

US Embassy in Jerusalem Officially Opens Today

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The land of Israel, “Eretz Israel,” as it is known in Hebrew, has always been a land bridge connecting the early civilizations living between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers to the northeast and those in the Nile River valley of Egypt, to the southwest.

This “fertile crescent” between Europe, Asia and Africa hosted the primeval history of the human race (creation, the fall, the great flood, the rise and spread of nations) and the patriarchal history of the Hebrew race (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph).

Left to itself, it will revert to a desperate and deserted desert-land. Mark Twain visited the land in the late nineteenth century and described the area, in his book *Innocents Abroad*, as “desolate and devoid of inhabitants.”

Yet, on the beautiful and fertile plain of Jezreel-Esdraelon, great armies of aggressive foreign empires and even theocracies have often wrestled for control, over the last three millennia. There an indigenous Hebrew people developed a thriving civilization and culture in their ancient homeland.

While some of the people remained in their cities and rural communities, most of them scattered across the Middle East, Europe and North Africa. Although they flourished at times, for nearly 2,000 years, they lived as an oppressed minority, suffering expulsions, massacres and ultimately genocide.

They barely survived, but they never lost hope. They overcame!

They started a restoration movement called Zionism, and many

began to return to their ancestral homeland. There they joined those who were already in the land and built one of the most vibrant and diverse nations the world has ever seen.

That nation is Israel. And this year, it is celebrating 70 years of existence!

In spite of entrenched resistance by many of its Arab neighbors, the modern nation of Israel is a reality and a “miracle”—70 years in the making, and deserving of international recognition and celebration!

Recently, U.S. President Trump publicly recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state. This seems odd, since it has been the functional capital since modern Israel declared itself a state in 1948. Its democratic-based government buildings for its legislative, judicial and executive branches are located there, as are the residences for the president and prime minister.

But the recognition of this ancient Jewish capital has been a political “hot potato” due to the international political rejection of the Jewish right to live as a Jewish-majority state by the neighboring Islamic-Arab states and their allies.

The U.S. Congress unanimously passed the U.S. Embassy Act of 1995, recognizing Jerusalem as the declared capital of Israel and funding the relocation of our embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, to complete our recognition of modern Israel, itself. Yet, U.S. presidents have delayed doing so, certifying a waiver to this law, every six months, asserting that it was “not in our national interests,” at that time with the politically sensitive Islamic-Arab nations.

Again, President Trump moved to fulfill campaign promises regarding Israel by deciding to move the embassy to an existing U.S. owned facility and designate it as the U.S. Embassy, during this year of celebration of the modern state of Israel.

This embassy will be inaugurated and officially opened today, May 14, which is the 70th anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence and the founding of the new nation.

In the Bible, God calls this land His own. (See Lev. 26:42 and this music video.) Accordingly, we call it the "Holy Land." God promised to make a "great nation" from Abraham's descendants, as well as promising to "bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." (Gen. 12:1-3).

Throughout the Old Testament history and into modern times, individuals and nations who blessed Abram's descendants were blessed by God; those who persecuted them, God cursed. Many believe the . has been blessed by God for the goodwill Americans have shown toward the Jewish people and the modern nation of Israel.

Now, 70 years since its rebirth as a nation, we reaffirm our recognition of the modern, Jewish -majority state of Israel and Jerusalem, as its "undivided capital." Let us rejoice at all that God has done in "His land." {eo}

*Ordained to the ministry in 1969, **Gary Curtis** is a graduate of LIFE Bible College at Los Angeles (soon to become Life Pacific University at San Dimas, California). He has taken graduate courses at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois. and Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Gary served as part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, California, for 27 years (1988-2015), the last 13 years as the vice president of Life On The Way Communications, Inc., the church's not-for-profit media outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for 50 years and live in Southern California. They have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*