

## Aim of lesson

To see how the promises given to Abraham and David or 'God's plan' have been fulfilled through Israel - the land and the people. The aim is to show that God's plan and promises apply in the world today by looking at what prophecy has been fulfilled, and what is still to happen. This will show that in a world which generally ignores God and appears to have much to offer young people, God is still in control. The promises are available to us all today and compared to these the world has nothing really to offer.

## Bible background

Genesis 12:2, 17:7-8; Exodus 19:5; Ezekiel 37:21-22; Leviticus 26:42; Deuteronomy 11:12-15; 28:64-68; Jeremiah 3:17-18; Luke 1:32-33; Galatians 3:26-29

## Preparation required

It may well be worth collecting any relevant newspaper cuttings with regard to any events happening in Israel at the time to use as introductory material which the students can read and discuss prior to looking how this fits in with God's plan for Israel. Another useful source may be 'Signs of the Times' from previous months' *Christadelphians*.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Look at Israel in two parts:

1. The Land
2. The Nation and People

### The Land

Start by reminding the students briefly of how the land of Israel figured in the promises to Abraham (Genesis 17:7-8; Leviticus 26:42; Deuteronomy 11:12-15), but remember that this has already been covered.

The students could look at different maps in the backs of their Bibles and compare the Old Testament maps to those depicting New Testament maps and maybe a modern atlas.

Through discussion with the students put together a picture of this land, a land flowing with 'milk and honey'. A useful tool would be a Bible Message Calendar to show the great diversity and beauty of the land and how little in some areas the area and customs have changed.

It is also worth noting during discussion that the physical geography of Israel and of the surrounding area in the Middle East confirms the Bible evidence. The mountains, rivers and seas are there as described in scripture etc.

The following list is to help the discussion about Israel the Land and give a picture of this place where the Bible records took place.

1. Israel is only a small country, but it is of strategic importance. It was conquered by the Romans, and was the centre of the medieval crusades against the Arabs.
2. It is where the cultures of the East meet those of the West.
3. It is the centre of the world's land masses.
4. There is enormous diversity of climate: you can freeze on Mount Hermon 9,232 ft above sea level, whereas the Dead Sea is some 1,312 ft below sea level - a 10,544 ft difference! Israel has some of the world's great vineyards and orchards.
5. The phenomenon of salt water existing so far inland, away from the sea, and in such concentration that it is impossible for swimmers to sink.
6. Still 60% or so of Israel's land mass is barren desert wilderness.
7. In some ways little has changed. Life as it was in biblical times coexists with 20th century life.
8. There has been war with the neighbouring Arabs for so long. Sum up the current situation.
9. Jerusalem the capital is thought by historians to be the oldest inhabited city in the world. Also the future capital of the world. Jeremiah 3:17-18

## **The nation and people**

After the discussion-orientated section about the land, look at the following references and see how God has brought his people home. Most countries are becoming multi-racial and multi-cultural; Israel is gathering Jews as was prophesied.

Genesis 12:2 - A promise from God to make Abraham's family a great nation.

Exodus 19:5 - If Israel obeys God they will be a treasured possession, a holy nation.

Deuteronomy 28:64-68 - Israel did not obey God so were scattered.

Ezekiel 37:21-22 - The promise to gather his people once again.

If we look at them in worldly terms, the Jews should not have survived. They have suffered persecution throughout the world for many centuries, which reached a peak during World War 2. The holocaust was merely a continuation of what had gone on for centuries.

After the Jews fled Europe and settled all over the world, God has been drawing them back as he promised in Ezekiel. Since 1948 and the setting up of the Independent State of Israel numbers have grown. 1948 population c.1 million; 1993 population c.4 million (of a total population of c.5 million). The gathering together of Jews in their homeland is just part of the preparation for the outworking of the promises to Abraham.

Use the maps in the Students' notes, and any others that you have, to illustrate these points.

You could also think of the many Jews who have had an enormous influence on the human race. Whether for good or ill, it has been out of all proportion to their numbers. Albert Einstein, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were all Jews, who in their own fields have dominated much of twentieth century thinking. Then there is the amazing dominance of Jews in music and entertainment. Many of the twentieth century's greatest composers (Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein), violinists (Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman) and pianists (Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim), have been Jewish; and amongst many other well-known Jews are Jonathan Miller, Stephen Spielberg, Barbara Streisand, and Peter Sellers. Even David Beckham is a Jew.

## **Future promises**

From the previous lesson we know that Abraham did not inherit the land and that since his descendant King Solomon, Jerusalem has not been united under one king. Ezekiel said 'There will be one king over all of them'. One part of the promises was that Abraham's family and their land would be everlasting, (Genesis 17:7-8), the nation of Israel with a king ruling in the capital Jerusalem has still to happen to fulfil the promises.

Matthew 1:1: The genealogy of Jesus shows that he is a direct descendant of Abraham and is, even humanly speaking, the rightful heir to the throne of Jerusalem, (Luke 1:32-33).

Galatians 3:26-29: If we belong to Christ then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. The opportunity of being part of Abraham's great nation, being blessed by God, and living in peace forever, is still available through Jesus. The promise of living in the kingdom, with Jesus as King ruling from Jerusalem, will be realised on his return.

## **Relevance to our lives**

Do the students want to be heirs to the promises?

## **Prayer**

Consider the Lord's prayer with special emphasis on the future fulfilment of the promises in "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

## **Other suggestions for activities**

Students may wish to continue the theme of the lesson by taking newspaper clippings on events in Israel and keeping their own record of the outworking of the hand of God upon his people and his land leading to the kingdom.