

## Christ in Prophecy

### Israel 34: The Preservation of the Jews

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#### Opening

**Dr. Reagan:** The greatest miracle in history was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What would you say is the second greatest miracle? Well, the miracle I'm going to talk with you about today would certainly be a contender. Stay tuned.

#### Part 1

**Dr. Reagan:** Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy.

One of my spiritual mentors when I was in my 20's was a great man of God named Carl Ketcherside. I heard him in a question and answer session one time when he was asked, "What do you think is the greatest evidence that the Bible came from God?" His startling answer was: "The Yellow Pages of the phone book." And needless to say, we were all stunned by this response.

When the questioner followed-up by asking what he meant, Carl said, "Look. Look at the names of the banks, the names of the department stores, the names of the lawyers and doctors and accountants. And you will see one Jewish name after another. God promised He would preserve the Jewish people, and He has."

In like manner, over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great Christian philosopher, to give him proof of the existence of God. Pascal answered, "Why the Jews, your Majesty, the Jews!"

Both Ketcherside and Pascal were referring to the fulfillment of Bible prophecies about the Jews, one of the most remarkable being that despite their worldwide dispersion and unparalleled persecution, they would keep their identity and be preserved as a recognizable nation of people.

The preservation of the Jews has to be one of the greatest miracles of history. It is so remarkable, so historically stunning that its uniqueness has been noted and commented on by a great variety of people. Consider, for example, the great historian Arnold Toynbee. He fully recognized the unusual nature of the Jewish experience. In his ten volume work, *A Study of History*, written between 1934 and 1954, he traced the rise and fall of 26 civilizations, developing a scheme of history which the Jewish civilization did not fit.

Toynbee ended up classifying the Jews as "fossils of history" because they seemed to be frozen in time, refusing to assimilate into the soup of humanity. Thomas Newton, the renowned British cleric and Bible scholar who served as Bishop of Bristol, declared in one of his sermons: The preservation of the Jews is really one of the most single and illustrious acts of divine Providence, and what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as none other nation upon earth hath been preserved.

Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, expressed his awe over the preservation of the Jews with these words: What is the Jew? What kind of unique creature is this whom all the rulers of all the nations of the world have disgraced, crushed, expelled, persecuted, burned and drowned, and who, despite their anger and fury, continue to live and to flourish? Tolstoy concluded this observation by proclaiming, "The Jew is the symbol of eternity."

To get a feel for how preposterous the preservation of the Jews is from a human perspective, consider this illustration by Rabbi Dov Greenberg who is the Executive Director of the Jewish Hasidic Movement at Stanford University he said, "Imagine we could travel back in time and say to the great Pharaoh of Moses' time, 'There is good news and bad news. The good news is that one of the nations alive today will survive and change the moral landscape of the world. The bad news is: it won't be yours. It will be that group of Hebrew slaves out there, building your glorious temples, the Children of Israel.'" Nothing, of course, would have sound more outrageous. Greenberg continues, "The Egypt of Pharaoh's time was the greatest empire of the ancient world, brilliant in arts and sciences, formidable in war. The Israelites were a landless people, powerless slaves. Indeed, already in antiquity, those in power believed that the Israelites were on the verge of extinction."

Perhaps the most insightful commentary on the immortality of the Jewish people ever written was by the American novelist Mark Twain who was an agnostic and a skeptic. His remarkable article about the Jewish survival appeared in *Harper's* magazine in 1897. He wrote, "If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contribution to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and he be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor; then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and the Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind." Twain ended his remarkable observation with these words, "All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Twain's question, "What is the secret of his immortality?" Can be answered in only one way, and that answer was provided by David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel. He said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

The preservation of the Jewish people throughout their 2,700 years of dispersion is just absolutely mind-boggling. Keep in mind that they were dispersed over 130 nations worldwide, and they were brutally mistreated wherever they went. Will Varner, a professor at The Master's College in California, has expressed it this way: "No nation in the history of the world ever has been exiled from its land, lost its national existence and language, and then returned as a people to that identical homeland and even revived its ancient tongue. No nation, that is, except one, the nation of Israel." The relentless persecution of the Jews dates from the very beginning of their existence as a nation. The Pharaoh of Egypt attempted to murder all their male babies.

A government bureaucrat named Haman conceived a genocidal plan to exterminate all the Jewish people in Persia. The Assyrian Empire conquered ten of the Jewish tribes and scattered them throughout Asia. Then came the Babylonian exile of the remaining two tribes and the two horrific wars with the Romans. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews were herded into ghettos and required to wear identifying symbols. They were subjected to pogroms, witch hunts, blood libels. They were even blamed for all the problems of society; even for the Black Plague. They were slaughtered during the Crusades. They were tortured during the Inquisition. And they became an object of complete annihilation during the Nazi Holocaust. And yet, the Jewish people survived and their persecutors ended up in the dust bin of history. How could this be? Chance? Coincidence? Good luck? A roll of the dice? There are many theories.

The most common theory offered by secular Jews is that the overwhelming persecution suffered by the Jewish people created within them an iron will to survive. And their genius as a people produced cunning and crafty methods of survival. But all such naturalistic explanations seem shallow and fall flat in the face of the odds that any people could preserve their existence and identity in the midst of so much suffering.

Other secular arguments include the high degree of education and literacy that characterized the Jews during the Middle Ages. This enabled them to more effectively preserve their traditions, and it increased their usefulness to society. Instead of living as beggars, they were able to become lawyers, and doctors, bankers and bureaucrats. Their high level of education also made it possible for them to be extremely mobile, enabling them to move about easily from one nation to another. They had financial resources, and they posed less of a welfare problem than non-Jewish migrants.

I'm sure all these elements were significant, but religious Jewish spokesmen have done much better with their explanation of Jewish survival. As one rabbi has put it: "The supernatural element of Jewish survival must be squarely faced." Another rabbi has put it this way: "If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the unique strength of the Jewish people, we must conclude that it is not its particular physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, nor its tongue, manners and customs. The only link which unites our scattered people throughout its dispersion, regardless of time, is Torah and mitzvot." Torah and mitzvot these two are the focus of Orthodox Jewish explanations of the preservation of the Jewish people. Torah refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures the books written by Moses, often referred to as the Pentateuch. Mitzvot are the commandments contained in the Torah. The rabbis contend that there are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. They view 248 of these commandments as positive in nature you know thou shalt do so and so. The remaining total of 365 are considered to be negative, thou shalt not do so-and-so. All the commandments are viewed as essential for a person to be holy as God is holy. But the problem is that all the mitzvot must be interpreted as to their daily application, a process that results in endless discussions and disputes and often conflicting conclusions. An example would be the commandment against building a fire on the Sabbath. The commandment is clear enough. But, does flipping a light switch or pushing an elevator button constitute the striking of a fire?

Over the centuries, the Jewish sages have developed an extensive code of oral laws that apply the mitzvot of the Torah to every aspect of daily life. This code is called Halacha. It is often referred to as Jewish Law. But a more literal translation would be the way to behave, or the way of walking. The observance of Halacha within the Diaspora during the 2,000 years since the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD prevented the Jewish people from becoming assimilated into the cultures where they were dispersed. The practice of Halacha enabled them to keep their identity as a people set apart by God to be a witness to the world. One rabbi has

referred to the observance of Halacha as “the tenacious adherence to our spiritual heritage.” He has further stated: “We, the Jewish people, are who and what we are because of a momentous faith, a faith that proved stronger than the greatest empires in history.”

Another key element to keeping Jewish identity which is often stressed in rabbinical writings is memory. Thus, all the Jewish feast days are reminders of either great events in Jewish history, or promises of God about the future, or both. For example, the Feast of Passover in the spring of the year points the Jewish memory back to the time when God miraculously delivered the Jews from Egyptian captivity. The Feast of Shavu’ot, known to Christians as the Feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest is a reminder of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is held at the beginning of the summer months. The most joyous feast of the year is the Festival of Tabernacles, Sukkot in Hebrew, in the fall of the year. It celebrates the completion of the fruit harvest, and it serves as a reminder of how God was faithful to the Jews during their wilderness wanderings when they lived in tabernacles. It is also a reminder that God has promised in His Word that one day He will come to the earth to tabernacle among His people. The observance of the seven Jewish feasts each year, year after year, kept alive in Jewish hearts the memory of God’s call on their life as a nation. They were reminded of how God had come to their rescue time, after time again, and how He had promised that one day they would become the prime nation in the world, through whom all of God’s blessings would flow to the nations.

The problem with these explanations of Jewish preservation is that they only show how the Jews kept their identity and not how they were able to survive. As a matter of fact, the maintenance of their unique identity made them an object of hatred and an easy target for abuse. The result was 2,000 years of unrelenting hatred, persecution, and slaughter. Their own Scriptures prophesied that once they were scattered, they would be persecuted wherever they went and would become few in number. Consider these passages from Deuteronomy, "And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you. Then after your scattering you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you did not obey the LORD your God."

Roman records indicate that 2,000 years ago there were between 8 and 10 million Jews living in the world. There are 14 million today. How many should there be? Well, in the same period of time, the population of China grew from 30 million to over one billion. The Arab peoples came into existence at the same time as the Jews. Today there are more than 400 million Arabs. Based on these statistics, the Jewish population today should be between 400 and 500 million. So, we find ourselves still grappling with the question we began with: “How did the Jews survive?” And there is really only one answer: supernaturally. Psalm 124 sums it up best it reads: “Had it not been the LORD who was on our side,” let Israel now say, “Had it not been the LORD who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us. Then the waters would have engulfed us, the stream would have swept over our soul; then the raging waters would have swept over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth. Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; the snare is broken and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

Although this passage probably speaks specifically about the survival of the Children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings under the leadership of Moses, it expresses an eternal principle concerning God’s relationship with the Jewish people. The author of Psalm 121 put it this way: “Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”

The Hebrew prophets were very precise about the fact that God would always preserve the Jewish people. Consider this symbolic prophecy of Isaiah who wrote 2,700 years ago, 700 years before the birth of Jesus. He wrote, "But Zion, the Jewish people, said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.' God answers, 'Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.'" Speaking more specifically, Isaiah wrote these words about the preservation of the Jews, he said, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all those who are angered at you will be ashamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish."

Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah, who wrote 75 years after Isaiah, declared that God would preserve the Jewish people. He wrote, "For I am with you," declares the LORD, "to save you; for I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly and will by no means leave you unpunished." A more graphic prophecy by Jeremiah concerning the preservation of the Jews can be found in Jeremiah chapter 31 where he wrote, "Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name. If this fixed order departs from before Me,' declares the LORD, 'Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.'

Thus says the LORD, 'If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,' declares the LORD."

So, when will the Jewish people cease to exist? When the sun stops coming up and going down. When the seasons of the year cease to come. And only after all the heavens and the depths of the oceans have been explored. In short, the Jewish people are here to stay. Do I need to inform you that these prophecies have been fulfilled? Despite their dispersion, their persecution, the murderous pogroms leading up to the Holocaust. 6.5 million Jews live in Israel today, slightly more than the number killed in the Holocaust, with another 7.5 million in other countries. Now, I hope you can understand why the continuing existence of the Jewish people is proof positive that there is a God and that the Bible is His Word.

Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our discussion of the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people, what has to be one of the greatest miracles of history.

I want to introduce you now to a great song about this miracle. The singer is Yaakov Shwekey. He is a 39 year old Orthodox Jew who was born in Jerusalem, raised in Mexico and received his Yeshiva education in Brooklyn, New York. He is married, and he and his wife have five children. They currently reside in New Jersey. Yaakov recently recorded a blockbuster song about the miraculous survival of the Jewish people. The song is call "We Are a Miracle." I want to thank him for granting us special permission to show a video production of him singing the song. Here now is Yaakov Shwekey singing, "We Are a Miracle."

"We Are a Miracle"

>>Israel must be wiped out, and the Jews.

Every day we fight a battle  
On the news we are the stars  
As history repeats itself  
And makes us who we are  
Hate is all around us

A nation in the desert we started out as slaves  
Ohhh ohhh  
Made it to the motherland, and then came the Crusades  
Ohhh ohhh  
It's been so many years crying so many tears  
Don't you know, don't you really know?  
We are pushed to the ground  
Through our faith we are found  
Standing strong

The Spanish inquisition wanted us to bow  
Ohhh ohhh  
But our backs ain't gonna bend never then, and never now  
Ohhh ohhh  
It's been so many years  
Crying so many tears  
Don't you know, don't you really know?  
We are pushed to the ground  
Through our faith we are found  
Standing strong

We are a miracle  
We are a miracle  
We were chosen with love  
And embraced from above  
We are a miracle

Extermination was the plan  
When the devil was a man  
Ohhh ohhh  
But the few who carried on  
Live for millions who are gone  
Ohhh ohhh  
It's been so many years  
Crying so many tears  
Don't you know, don't you really know?  
We are pushed to the ground  
Through our faith we are found  
Standing strong

We are a miracle  
We are a miracle  
We were chosen with love  
And embraced from above

We are a miracle

Every day we fight a battle  
On the news we are the stars  
As history repeats itself  
And makes us who we are  
Hate is all around us  
But we'll be here to sing this song  
Sing this song  
Sing our song

We are a miracle  
We are a miracle  
We were chosen with love  
And embraced from above  
We are a miracle

We are a miracle  
We are a miracle  
Through it all we remain  
Who Can Explain  
We are a miracle  
Through it all we remain  
Who Can Explain  
We are a miracle

**Dr. Reagan:** Wasn't that a marvelous song? You know folks, the preservation of the Jewish people has fulfilled one of the oldest prophecies in the Bible. I have in mind a symbolic prophecy that was given to Moses while he was living in exile in the land of Midian, after fleeing from Egypt.

One day as he was tending his father-in-law's flocks, he spied a burning bush, and he was enthralled by it because it continued to burn without being consumed. Moses didn't realize it at the time, but he was witnessing a symbolic prophecy. You see, the burning bush that could not be consumed was a prophecy that the Jewish people would suffer great persecution, and even efforts to annihilate them, but they would continue to exist because of God's supernatural protection. And that will continue to be the situation in the future. Bible prophecies clearly state that the Jewish people still have a lot of persecution ahead of them during the Great Tribulation. But prophecies also make it clear that a great remnant will survive the fury of the Antichrist.

Well, folks, that is our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you, and I hope, the Lord willing, that you will be back with us next week. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near!"

**End of Program**