The Middle East
In Prophecy

Part Two
Wednesday, December 3, 2014

The above picture, taken several years ago, of Pastor and Mrs. Betzer was shot at the Betzer River in northwest Israel, about 2 miles south of the Lebanese border. Shot during dry season, the small stream wends its way through this canyon that looks for all the world like some movie western locale. It certainly is not the Mississippi. Or even the Jordan. Still – it exists and your pastor loves it!
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THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Next month, January 9th, I am scheduled to speak at Temple Judea (SW Bulb Road in Ft. Myers) during the closing dinner of Shabbat. My assigned subject is, “Why Christians love Israel and the Jews.” (I will give a similar lecture next Friday night, December 12th, at Christian Outreach Center, 3500 Fowler, Lynn Bracco, Pastor). It is always a sheer joy to me to speak on behalf of Israel and the Jewish people. Far from being removed from God’s prophetic program of the ages, they are just now coming into their season!

Over the past quarter century, I have been invited by local rabbis to speak in most of the area synagogues. Darlene and I are included, in fact, in the southwest Florida area phone directory of local Jews, published by the Jewish Federation. I point that out with a great degree of satisfaction and sheer delight.

The picture on the cover was taken of Darlene and me several years ago standing on the rim of the canyon in northwest Israel that channels the Betzer River. It’s not much of a stream, I assure you, carving its way through the rocky area a mile or so south of the Lebanese border. The canyon and area looks like something out of a movie western.

I am told by Yael Dayan, daughter of the famed Israeli war general and hero of the Six Day War, Moshe Dayan, and mayor pro-tem of Tel Aviv, that there are many Betzers in her family. So I come by this love of Israel and the Jewish people quite naturally.

I want to open this session with a re-visit to the travesty, the heresy, of Replacement Theology or SUPERSESSIONISM as it is also known.

The Unscriptural And Vile Theory Of Replacement Theology

Proponents of this heresy essentially proclaim that the Church has replaced Israel in God’s redemptive plan. Their message contains their belief that:

- Jews are no longer God’s chosen people
- There is no divine future plan for the nation of Israel
- The many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian church

This is utter, unscriptural nonsense, of course. But it is amazing to me how many churches and pastors, yes, even in our own Assemblies of God, know so little scripture that they have bought into the heresy.
The prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are “spiritualized” or “allegorized” into promises of God’s blessing for the church. Major problems exist with this view, such as the continuing existence of the Jewish people throughout the centuries and especially with the revival of the modern state of Israel.

If Israel has been condemned by God, and there is no future for the Jewish nation, how do we explain the supernatural survival of the Jewish people over the past 2000 years despite the many attempts to destroy them? How do we explain why and how Israel reappeared as a nation in the 20th century (1948) after not existing for 1900 years? Biblically speaking, the church is completely different and distinct from Israel and the two are never to be confused or used interchangeably. We are taught from Scripture that the church is an entirely new creation that came into being on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), although I believe it began at Calvary, and will continue until it is taken to heaven at the Rapture. The church has no relationship to the curses and/or blessings for Israel. The covenants, promises and warnings are valid only for Israel. It is true that Israel seems to have been temporarily set aside in God’s program for these past 2000 years of dispersion; however, following the Rapture of the Church God will restore Israel as the primary focus of His plan.

God’s schedule:

1. The first event on earth following the Rapture is the Tribulation (Revelation 6-19). The world will be judged for rejecting Christ (which has nothing at all to do with the church), while Israel is prepared through the trials of the Great Tribulation for the second coming of the Messiah.
2. Then, when Christ does return to the earth, at the end of the tribulation, Israel will be ready to receive Him.
3. The remnant of Israel which survives the tribulation will be saved, and the Lord will establish His kingdom on this earth with Jerusalem as its capital.
4. With Christ reigning as King, Israel will be the leading nation, and representatives from all nations will come to Jerusalem to honor and worship the King, Jesus Christ. The Church will return with Jesus and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Rev. 20:1-5 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. [2] And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, [3] And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. [4] And I saw thrones, and they sat upon
them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. [5] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Let's be clear about this: The church has NOT replaced Israel in God's plan. While God may be focusing His attention primarily on the church in this dispensation of grace, God has not forgotten Israel and will one day restore Israel to His intended role as the Nation he has chosen. (See Romans 11)

BUT....HAS THE JEWISH REJECTION OF CHRIST AND ISRAEL'S TRANSGRESSIONS THROUGH THE CENTURIES NOT ENDED GOD'S FAVOR WITH THE JEWS? AND HOW DO WE KNOW THE LAND OF ISRAEL STILL BELONGS TO THE JEWS?

Let's turn to the Bible for the true answers.

In the previous notes, I carefully pointed out God's promise to Abraham, confirmed by the blood covenant, that He would give Abraham and his descendants a land of their own. The geographical boundaries of that promised land far, far exceed any territory Israel has ever actually possessed, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates River and from the Persian peninsula to Turkey. But what about today? Is God's promise still binding?

Some teach that because of Israel's failures, particularly those of idolatry which brought about the three Babylonian invasions 605-586 B.C., that God has set aside His covenant and abrogates His promise. However, nowhere in Scripture does such a "fact" materialize.

Note again what God promised to Abraham: Genesis 13:14-18 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. [18] Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord. The promise was unconditional!
In this connection, Deuteronomy chapters 28-30 are very important for they outline God's dealings with Israel and explain Israel's present condition. In those chapters, the children of Israel had been out of the land of Palestine for more than 400 years (from Joseph to Moses) when God used Moses to deliver the message in Deuteronomy 28. The land itself was again in possession of Israel's enemies, who sought to bar her readmission to the land. The redeemed nation, delivered from Egypt under Moses, was approaching the land of milk and honey under Joshua, only to find it a land flowing with strong enemies. Many questions arose in the minds of the Jews: Do we still have any rights there? Does that land still belong to us? Do we have the right to occupy it? Will God be with us? Or has He forsaken us and forgotten His promise? Moses gave assurance that even 400 years absence could not abrogate the promise of God. Then Moses prophesied the future Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and also the Roman captivity as God's judgments for disobedience:

Deut. 28:47-62

Because you have not served the Lord your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, [48] you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. They will oppress you harshly until you are destroyed. [49] "The Lord will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like an eagle. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, [50] a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young. [51] Its armies will devour your livestock and crops, and you will starve to death. They will leave you no grain, new wine, olive oil, calves, or lambs, bringing about your destruction. [52] They will lay siege to your cities until all the fortified walls in your land—the walls you trusted to protect you—are knocked down. They will attack all the towns in the land the Lord your God has given you. [53] The siege will be so severe that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you. [54] The most tenderhearted man among you will have no compassion for his own brother, his beloved wife, and his surviving children. [55] He will refuse to give them a share of the flesh he is devouring—the flesh of one of his own children—because he has nothing else to eat during the siege that your enemy will inflict on all your towns. [56] The most tender and delicate woman among you—so delicate she would not so much as touch her feet to the ground—will be cruel to the husband she loves and to her own son or daughter. [57] She will hide from them the afterbirth and the new baby she has borne, so that she herself can secretly eat them. She will have nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns.

[58] "If you refuse to obey all the terms of this law that are written in this book, and if you do not fear the glorious and awesome name of the Lord your God, [59] then the Lord will overwhelm both you and your children with indescribable plagues. These plagues will be intense and without relief, making you miserable and unbearably sick. [60] He
will bring against you all the diseases of Egypt that you feared so much, and they will claim you. [61] The Lord will bring against you every sickness and plague there is, even those not mentioned in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. [62] Though you are as numerous as the stars in the sky, few of you will be left because you would not listen to the Lord your God.

The judgment of God would take the form of captivity and expulsion from the land of promise. Note verse 64: Deut. 28:64

For the Lord will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone!

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When young Ezekiel was carted off to Babylon (Iraq) in one of the Babylonian invasions, God later - in the Spirit - whisked him back to “the land” where he stood upon a precipice and witnessed the miracle of the dry bones. “Who are these disjoined human bones?” he asked God. God responded, Ezekiel 37:11-14 Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone.' [12] Now give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. [13] When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the Lord. [14] I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I am the Lord. You will see that I have done everything just as I promised. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

In my own life time, I have witnessed this divine miracle. In May of 1948, Israel once again became a sanctioned state (by the United Nations). But it was not an easy journey.

Since the Romans overthrew Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Just as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:2), the land of Israel has been under different occupiers. Here is a brief outline of those powers:

- 66 - 73 AD The Romans attacked Judea and sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD
- 130 AD The Roman Emperor Hadrian build a Roman city on the ruins of Jerusalem - a city he called Aelia Capitolina
- For a long time Israel was now ruled by the Byzantine Roman Empire until –
- 614 AD The Persians under General Shahbaraz captured and sacked Jerusalem
- 690 AD The Muslims established the Dome of the Rock on the place where the
great Jewish Temple once stood

- Around 1000 AD the Crusades were fought and Israel changed hands several times
- In 1291 AD the final crusade was fought with Muslims taking control
- In 1541 AD under the Ottoman empire (Turk), Sultan Suleiman I sealed off the Golden Gate to prevent Messiah’s re-entrance to Jerusalem
- Napoleon had his adventures in the Holy Land in the 18th century
- August 29-31 The first Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland, in which the World Zionist Organization was founded with its ultimate aim to establish and secure a homeland for the Jewish people.
- 1901 AD The Jewish National Fund was founded at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel with the aim of buying and developing land in the southern region of Ottoman Syria (Galilee) for Jewish settlement.
- 1914 - 1918 World War I At the end of the war Israel was occupied by the British under the General Allenby administration.
- 1948 AD Israel is permitted statehood by the United Nations and so declared in May, which set off the wars listed in last week’s notes.

Where were the Jews during these 1400 years? Dispersed all over the world. In 1933 Hitler was declared Chancellor of Germany and the “Final Solution” of the Jews began shortly after. That “Final Solution” was Hitler’s insane desire for Jewish genocide, culminating in such places as Auschwitz, Birkenau, Dachau, Buchenwald, Sobibor and other horror chambers that claimed the lives of six million Jews plus millions of others in various ways of dying.

At the end of the war, Jews tried desperately to find a land of safety. The U.S. was of little help until the Truman Administration. The Arab nations, clearly assisted by Britain, hounded the Jews in the Holy Land. Entire shiploads of Jews were turned away from the Palestinian shores by the British. It was at this propitious time that ZIONISM came to the rescue.

The name Theodore Herzl is one you should know. He was considered the founder of modern-Zionism. Following a career at the University of Vienna and Salzburg in Austria, Herzl used his journalistic abilities to promote the idea of a Jewish homeland. His dream did not become a reality for a half century, but his ideas and concepts spurred the Jewish goal forward and at least for a time slowed down the anti-Semitism rampant in that part of Europe.
The word “Zionism” was coined in 1890 by Nathan Birnbaum who was very helpful in getting Jews to consider their own homeland. The general definition of the word means “the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Zionism has come to include the movement for the development of the State of Israel and the protection of the Jewish nation in Israel through support for the IDF - the Israeli Defense Forces. Based on the original concept of the word Zionism, I have been an ardent and vocal supporter of it. I would add, however, that disagreements in philosophy have led to rifts within the Zionist movement and a number of splinter groups have emerged such as political Zionism, religious Zionism, socialist Zionism and Territorial Zionism. It is primarily the latter group that I support fully as God made that provision in Abraham’s day.

The early Zionists believed that the sole purpose of Zionism should be the establishment of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River - the land promised by God to Abraham in the Bible and where Jewish self-rule had existed for hundreds of years. While there was no point in seeking conflict with the Arabs, force might have to be used to make way for a Jewish majority in Palestine if there were no alternative. The three main issues were:

- the establishment of Jewish settlements in Palestine
- the right to a Jewish armed force
- free Jewish immigration to Palestine

Why the name “Zion?” Jerusalem was often called “Zion.” Mount Zion is one of the steep hills of the city, located on the south side of the walled city. It was on Mount Zion that the Upper Room was located, where Caiaphas’ house and dungeon were situated and at the foot of it - the Pool of Siloam. We used to sing in my home church in Iowa, “We’re marching to Zion - beautiful, beautiful Zion!” Zion is yet another name for Heaven and eternity with God.

It has been my delight through the years to meet two of Israel’s Prime Ministers, the great Menachem Begin and the current leader Benjamin Natanyahu. I met Natanyahu and CNN reporter Wolf Blitzer at the Jewish Embassy in Washington DC some years ago. Both men were very kind and cordial. My late friend, Evangelist David Lewis, was a close friend of Begin and, in fact, often stayed at the Prime Minister’s home when he was in Israel. Begin was a leader in the Jewish \textit{IRGUN}, the para-military movement fighting the British occupation, culminating in the bombing of the King David Hotel in the summer of 1946. The southern wing of that hotel was the headquarters for the occupying British military. The Irgun leaders called the hotel well ahead of the
explosion and warned them of what was going to happen but the call was ignored or considered a hoax. When within an hour the explosion took place it was the beginning of the end of the British Mandate (occupation). Two years later, Israel was a fully sovereign state.

HATIKVAH “THE HOPE”

The yearning dream of Jews for centuries was their own homeland, lost for almost 2,000 years. In 1886, Samuel Cohen, a Jew who lived in Bohemia, wrote words that would become the lyric of the Israeli national anthem. In those words you can feel the heartbeat, the longing, the yearning for a homeland:

As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning deep in the heart,
With eyes turned toward the East, looking toward Zion,
Then our hope - the two-thousand-year-old hope - will not be lost:
To be a free people in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Several years ago, Darlene and I were in Jerusalem and attended a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra (certainly one of the top five such music organizations on earth) led by famed conductor Zubin Mehta. (Other great conductors there had included the late and great Leonard Bernstein.) I had always wanted to see Mehta since the orchestra’s incredible recording of “The Planets” composed by Gustav Holst in 1914. Each of the seven movements was named for a planet in the solar system. So - on this night in Jerusalem, the 140-piece orchestra took its place on the stage that night and opened the concert with HATIKVAH. Darlene and I stood in awe with the rest of the huge crowd, goosebumps rising, as we joined with the Israelis in that thrilling anthem of hope and freedom. By the way, the Israeli orchestra will no longer perform in England since the last time they played in London, a huge anti-Jewish outburst from the audience disrupted the concert. (Anti-Semitism is on the rise all across Western Europe. The Jews must have the security of their homeland - Israel!)

SO HOW DID ISRAEL BECOME SANCTIONED AS A SOVEREIGN STATE?

In order to comprehend Israel’s future in prophecy, I believe it is mandatory to understand the roots of its beginning. I indicated in the first session notes that “in order to comprehend a mountain, you must understand (or measure) the valley.” So how did Israel come into being in the first place? We should know this since for some of us, it happened in our lifetime.
When Britain finally came to its senses and pulled out of Israel, the United Nations devised a “partition” plan in the Middle East (all of which had been under the Ottoman Turks for centuries prior to WWI and then came under the British Mandate.) The UN Ad Hoc partition committee voted (33 in favor, 13 opposed, 10 abstaining) to recommend to the full United Nations that Britain would be out of the Middle East by August 1, 1948. The UN addressed the conflicting objectives and claims of two competing movements:

- Arab nationalism in the Middle East
- Jewish nationalism known as Zionism

The plan called for economic union between the proposed states as well as protection of its religious and minority rights.

It should be fully understood from history that ARAB LEADERS AND GOVERNMENTS REJECTED THE PLAN OF PARTITION IN THE RESOLUTION AND INDICATED AN UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT ANY FORM OF TERRITORIAL DIVISION. This plan - which was never implemented because of Arab opposition - was the genesis for Middle East unrest, which WILL CONTINUE FOR FOMENT UNTIL THE PRINCE OF PEACE RETURNS.

The Balfour Declaration

The 1918 census of Palestine showed an estimated 700,000 Arabs and 56,000 Jews. Still in 1917, the British committed to a document known as “The Balfour Declaration” that there would be a “national home” for Jews in the Middle East. This did not set well with the Arab leaders. As a result, over the next decades, the UN diligently partitioned the land with an Arab state linked to Transjordan (now simply called Jordan), a small area for the Jews and a mandatory safety zone.

The proposal: Palestine would be divided into three parts: an Arab State, a Jewish State and the City of Jerusalem. The proposed Arab State would include the central and part of the land as well as part of western Galilee, with the town of Acre, the hill country of Samaria and Judea, an enclave in Joppa and the southern coast stretching from Ashdod through the Gaza Strip. The proposed Jewish State would include the fertile Eastern Galilee, the coastal plain stretching from Haifa to most of the Negev desert. The Jerusalem area would include Bethlehem. Broken down, the Arabs received 43% of the land and the Jews got 56%.

I give you this information to fully understand that Israel is NOT an illegal state as its critics propose. Israel was a duly authorized and sanctioned state by the United Nations. All the wars I outlined for you in the previous notes are a result of Arab denial of this reality.
Remember from the first study that scripture makes it very clear that Satanic opposition to
Israel and the Jews has been extant from Genesis on. Let the issues be very clear here.
Satan’s fury is going to escalate as his time grows shorter and shorter.

Small wonder Satan is so angry. He knows that He cannot defeat God’s plan for the ages
and that the very people, the Jews, whom he despises so much, will be used by the Lord
toward the ultimate redemption of the world.

Next week: So where did it begin to go wrong? What happened to cause such
destruction to God’s directives? We will study how this all began...the night Abraham
opted for “Plan B” rather than God’s “Plan A” next week.

(On the back page of tonight’s notes you will find the map of Israel missing from last
week’s syllabus.)
Let's get acquainted with "the land."

Mount Hermon - the border of Israel, Syria and Lebanon
Banias and the Cave of Pan - where Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say I am?"
Capernaum - where Jesus lived during His 3-year ministry and the home of Peter.
Cana - where Jesus performed His first miracle
Nazareth - where Jesus grew up
Herad Spring - where Joshua separated his army down to 300
Bethshan - where Philistines brought Saul's body
The Valley of Armageddon
Caesarea

http://en.18dao.net/images/00/01/Map-Israel.jpg