old man Simeon held the baby and blessed Him, and the old prophetess Anna prophesied about Him to Mary.

And 12 years later it was in the city of Jerusalem that Mary and Joseph looked for the boy Jesus for 3 days and finally found Him there in the temple talking with the teachers.

And this is the temple there in the city of Jerusalem where later Jesus and His disciples would go when He was here on earth. And Jesus preached about the kingdom of heaven in many places in the land of Israel, including in the city of Jerusalem.

And Jerusalem is the city where Jesus entered, riding on a donkey, on what we call Palm Sunday. And as He rode into Jerusalem, the people shouted, praising Him. Then in the book of Luke it says that as Jesus was getting near the city of Jerusalem, He began crying. Jesus knew that many of the people in the city of Jerusalem didn't believe in Him and wouldn't be able to go to heaven. And Jesus knew that soon He would be crucified there. And Jesus knew that a terrible time would be coming for the city of Jerusalem and the people who lived there. But Jesus wasn't crying for Himself. No. He was crying for the city of Jerusalem and its people. And as Jesus was crying, He said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Bad things are going to happen to you because you don't believe!" Jesus loved the city of Jerusalem, the city where God had put His name, the city where the temple of the Lord was, the city where people came to worship the Lord God. Jerusalem, the beloved city.

Then about 4 days after that, Jesus and His 12 disciples ate what we call the Last

Supper there inside of the city of Jerusalem.

But did the Jews believe in Jesus? Well, some did, but many of the Jewish leaders didn't. So the day after eating the Last Supper, Jesus, the Son of God, was put on a cross just outside of the city of Jerusalem. And while He was on the cross, the sun didn't shine for 3 hours. And when Jesus died, there was a great earthquake in and around the city of Jerusalem. And inside the Lord's temple in Jerusalem the veil, the big, thick curtain, the curtain that hid the ark of the Covenant, this curtain tore in half as the Lord Jesus died just outside of the city of Jerusalem.

And after He had died, Jesus, the Son of God, was buried in a cave just outside of the city of Jerusalem. And a big stone was rolled over to cover the door of the cave. That all sounds very sad, doesn't it?

But -- did Jesus stay dead? No!! Three days later on what we call Easter Sunday, there was another earthquake, and outside of the city of Jerusalem an angel rolled away the big stone that was over the door of the cave -- and it could be seen that the cave was empty! Jesus wasn't in there anymore!! He was alive!!! Hooray!! And that same day Jesus appeared to His disciples in a room inside of the city of Jerusalem! This proved that the Lord Jesus was alive and would be able to forgive our sins if we just trust in Him, didn't it?! Yes, Jesus made a way for us to go to heaven someday and be with Him. How wonderful!

But back to the city of Jerusalem. Is that all the Bible tells about this city? No. Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus took His disciples outside of Jerusalem. He told them to go back into the city of Jerusalem, and to wait there. He told them that there the Holy Spirit would give them special powers. And after Jesus finished talking, as the disciples watched, suddenly they could see Jesus go up into the sky until a cloud covered Him! Jesus went back to heaven as they watched!

So then the disciples went back into the city of Jerusalem and waited, just as Jesus had told them to do. And 10 days later, there in the city of Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came on Peter and the other disciples, and they were given the power to speak languages that they'd never known before! And a big crowd of people came, and the disciples told all of these people about the Lord Jesus and how He had died for our sins but was alive again. And that day about 3000 people believed in Jesus! They became what we call Christians.

And after that the apostles were still in the city of Jerusalem, and they all began teaching about Jesus and how to be saved from their sins and be able to go to heaven and be with the Lord God someday. And many people, both Jews and not-Jews believed on Jesus, trusted in Him, and were saved. Later they went all over the land telling people this good news about how to be saved. But it all started in the city of Jerusalem, didn't it?

Yes, Jerusalem was still a very important city. But -- about 40 years after Jesus went back to heaven, the Jews who didn't believe in Jesus rebelled against the Romans. And the Roman army came in and killed many of them. And the Roman army destroyed the Lord's temple in the city of Jerusalem. Only a part of the wall that had been around the temple was still standing. A while after that not very many of the Jews lived in the land of Israel or in the city of Jerusalem anymore. Jerusalem doesn't sound like a city of peace then, does it? But wait and see!

This went on for about 1,800 years. The land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem were still there (though there was no longer a temple to the Lord in Jerusalem). But Israel and Jerusalem were owned by people who were not Jews, and hardly any Jews lived in Jerusalem. But the Jews still thought about their beloved city of Jerusalem.

Then about 135 years ago (about the time my grandparents were teenagers) Jews began moving back to Israel. And then more and more Jews moved back. Finally, when I myself was a teenager, there again became a land of Israel that was owned by the Jews! And the Jews again owned part of the city of Jerusalem. But then 20 years later (only about 50 years ago) the Jews once again owned the whole city of Jerusalem! And still today the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem are owned by Jews.

But, sadly, still many Jews don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. (There are lots of missionaries who tell the Jews about Jesus, though.) And there still is no temple to the Lord God in the city of Jerusalem. Instead, where the Lord's temple used to be in Jerusalem, the Muslims have a big mosque (their kind of church).

But though there is no temple in the city of Jerusalem today, even now there still is in Jerusalem that same part of the broken wall from the wall that had been around the Lord's temple that Herod had built. This broken wall has been standing there inside of the beloved city of Jerusalem for almost 2000 years! The Jews call it the Wailing Wall. And Jews today will go to this broken wall in Jerusalem and pray to God.

But the Bible tells us that there will be a temple to the Lord in the city of Jerusalem again before the Lord Jesus comes back to earth. And when the Lord Jesus comes back to earth, He will come to just outside of the city of Jerusalem. And then He will enter His beloved city of Jerusalem, and He will set up His kingdom there!

Yes, the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, tells us that when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will set up His kingdom for 1000 years in the land of Israel, and Jesus will rule the whole world from the city of Jerusalem. And the Christians will be with Him.

The Bible doesn't say what will happen to the temple that will be in Jerusalem before the Lord Jesus comes back to earth. But after He comes back, a new, bigger and more beautiful temple will be built in Jerusalem. And all of the nations of the world (not just the Jews) will go to this temple in Jerusalem to worship the Lord. Jerusalem will be a city of peace again, won't it?

Then at the end of that 1000 years, the Lord will make the earth all new again, and there will be never again be sin or sickness or dying or any sadness! And there will be peace forever! And all Christians will be with the Lord God forever!

And God will send down from heaven the glorious New Jerusalem. And Christians will be able to go into the New Jerusalem whenever they want to! But there will not be a temple in the New Jerusalem. What?! No temple?! Why not?! Why no temple in the New Jerusalem?! Because the Lord God will have His throne right there in the New Jerusalem, so no temple will be needed! And the Lord God's throne will be in the New Jerusalem forever! Jerusalem will really be a city of peace then, won't it?! Forever!

The city of Jerusalem! The beloved city! The city of God!! The city where the Lord God said He would put His name forever! And finally the New Jerusalem where the Lord's throne will be forever! And then Jerusalem will truly be the City of Peace -- forever! Jerusalem! The city told about in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation! Jerusalem! The beloved city!

Yes, and then it will be for Jerusalem as a beautiful song says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, sing for the night is o'er. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna for ever more!"