

Lesson 21

Confession time – how many of you are feeling like this study is getting “a little long in the tooth” or a little old? You can be honest – come on, how many times can we hear the story of God blessing the Jews, the Jews sinning, and God exacts judgment on them? Hopefully, by now, we have fully received the messages from 52 chapters of Jeremiah and 34 chapters of Ezekiel that God has a big problem with sin, and prolonged sin in the face of countless warnings from God He will judge. Right?

Question – how many of you, your children, or grandchildren have ever learned to play a musical instrument? What’s that like at the beginning of the process? Playing the scales and chords over and over and over. For me, it was the trombone, and I remember getting to the point thinking, ‘Enough – I get it!’ Then that glorious day came when the music teacher announced, ‘It’s time to play some music’. Hallelujah!

Well, my fellow lovers and followers of Jesus Christ, we have reached the point in this study where we get to play some music. Today’s reading coupled with chapters 9 and 10 of Daniel – which Lin and I will be getting to in about a month – are the cornerstone sections of Scripture that provide a prophetic timeline of the life of the Nation of Israel. Now why this should be ‘music’ to your ears is, if I do my job today well, you will see where we, as the church and in human history, are in this prophetic timeline. When I am finished, my hope and prayer is that once you will see where we are at this point in the prophetic timeline, your level of excitement at the prospect of the imminence of Jesus’ return will be elevated.

For a good part of the church age, which began with the Day of Pentecost, there has been a corrupt theology called “Supersessionism” or more commonly known as “Replacement Theology” that is being taught

even to this very day. The core of this theology is it designates the belief that the Christian Church has *replaced* the Israelites as God's chosen people and that the Mosaic covenant has been replaced or superseded by the New Covenant. In other words, when we read about prophecy dealing with post-resurrection-of-Christ times, because of the Jews rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, they forfeited their position as God's prized possession. For the church, because of its acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah, it has taken the place of the Jews in the favored position as God's chosen people. One of the presumptions of this bankrupt theology is the Nation of Israel and the Jews have no hope – basically, they're toast.

Whenever we're confronted with a theology, we need to check it against what the Bible says – and on this topic – the Bible says a lot. John Courson points out in his commentary that throughout the Old Testament, God made 5 covenants with the nation of Israel. They are

1. Abrahamic Covenant – God promised to bless Abraham regardless of what Abraham did or didn't do (Genesis 12:1-3)
2. Palestinian Covenant – God gave 300,000 square miles of land - from the Euphrates River to the Nile (Genesis 13:14)
3. Davidic Covenant – God promised that an eternal King would come from David's lineage – fulfilled in Jesus (2 Samuel 7)
4. New Covenant – God promised to give Israel a new heart upon which He would write His will (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

These first 4 covenants have one thing in common – they are all unconditional. That means – regardless of what the Jews do or don't do, God is going to honor that covenant – no matter what. The fifth covenant was

5. Mosaic Covenant (the Law) – God promised to bless Israel if they followed His commandments (Deuteronomy 28)

What made this covenant different from the other 4 was that it was conditional – meaning as long as the Nation of Israel complied with the conditions of the covenant – namely following His commandments – He would bless them if they obeyed. What is implied if they don't obey His commandments? He won't bless them – He will judge them – not out of malice but out of a desire to correct sinful behavior.

God kept His promise on the conditional covenant – when they would periodically repent, He would bless them, and visa versa. If God is going to keep His promise on a conditional covenant, then we can count on Him to keep his unconditional covenants. Numbers 23:19 should be a verse all of us should commit to memory. “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” The Apostle Paul affirms the Lord's heart regarding the Nation of Israel in Romans 10:1, “Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”

A review of Scripture makes it clear that Replacement Theology has no Biblical foundation. As I just mentioned, today's reading is one of the key foundational prophetic sections of the Bible dealing with the life of the Nation of Israel. If we were to buy into Replacement Theology, it would literally gut the significance of what is being described and prophesied in these chapters. Simply, if you remove the Jews from the future plans of God, then a material portion of Scripture becomes null and void. Any teaching that devalues the entirety and perfection of the Word of God is coming from the

bowels of hell. There is nothing in Scripture that even gives a hint to the validity of the Replacement Theology. It's just bogus. In summary, God is not done with the Nation of Israel!

Ok, I'll step down from my soapbox. Our reading begins in chapter 35 of Ezekiel. He is instructed by the Lord to prophesy against Mt. Seir and proclaim that the Lord will make it most desolate. As you can see on this map, Mt. Seir was located in the land of the Edomites. Pop quiz time – who are the Edomites descendants of? Esau – Jacob's furry twin brother. You probably remember the story, Esau sold his birthright as the first born to Jacob for some stew, and because of this, he and his descendants – the Edomites – became enemies of the Nation of Israel.

In verses 3-4, the LORD says, "I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate waste. I will turn your towns into ruins and you will be desolate." He goes on to explain why in verse 5, "Because you harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax."

The Edomites would refuse the Jews to pass through their land on their way to the Promised Land, and every time someone attacked the Jews from the north, the Edomites would attack from the south. God's opinion of Esau's and his descendants' attitude towards the Jews is pretty much summed up in Malachi 1:3 where He says, "But Esau I have hated." May God never use the word "hate" and my name in the same sentence. This area of Edom remains one of the most desolate places on Earth to this very day. Clearly, God means what He says, and He does what He says He's going to do.

As we get into chapter 36, we finally begin to see a new tone emerging from the LORD regarding the Jews and the Nation of Israel. Beginning in verse 8, the LORD begins to speak of the restoration of the land of Israel. ⁸“But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹I am concerned for you and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown, ¹⁰and I will cause many people to live on you—yes, all of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. ¹¹I will increase the number of people and animals living on you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before.”

In the 19th century Mark Twain wrote a book called, “The Innocents Abroad” that documented his travel to, among other places, the area of Palestine – now the Holy Land. He said, “..... A desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds... a silent mournful expanse.... a desolation.... we never saw a human being on the whole route.... hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive tree and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.” For almost 2,000 years, the land of Israel was pretty much a wasteland.

Beginning in the early 20th century, the Jews started buying the land and due to the grace of God and their hard work, the Sharon Valley is now one of the most fertile lands in the world. This is a picture of the Sharon Valley – it’s absolutely beautiful – lush, green, and the Nation of Israel is a net exporter of agriculture. This prophecy has been fulfilled.

The LORD, though, is not done dealing with the lack of obedience in the Nation of Israel. In verse 18 He says, “I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with

their idols. ¹⁹ I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions.” This is what we’ve been reading about – over and over again - through Jeremiah and up until now. They were given the land and could possess it as long as they obeyed the LORD. They didn’t, so they were scattered and judged according to their actions.

Getting scattered wasn’t enough of an incentive to repent because once they were booted from their land, what did they do? Verse 20 tells us, “And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave his land.” So they’re kicked out of their land for their behavior and disobedience, and they are not taking any ownership or accountability. Worse, they profane God’s name in the foreign countries they’ve been scattered to.

Accusations against God have been going on since the Garden of Eden, and although judgment has taken place periodically through the thousands of years, God has only once visibly defended Himself and His name when He sent His Son to die on a cross. Jesus, being God, demonstrated through His life and sacrifice being the most relatable presentation of God’s character since the beginning of humanity. The truth of Who God is can only truly be accurately portrayed by God Himself. Think about it, until we are saved and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we cannot present the truth of God. Even with the Holy Spirit, we still have our flesh battling His leadership mixing in our flesh as we attempt to represent God.

Sadly, God must defend Himself and His name – despite His children’s best or worst intentions. Here’s a question for you to think about.

Why would God be concerned about how He's perceived? He doesn't need us. Why would God Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and earth, all-powerful and self-existent give one thought as to what we think about Him? Why? He is a loving and caring God. He takes no pleasure in the lost – it is His desire that all should come to repentance and be saved. If His true character is not preserved, then where is the hope that humanity has from the deliverance of the sin of this world?

Listen to what He says in verse 22-23, “It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.” By restoring the land and bringing the people back into Israel, God Himself is proving the truth of His prophets' words.

Do these people deserve this incredible act of love? No – He tells them in verse 32 they should be ashamed and disgraced for their conduct. Yet, He restores the land and brings back the people to the land He promised them. That is grace. Did we deserve our salvation? No, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Brothers and sisters I implore you to constantly reflect on the incredible grace of God. Remember the saying, Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve.

Chapter 37 is where we get the visual of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel is brought out by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley, and it is full of dry human bones. The LORD asks Ezekiel if these bones can live. I love his response, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

Have you ever been confronted with a situation – or maybe you’re being confronted with one now – that seems impossible to understand or figure out what is going on? You’re just overwhelmed with the complexities of the situation, and it is beyond your ability to comprehend a solution. We would do well to consider Ezekiel’s heart, attitude, and frame of mind that had to be in place for him to utter such statement as, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

Let’s examine each word of this statement as each of them individually and collectively are a great example of how we should approach the impossible circumstances of our lives.

The definition of sovereign means a person who has supreme power or authority. He can do whatever He wants. Claiming God is sovereign is an acknowledgement that He is in control – not us.

The term LORD implies a person who has authority, control, or power over others – he is a master, chief or ruler. By calling God the LORD, we are submitting to His control not only over everything but also over ourselves. As a servant of the LORD, I have no right to reject anything He tells me to do. If He says to do something or not to do something, I am to obey without question.

“You” confirms the title of Sovereign LORD is meant for God – not us or anyone else.

“Alone” confesses that in the face of what we’re dealing with, it is not God plus all of our brilliance and wisdom – it is God alone who is going to provide.

“Know” is admitting God is omniscient – He has total understanding.

So by saying, Sovereign LORD, you alone know, Ezekiel is acknowledging that God is in complete control – and it is He – not anyone or anything else who is the Sovereign LORD Who has all knowledge. In summary, Ezekiel, in the response to an impossible question or situation, is humbling himself before the LORD and acknowledging he doesn't have the answers – but the LORD does. What a great model for each of us to follow when we're confronted with situations that are beyond our understanding and control.

The LORD tells Ezekiel to prophesy against the bones by hearing the word of the LORD and telling them the LORD will breathe into them, and they will come to life. This is a foundational point of God's character – He is a giver of life. When God created Adam from the dust of the ground, it wasn't until He breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life that he became a living being. In John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on the disciples, He gave them the Holy Spirit.

What does this mean for us today? Jesus tells us in chapter 3 of John's gospel that we're to be born again if we're to enter the Kingdom of God. That implies that without being born again, we must be dead. What is it that allows us to be born again? By our confession of faith in Who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the cross, we are given new life via the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, being a co-equal member of the Godhead, is a giver of life. When we are walking in the Spirit, the fruit of our walk is life-giving – it is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control towards others. If you've ever been around someone who is walking in the Spirit, you can sense they're not condemning or judging – they are exuding and offering the giver of life – the Holy Spirit.

The bones come to life, and the LORD tells Ezekiel that the bones are the people of Israel. He tells them that He is going to bring the people back to the land of Israel. This portion of the prophecy is complete.

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. This document declared the establishment of a Jewish state in the land today known as Israel. This date is one of the most important dates in the prophetic timeline of the Nation of Israel. No country of people in human history that was removed from its land has ever been returned to it. Not once. The Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites – they are all gone. Only the Jews have returned to their land.

The fullness of the restoration of the land of Israel was not yet complete. It wasn't until 1967 from the 6-day war that the Israelis captured east Jerusalem – this gave them complete control over Jerusalem. However, for some reason, Moshe Dayan gave part of the authority of Jerusalem back to Islam. The famous dome of the rock, an Islamic shrine located on Mt. Moriah, is situated on the temple mount, and this is and will continue to be a battleground between the Jews and the Muslims as another critical component of prophecy is the placement and construction of the third temple – which is to be on Mt. Moriah.

The restoration of Israel mentioned in chapters 36 and 37 could not have been made possible without the Nation of Israel being, in effect, resurrected. All remaining unfulfilled prophecies hinged on the return of the Jews to their homeland. Chapter 36 and the first part of Chapter 37, for the most part, have been fulfilled.

What hasn't yet been fulfilled is the second half of chapter 37, which speaks of God putting His Spirit into them. It may surprise you that much of

Israel today is either agnostic or atheistic. It is a largely secular nation. It won't be until we get to the Great Tribulation, which is a 7-year period following, I believe, the rapture of the church. God will be dealing with the Nation of Israel and a Christ-rejecting world in a horrible way, but it will be also a period of the greatest revival in history as the Jews' eyes will finally be opened to the truth of Who Jesus is.

This isn't to say that there aren't faithful Jews living in Israel today – there are – thank God. Even though they're not on the same page as us regarding Jesus being the Messiah, we as Christians have a similar faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is why we, as a nation, must not abandon our support for the Nation of Israel.

Psalm 33:12 makes it clear that, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.” It should go without saying, but I'm going to say it anyway, that the opposite of this verse is true. You could say, “Cursed is the nation whose God is not the Lord.” I fear that is the direction our country is headed. Should our nation continue on this course of stripping away God from its conscience, no doubt one of the most terrible outcomes of this trend will be abandoning our support for the Nation of Israel. No empire in history has survived when it turned against the Nation of Israel. Psalm 122:6 commands us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Regardless of what our political and judicial components of government say, we must stand firm in our support and prayers for the Nation of Israel.

In verses 15-17, we learn about two sticks being joined together. The symbolism is not only obvious, but also it is spelled out that each stick is representative of the northern kingdom and southern kingdom being brought together as one nation. If you can believe it, Joseph Smith – the founder of

the Mormon church, has referenced these Scriptures that speak of “Joseph” being him – not the Joseph from Genesis – Jacob’s son. He is claiming these Scriptures give Him the divine authority to be the prophet he claimed to be. Anyone who believes this needs some serious help or a lobotomy. The Scriptures clearly mention Ephraim, one of Joseph’s sons (from the Bible), in the same sentence stating they’re one and the same. It is so sad how easily people can be deceived.

Chapter 37 concludes with the promise that God’s servant David will be king over the reunited kingdom. At this point, He is speaking about the Millennium – the 1,000 years following the great tribulation. Some scholars believe that David will be resurrected and be the shepherd during this period, but most scholars, which I subscribe to, believe this is referencing the Lord Jesus Christ. The promises of forever living in the land and having peace must be comforting to the Jews who are under constant threats of attack, which we are now going to get into.

I think it would be helpful to take a pause and review where we are today in the timeline of Biblical History. I’m going to go through these slides pretty quickly – they will be up on the web-site tomorrow along with the rest of the slides and the text of this message. I’ve created a timeline but I want to offer a precaution. You’ll notice that the bottom line is numbered 1 to 7. Each number represents one thousand years. I have chosen the last number as it is my belief that there is enough context in Scripture that the number 7 is symbolic of completion. In other words, the entirety of the human race before it enters into eternity once and forever will span 7,000 years. Again, I want to emphasize this is my belief – I am not proclaiming it as a certainty.

That being said the first 6,000 years I am going to point out are a fairly widely held and agreed upon statements of fact. The first step in human history was creation. This is described in Genesis 1 & 2. The next major step was the fall as described in Genesis 3 – this is the sad point in time where Adam and Eve sinned and handed over the title deed to the earth to Satan. Some 1,600+ years later came the great flood and Noah - as laid out in Genesis 6-8. Beginning with Abram – later to be called Abraham – in Genesis 12 and all the way through the book of Malachi, we get the birth and life of the Nation of Israel.

With the arrival of Jesus and during His life, this would put the Nation of Israel, in a sense, on hold in the prophetic timeline. Because of the Jews rejection of Jesus, this opened the door to a period of time where people could be adopted into the blessings of being God’s children. This is otherwise known as the Church Age, which began on the Day of Pentecost and is covered in Scripture from the book of Acts to Revelation 3. We are currently in the Church Age, but the question that we should be asking is ‘where are we in the life of the church age?’ It’s been about 2,000 years so far which is very interesting to me. When Jesus came on the scene, it had been about 4,000 years since Adam & Eve. So if you take 4,000 plus the 2,000, that puts us at about 6,000 years of human history as of today.

The next major step in Biblical history will be the Rapture as noted in 1 Thessalonians 4. There is also going to be a 7-year period known as the Great Tribulation. The timing of the Rapture is subject to debate within the church. There are three primary positions:

1. Pre-tribulation – assumes that the church will be taken out prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The belief is

the rapture will actually be the event that kicks off this horrible 7 years.

2. Mid-tribulation – this position assumes the first 3 ½ years of the 7-year period will not be so bad – there will actually be peace between Israel and its enemies. However, at the end of 3 ½ years, the antichrist will enter the re-built temple and demand to be worshipped as god – this is known as the abomination of desolation.
3. Post-tribulation – this group believes the church will go through the entirety of the 7-year period and will be raptured up just before Jesus' 2nd coming.

Getting back to our reading, we get into chapters 38 and 39 where we learn of a massive attack waged against the Nation of Israel. The LORD tells Ezekiel to set his face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. Gog is a word for ruler, meaning roof, which actually means “the man on top”. Magog means “head”; it is the Hebrew word “Rosh”. This is believed by most scholars to really mean Russia. Meshek and Tubal are widely believed to be Moscow and Tobolsk – an area in Siberia. So this prophecy is making the case that this invasion of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation will be a coalition of several countries led by Russia. This is an extraordinary prophecy as God specifies the name of a country that isn't even in existence at the time of Ezekiel's writing.

Other countries mentioned are Persia – which is modern day Iran; Cush – believed to be modern day Ethiopia; Put, which is Libya; Gomer – most likely the eastern part of Germany and Poland; and Beth Togarmah –

today's Turkey, Romania, the countries of the former Yugoslavia including Slovenia and Croatia – collectively the Balkan states.

To give you an idea of the geography that is involved in this coalition, I've put up this map. Israel is about the size of the state of New Jersey, so from a human perspective, there's no way little Israel can ward off this huge coalition. Here's the thing – this battle isn't against Israel – it's against the God of Israel, and this coalition will be no match for the protective power of God.

This coalition will develop an evil plan to attack peaceful and unsuspecting people – living in unprotected areas. We then learn of some countries who are going to protest this plan. Who are they? Sheba and Dedan are believed to be Saudi Arabia, and Tarshish is considered to be England.

There are some interesting verses that are worth noting in Chapter 38. Ezekiel 38:4 says, “**I** will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.” Ezekiel 38:16, “In days to come, Gog, **I** will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.” What are we seeing here? God Himself is drawing the coalition into the battle. What methods is He using to draw them into this invasion? Given the abundance of natural gas and lush agriculture, the primary motivation is money.

For the remainder of chapter 38 and chapter 39, we read of God's destruction and what's left after the destruction of the coalition. It is hard not to see some parallels to these descriptions of this exchange to a significant launching of nuclear weapons. We should note that once a country gets a

hold of a significant weapon, there is little, if any history when, at some point, the weapon is not used. Verse 19 of chapter 38 speaks of a great earthquake – could that be the result of multiple nuclear detonations or could it be God letting this coalition know He is a jealous and protective God, and He’s going to protect His chosen people?

Chapter 39 describes the aftermath of this exchange; the surviving people will use the coalitions weapons for fuel for seven years. The dead bodies will be given to the birds and wild animals. It will take seven years to bury all the dead bodies. This will be done in an area called the Valley of Hamon Gog.

Verses 25 & 29 sums up God’s restoration of the Nation of Israel, “I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.” What a glorious day that will be.

Ok – we’re in the final stretch. Let’s get back to the Biblical history timeline. At the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return with us in our glorified bodies and wipe out the invading armies. That will usher in a 1,000-year period of unparalleled peace under the reign and rule of the Lord Jesus. This is known as the Millennium as described in Revelation 20.

The Millennium’s length is intriguing to me. It is 1,000 years. As I mentioned earlier, today represents roughly 6,000 years of human history. 6,000 plus 1,000 equals 7,000, and that, as I also said earlier, is the number of completion in Scripture. This final timeline slide is a little different as it attempts to mark the key dates in Israel’s history since the writings of Ezekiel back just before 600 A.D. Now this timeline is obviously not proportional in time, but I hope it gives you some perspective of where I

believe we are in the prophetic timeline. By most accounts we are currently somewhere in Chapter 37 – there are no remaining prophecies that I know of that need to be fulfilled prior to the rapture. I believe we are in the last of the last days.

In what is known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave us some clues of what the end times were going to look like in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. It's worth noting a couple of quotes the Lord says about these times.

Matthew 24:12,14: “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold... And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” It is hard not to see the rapidly growing tidal wave of wickedness and the corresponding coldness of indifferent hearts in this world today.

I could go on a long time about this – most of you probably think I already have. The truth of the matter is we don't know when the rapture is going to take place, Jesus said in Matthew 24:36: “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

I believe we are very close to being called home, folks. So what should we be doing? Getting the Word out to everyone we know who doesn't yet know the Lord Jesus. While we're doing this, we should be watching for His return and praying Maranatha – come quickly, LORD. Let's pray.