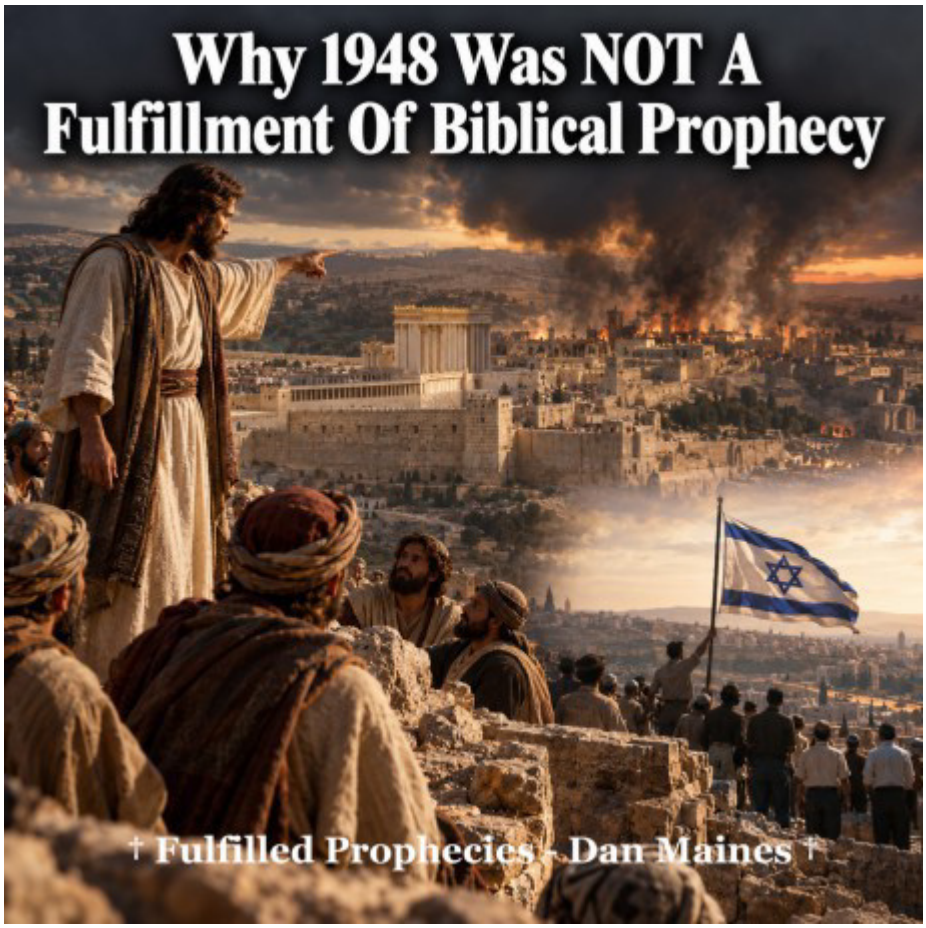
Fulfilled Prophecies

Why 1948 Was NOT A Fulfillment Of Biblical Prophecy



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† On May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was established. Since that day, many evangelical teachers have claimed that this political event fulfilled biblical prophecy and began the countdown to Christ's return.

† But there's a serious problem with that interpretation. The New Testament never identifies a modern Jewish nation as the fulfillment of God's promises, and Jesus never told His disciples to watch for a political event nearly two thousand years in their

future (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22).
† Much of modern dispensational eschatology depends on the assumption that the establishment of Israel in 1948 fulfilled Ezekiel 37, Isaiah 11, and other restoration prophecies. Once that assumption is accepted, teachers begin constructing prophetic timelines involving a rebuilt temple, a future tribulation, an Antichrist, and a future earthly kingdom.
† But an interpretation can't become biblical truth simply because it's popular. We must examine what the prophets actually promised, how the apostles interpreted those promises, and when Jesus said the fulfillment would occur (Luke 24:44; Acts 3:24).
† The biblical restoration of Israel wasn't about establishing another political nation. It was about bringing God's covenant promises to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, gathering His people into one body, and establishing the everlasting kingdom (Luke 1:32-33; Ephesians 2:14-16).
† The question isn't whether Israel became a modern nation in 1948. That's an established historical fact. The question is whether Scripture identifies that event as the fulfillment of prophecy. It doesn't.

Matthew 24:32-34
Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near; so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
† The fig tree illustration is frequently used to claim that Israel became a nation in 1948 and that the generation witnessing that event would see Christ's return. But Jesus never identified the fig tree as the modern State of Israel (Luke 21:29-31).
† Luke's parallel account mentions the fig tree and all the trees. That makes the illustration about recognizing the nearness of an event from visible signs, not identifying a particular modern nation (Luke 21:29-31).

† Jesus told His disciples that the generation hearing His words wouldn't pass away before all those things occurred. He didn't say a generation beginning in 1948 would witness their fulfillment (Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:32).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 provides the historical setting for His warning. Turning the fig tree into a prediction of 1948 ignores the audience, context, and time limitation Jesus established (Matthew 24:1-3; Luke 21:20-24).

Luke 21:20-22 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.
† Jesus identified the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by surrounding armies as the sign of its coming desolation. He instructed people living in Judea to flee, not future generations to watch for the establishment of a modern nation (Matthew 24:15-16).
† His warning concerned a specific city, a specific people, and a judgment that would come upon the generation rejecting Him (Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 23:35-38).
† Jesus called those events days of vengeance in which the things written concerning that judgment would be fulfilled. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 fits the historical setting of His warning (Daniel 9:26; Luke 21:32).
† The prophecy concerned the end of Jerusalem's Old Covenant order, not the beginning of a modern political state nearly nineteen centuries later (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 10:9).

Ezekiel 37:11-14
Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the entire house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord God says: "Behold, I am going to open your graves and cause you to

come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord.'"

† Ezekiel spoke to a people experiencing exile and covenant judgment. The valley of dry bones portrayed Israel's hopeless condition and God's promise to restore His people (Ezekiel 37:1-10).

† The prophecy included restoration to the land, but it also promised spiritual life through God's Spirit. We can't isolate the geographical language and ignore the spiritual transformation at the center of the vision (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

† Israel's historical return from Babylonian exile began centuries before Christ. The deeper promise of spiritual restoration reached its fulfillment through the Messiah and the New Covenant (Ezra 1:1-4; Acts 2:32-33).

† The apostles identified the giving of the Holy Spirit as an accomplished reality in their generation. The modern State of Israel wasn't established through the apostolic proclamation of Christ or the New Covenant gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:16-18; Acts 2:38-39).

† Ezekiel's vision can't simply be transferred to 1948 while separating it from God's promised spiritual restoration.

Ezekiel 37:24-26

And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes and follow them. And they will live on the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and My servant David will be their leader forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and set My sanctuary in their midst forever.

† Ezekiel didn't merely predict national restoration. He promised one shepherd, one king, an everlasting covenant, and God's permanent dwelling among His people (John 10:14-16; Hebrews 13:20).
† Jesus is the promised Son of David who reigns over His people. Peter proclaimed that God raised Jesus and exalted Him to fulfill His promise concerning David's throne (Acts 2:29-36).
† The everlasting covenant is established through Christ's blood, not through a modern government's declaration of independence (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15).
† God's sanctuary is now His people, built together as a dwelling of God in the Spirit. This is the New Covenant fulfillment of the promise that God would dwell among them (Ephesians 2:19-22; 2 Corinthians 6:16).
† A political nation without universal recognition of Jesus as its king can't be identified as the complete fulfillment of Ezekiel's promised kingdom.

Isaiah 11:10-12
Then on that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal flag for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover with His hand the second time The remnant of His people who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a flag for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.
† Isaiah's prophecy is often presented as a prediction of Jewish immigration and the establishment of Israel in 1948. But the prophecy begins with the root of Jesse, the Messiah who becomes the gathering point for the nations (Romans 15:12).
† Paul directly quoted Isaiah 11:10 and applied it to Jesus Christ and the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's people. He didn't postpone its meaning to a modern national restoration (Romans 15:8-12).

† The gathering of God's people takes place under the authority of the Messiah, who brings Jews and Gentiles together through faith (Ephesians 2:11-18).
† The apostles preached this gathering as an unfolding reality in their own ministry. Isaiah's promise wasn't waiting for a political declaration in 1948 (John 11:51-52; Acts 15:14-17).

Amos 9:11-12
"On that day I will raise up the fallen shelter of David, And wall up its gaps; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old; So that they may possess the remnant of Edom And all the nations who are called by My name," Declares the Lord who does this.
† Amos promised the restoration of David's fallen dwelling, but the New Testament explains how that promise was being fulfilled (Acts 15:13-18).
† At the Jerusalem council, James appealed to Amos when explaining why Gentiles were being received into God's people without becoming Jews under the Law of Moses (Acts 15:14-19).
† The restoration of David's house was taking place through the reign of Christ and the gathering of believers from the nations, not through the reestablishment of an independent Jewish government (Acts 2:30-36).
† James didn't instruct the church to wait for a national event thousands of years later. He recognized the prophetic restoration in what God was already accomplishing through the gospel (Acts 15:15-18).

Galatians 3:16
Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.
† Paul identified Jesus Christ as the promised offspring of Abraham. This is foundational because God's covenant promises find their fulfillment in Christ, not in national identity

apart from Him (2 Corinthians 1:20).
† The promise to Abraham always included blessing for the nations. Through Christ, Gentiles receive the promised blessing and become heirs through faith (Galatians 3:8-9, 14).
† Making the modern State of Israel the center of prophetic fulfillment reverses Paul's explanation. Christ is the promised heir, and belonging to Him determines participation in the inheritance (Galatians 3:26-29).

Galatians 3:28-29
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.
† Paul didn't establish two separate covenant peoples with two separate prophetic destinations. He taught that believers are united in Christ and share the inheritance promised to Abraham (Ephesians 3:4-6).
† Ethnic ancestry doesn't replace faith in Christ as the basis of New Covenant membership. The promises are received through the Messiah, whether a believer is Jewish or Gentile (Romans 4:11-16).
† The church didn't replace Israel. God's promises to Israel reached their intended fulfillment in Christ, and all who belong to Him share in that fulfillment (Galatians 3:7-9; Ephesians 2:19).

Romans 9:6-8
But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants shall be named." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.
† Paul distinguished physical descent from membership among God's covenant people. Not everyone descended from Israel belonged to the faithful remnant through whom God's promise

was being fulfilled (Romans 9:27).
† This doesn't deny Jewish ancestry or history. It establishes that God's saving promises aren't fulfilled merely by possessing a particular ethnicity or national citizenship (Romans 2:28-29).
† If physical descent alone never guaranteed participation in the covenant promise, the creation of a modern nation can't automatically establish prophetic fulfillment (Romans 4:13-16).

Romans 11:5-7
In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;
† Paul identified a faithful remnant of Israel in his own day. That remnant received God's promises through grace and faith in Christ, not through national political restoration (Romans 11:1-5).
† The hardening of unbelieving Israel didn't prevent God from accomplishing His purpose. Through the gospel, the faithful remnant and believing Gentiles were brought into one covenant people (Romans 11:17-24).
† Paul's olive tree illustration describes participation through faith. It doesn't establish a future political nation as a separate means of covenant salvation (Romans 11:20-23).
† His expectation concerning Israel's salvation must be read within his explanation of the Deliverer, the removal of sins, and God's covenant mercy (Romans 11:25-27).

2 Corinthians 1:20
For as many as the promises of God are, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him also is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
† Paul declared that God's promises find their confirmation in Jesus Christ. He didn't direct believers to search for a future political state as the final proof of God's faithfulness (Luke

24:44).
† Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, established the New Covenant, and brought the promised blessing to those who believe (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 8:6).
† The foundation of biblical eschatology must be Christ's accomplished work, not a modern historical event interpreted through a prophetic system (Colossians 2:16-17).

Hebrews 8:13
When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.
† Hebrews explained that the Old Covenant had become obsolete and was approaching its final disappearance. The temple system was still standing when this warning was written (Hebrews 9:8-10).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 visibly confirmed the end of that covenant order. There was no biblical requirement for the Old Covenant nation to be politically restored in 1948 (Hebrews 10:9-18).
† Christ established a better covenant with a permanent priesthood and an effective sacrifice. Returning prophetic attention to a future temple and national sacrificial system moves backward from what Christ accomplished (Hebrews 7:23-28; Hebrews 10:11-14).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-7, documented the Roman siege, the destruction of Jerusalem's temple, and the devastating consequences of the Jewish revolt in AD 70. His account provides historical confirmation of the setting Jesus described in His warning about Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24).
† Tacitus, Histories, Book 5, described the Jewish revolt and the Roman campaign against Jerusalem. His surviving account independently confirms the first-century conflict that brought Jerusalem under Roman judgment (Matthew 24:1-2).
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapters 5-7,

preserved early Christian traditions concerning the flight of believers from Jerusalem and connected the city's destruction with the warnings of Christ (Luke 21:20-22).
† The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, proposing the partition of British Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. This was an international political proposal, not a declaration that biblical prophecy had been fulfilled.
† On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. The declaration was a historical act of national independence. It didn't claim to be a New Testament fulfillment of Ezekiel's spiritual restoration through Jesus Christ.
† John Nelson Darby helped develop and popularize dispensational teaching in the nineteenth century, long before 1948. His prophetic framework distinguished Israel and the church and anticipated a future national role for Israel.
† The Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909, further popularized dispensational interpretations among English-speaking evangelicals. The belief in a future restoration of national Israel therefore preceded 1948, and the event was subsequently interpreted by many as confirmation of that expectation.
† Historical events must be interpreted by Scripture. We can't take a theological system developed centuries after the apostles and use it to override the explanations Jesus and His apostles already provided (Acts 17:11).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We must distinguish historical events from biblical prophecy. The establishment of Israel in 1948 was historically significant, but historical significance alone doesn't establish prophetic fulfillment (2 Peter 1:20-21).
† We must stop building prophetic timelines around dates that Scripture never identifies. Jesus located the judgment of Jerusalem within His own generation, and the apostles consistently spoke of the approaching end of their covenant age

(Matthew 24:34; James 5:8-9).
† We must read Old Testament promises through their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The apostles interpreted the promises to Abraham, David, and Israel through the Messiah and the New Covenant (Acts 13:32-33; Galatians 3:16).
† We must never confuse the modern State of Israel with the New Covenant people of God. Jewish people, like Gentiles, are invited to receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-13).
† We must reject the idea that opposing a particular prophetic interpretation means opposing Jewish people. Biblical interpretation, human dignity, and contemporary political questions aren't the same issue (Romans 12:18; Galatians 6:10).
† We don't need another temple, another priesthood, another sacrifice, or another national covenant. Jesus Christ has already established the everlasting covenant through His finished work (Hebrews 9:11-15).
† We aren't waiting for the kingdom to begin. Believers have already been transferred into Christ's kingdom and have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:22-24).
† The New Jerusalem isn't a future political capital established through military power. It's the New Covenant dwelling of God with His redeemed people, and its gates remain open to those who come to Christ (Revelation 21:2-3; Revelation 21:25; Revelation 22:17).
† Our hope rests in the risen and reigning Christ, not in predicting the next Middle Eastern conflict or calculating another prophetic countdown (Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 1:20-23).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Was the establishment of Israel in 1948 a fulfillment of Ezekiel 37?
A: No. Ezekiel's prophecy included spiritual restoration, one shepherd, an everlasting covenant, and God's dwelling among His people. Those promises find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ

and the New Covenant, not merely in political statehood (Ezekiel 37:24-28; John 10:16; Hebrews 13:20).

Q: Doesn't the fig tree in Matthew 24 represent Israel becoming a nation again?
A: Jesus never identified the fig tree as the establishment of modern Israel. Luke's parallel mentions all the trees, and Jesus explicitly identified His own generation as the generation witnessing the fulfillment (Matthew 24:32-34; Luke 21:29-32).

Q: Doesn't Isaiah 11 predict Jews returning to Israel from every nation?
A: Isaiah described the gathering under the root of Jesse. Paul identified that root as Jesus Christ and applied the prophecy to the inclusion of the Gentiles through the gospel (Isaiah 11:10-12; Romans 15:8-12).

Q: Didn't God promise Abraham the land forever?
A: God made land promises to Abraham and his descendants, and Scripture records their historical fulfillment in Israel's possession of the land. The New Testament identifies Christ as Abraham's promised offspring and expands the inheritance to all who belong to Him (Joshua 21:43-45; Galatians 3:16, 29; Romans 4:13).

Q: Doesn't Romans 11 promise that all Israel will be saved?
A: Paul connected Israel's salvation with the Deliverer who removes sins and with God's covenant mercy. He didn't identify the establishment of a modern political state as the fulfillment of that salvation (Romans 11:25-27).

Q: Does rejecting 1948 as prophecy mean God has rejected Jewish people?
A: Absolutely not. Paul affirmed that God hadn't rejected His people and that Jewish believers were part of the faithful remnant. Salvation remains available to Jews and Gentiles through the same Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 11:1-5; Romans

10:12-13).

Q: Did the church replace Israel?
A: No. God's promises to Israel reached their fulfillment in Christ. Jewish and Gentile believers are united in one body and share the inheritance through Him (Ephesians 2:14-19; Galatians 3:28-29).

Q: Why do so many evangelical teachers connect 1948 with prophecy?
A: Many inherited a dispensational framework that expects a future national restoration of Israel. They interpret 1948 through that framework, but Scripture itself never identifies that date or the modern state as the fulfillment of the restoration prophecies (Acts 15:14-18; Galatians 3:16).

Q: If 1948 wasn't prophetic fulfillment, what should Christians be watching for today?
A: Christians should live faithfully under Christ's present reign, proclaim the gospel, and demonstrate His love. We're not instructed to calculate future prophetic dates from modern political events (Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:18-20).

Q: What is the greatest mistake in making 1948 the center of biblical prophecy?
A: It shifts the center of God's redemptive promises away from their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and makes a modern political event the foundation for interpreting passages the apostles already applied to Christ and His people (2 Corinthians 1:20; Acts 13:32-33).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Matthew 24:32-34; Luke 21:20-22; Ezekiel 37:11-14; Ezekiel

37:24-26; Isaiah 11:10-12; Amos 9:11-12; Galatians 3:16; Galatians 3:28-29; Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:5-7; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 8:13.
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7; United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 181 (1947); David Ben-Gurion, Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948); John Nelson Darby, nineteenth-century dispensational writings; C. I. Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible (1909).

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