

END TIMES AS PICTURED IN THE FALL FEASTS
WEEK 5 - WHAT'S GOD UP TO?

THINGS ARE NOT FALLING APART – THINGS ARE FALLING INTO PLACE!

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. On the 6th day, God created man and told man that he would have dominion, man would rule over all the earth. Scripture tells us that it was “very good”.

What happened? Enter Satan who offered Eve a pleasant proposition – to eat of the forbidden tree – to eat of the fruit forbidden by God. It wasn't enough that God had given Adam and Eve the entire world. It wasn't enough that God walked with man, that God fellowshiped and communed with man. Man wanted more! And so Adam and Eve both ate of the forbidden fruit – and sin entered the world.

God, because He is God, judged sin! He MUST because He is holy! BUT GOD – in the midst of judgment on sin – IMMEDIATELY promised the REDEEMER – Jesus. He MUST – because God is merciful!

God is in the redeeming business. As soon as sin entered the world, God provided man with a way back to Himself. God began reconciling man to Himself. God began saving people one-by-one. And He continues to do so today.

What is God up to? God is up to BEING GOD!

AND, when God cursed Satan – the conflict began. We see the battle of the ages throughout Scripture – God vs. Satan. BUT GOD is ALMIGHTY, OMNIpotent, OMNIscient, OMNIpresent. Satan is NOT on par with God. Satan's powers are limited.

II Tim. 1:7 – God didn't give us a spirit of fear but of power, and love and of a sound mind!

Why do we see so much turmoil particularly in the Middle East?

What's up with Israel? GOD! God is protecting Israel. God has chosen Israel for His purposes. God has guaranteed Israel's survival. Therefore, Israel remains in existence today – and will remain so. God chose Israel to accomplish His purposes. God did not choose Israel because of anything Israel has done. God didn't choose Israel because He has more love for Israel or because they were bigger or better. God chose Israel because – God chose to do so. God's choosing of Israel is based on GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE! And, God chose Israel as the instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18). Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4 – “Salvation is of the Jews”. What does that mean? God chose Israel as the channel through whom the Messiah – Jesus – would come. God's end times plan – which culminates in RESTORATION and the knowledge of the glory of God filling the earth – surrounds ISRAEL.

And so God has placed Israel in the CENTER of history and in the
CENTER of Bible prophecy!

Do you think Satan is thrilled at this? Satan hates God. God chose Israel to accomplish His purposes – His plan. So – Satan hates Israel. If Satan succeeds in destroying the Jewish people, then God's eternal plan is thwarted.

Did you know that Israel will initiate the Second Coming of Jesus? Zechariah 12:10ff tells us that when God pours out His Spirit on the third of the Jewish people who are left at the end of the Tribulation, they will mourn for Jesus, they will CRY OUT for Jesus - and Jesus will return. At Jesus' Second Coming, when He establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, Satan will be bound. Do you think Satan is looking forward to this? Thus the battle rages! DON'T interpret Scripture by current events. Interpret current events by Scripture!

God chose Israel to accomplish His purposes past, present, and future. AND SO Israel continues to exist – against all odds. Israel, the size of NJ, is alive today. Israel has been surrounded by enemy nations that have desired to annihilate Israel.

CONSIDER: any attack to do away with Israel is an assault against God
Who has chosen Israel to accomplish His purposes.

Nations have attacked Israel and engaged them in war. In the War of Independence in 1948, in the Sinai Campaign in 1956, in the Six Day War in 1967, in the Yom Kippur in 1973 God fought for Israel and against all odds – Israel survived! And the majority of the world has come against Israel accusing Israel of war crimes as Israel defends herself. Israel is not popular in many circles. BUT GOD is protecting Israel. WE NEED TO KNOW that God's protection of the nation of Israel does NOT mean that every Jewish person will come to faith in Jesus. Just as God is calling individual Gentiles to place their trust in Jesus – God is calling individual Jewish people to place their trust in Jesus!

God has placed Jerusalem in the eye of the storm – so that God can be glorified. God's name is in Jerusalem – II Chron. 6:6 - *I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there.* Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years (Isa. 2; Zech. 14; Rev. 20). Is it any wonder why God would tell us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psa. 122:6)? Jerusalem is where God's plan of redemption – of salvation – is anchored! And so all eyes in the world are on Israel – on Jerusalem! And we see God work out His plan – as the conflict continues!

The prophet Zechariah focuses on events leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus. Jerusalem is ground zero for these events.

Zech. 12:2-3 - *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³ And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.*

What is this cup of drunkenness in Zech. 12:2? Jerusalem is pictured as a large basin from which the nations will figuratively drink only to find themselves intoxicated,

disoriented – not thinking clearly. Aren't we seeing that happening? Nations have told Israel to step down from defending themselves!

And those who would heave Israel away (Zech. 12:3) – what does that mean? I'm suggesting that it's talking about those who fail to see God's plan for Israel – who might wish to annihilate Israel – to see Israel thrown into the sea – who might claim that God is finished with Israel!

What is God's response?

Zech. 2:8 - For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.

Apple of the eye – the pupil. God is protecting Israel. God has chosen Israel for His purposes. Coming against Israel is assaulting God! God has guaranteed Israel's survival. Therefore, Israel remains in existence today – and will remain so.

Joel 3:2 - I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.

Zech. 12:3 - I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces....

Zech. 12:8 - In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem... against ALL nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zech. 12:8 is speaking of the war of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation. Yet, we are seeing this intoxicating effect on nations today.

There is so much conflict in the Middle East – and the entire world is impacted by that conflict. Plans to bring about peace in the Middle East have been proposed for years. The peace talks always fail. Only Jesus' physical return at His Second Coming will bring peace.

In Dan. 9:27 we read that the seven-year period leading up to the Second Coming of Christ – the Tribulation - will begin when a coming ruler "will make a covenant/a peace treaty with many for seven years (one week)" A covenant/peace treaty will be made with Israel. Who is that coming ruler? The antichrist. We know from the book of Daniel that the antichrist will break that peace treaty after 3.5 years. . . Dan. 9:27 - *Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*

AND, in the second part of the Tribulation, the antichrist will go after the Jewish people and Christians with a vengeance never before seen. Rev. 12:13-17 - *Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman (Israel) who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was*

enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In II Thess. 2:4 we're told about a third Temple. Israel will be allowed to rebuild her Temple in Jerusalem. It will be the third Temple. They have been preparing to do so for years. The Temple Mount Faithful has established a small museum with replicas of the clothing of priests who ministered and served in the Temple in Jerusalem in Solomon's day and in Jesus' day – and with replicas of implements that were in the Biblical Temple – the 7 branch lampstand/menorah, the table of showbread, and other utensils and musical instruments.

And it is in this third Temple during the Tribulation that the antichrist will set himself up to be worshipped by those left on earth. II Thess. 2:3-4 tells us that . . . *the man of sin will be revealed. This is the antichrist, the son of perdition* (damnation; eternal punishment), ⁴ *who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

Much conflict surrounds Israel! The conflict began in the garden of Eden – when God cursed Satan and promised THE Redeemer (Gen. 3:15).

Jerusalem is the largest threshing floor noted in the Bible. King David was told by God to build an altar on a specific threshing floor (I Chron. 21:18ff) (owned by Ornan the Jebusite). This threshing floor became Jerusalem. What's a threshing floor? Where threshing was carried out. During threshing the grain (the good part of the wheat) is separated from the chaff (the useless part). The threshing process could be as mild as tossing the wheat up into the air with a winnowing fork and letting the wind off the Mediterranean carry the chaff away – causing the grain (good part of the wheat) to fall to the ground. The threshing process could dictate that the separation of the grain from the chaff is carried out through beating or trampling on the wheat. The Hebrew word for "thresh" is "to trample" which comes from one of the threshing practices of using oxen to trample the grain. Threshing in Scripture is indicative of TRIBULATION, of JUDGMENT in Scripture. Jerusalem had been used as a threshing floor in OT times (I Chron. 21). Jerusalem continues to be trampled upon today. Jerusalem has indeed been in the eye of the storm – BUT ALWAYS under God's protection!

How do we understand the current turmoil?

Psa. 83:1-5 - *Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God!* ² *For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head.* ³ *They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones.* ⁴ *They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, That the name of Israel may be remembered no more. For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You:*

Psalm 83 addresses the formation of a confederacy, predominately Arab nations, who seek the utter destruction of the nation Israel. These nations are contemporaries of each other. What we read in Psalm 83 is more than a basic list of Israel's historical enemies. Israel had more enemies than mentioned in Psa. 83. The Psalmist is asking God to frustrate this conspiracy against Israel. Bible scholars have noted that at no period in Israel's history has such a confederation of nations amassed against Israel.

Psa. 83:13-18 - *O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind!* ¹⁴ *As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire,* ¹⁵ *So pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm.* ¹⁶ *Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD.* ¹⁷ *Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; yes, let them be put to shame and perish,* ¹⁸ *that they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.*

If Psalm 83 is indeed prophetic, might we soon see a Middle East war resulting in the Arab countries surrounding Israel losing land to Israel in an Arab-Israeli war and perhaps losing oil fields. Given God's protection of Israel, through such a war Israel might indeed be the VICTOR!

We need to remember to pray that these nations come to know God through Jesus!

Consider the aftermath of an Arab-Israeli war in which Israel is the victor. The world would be reeling and raging from the fallout!

How many of you have heard of the war of Gog and Magog? Scripture uses this title – “Gog and Magog” – for two wars. One occurring at a time NOT specified – and one occurring following the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom.

Rev. 20:7-9 - *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison* ⁸ *and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.* ⁹ *They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

We are going to look at the first war of Gog and Magog in Scripture – in Ezekiel 38 & 39. This is the war of Gog and Magog that is not quite clear re: a timeframe.

Eze. 38:3-6. God is speaking to Gog (a title for the ruler of Magog) of the land of Magog. Magog is thought to be modern day Russia. Magog's ancestors - the Scythians who settled north of the Baltic Sea in which is now Russia per the Historian Josephus) — *Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh (chief), Meshech, and Tubal.* ⁴ *I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.* ⁵ *Persia, Ethiopia and Libya are with*

them, all of them with shield and helmet; ⁶ Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah (modern-day Turkey) from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you.

Eze. 38: 7-17 - Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. ⁸ After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. ⁹ You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you. Thus says the Lord GOD: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: ¹¹ You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates’— ¹² to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? ¹⁵ Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. ¹⁶ You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.” ¹⁷ Thus says the Lord GOD: “Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?”

Several nations (not all nations; this is NOT Armageddon) will come against Israel – Russia with Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya, and others – along with modern-day Turkey – coming from the FAR NORTH (Eze. 38:6). Eze. 38:15 tells us that Gog comes from the far north. Moscow is almost due north of Jerusalem!

What about the enemies of Israel directly surrounding her? Is there a notable omission in Ezekiel 38? Not one of the Arab nations immediately surrounding Israel is listed as participating in this campaign against Israel. Perhaps it’s because they’ve been crippled by the recent Arab-Israeli war - ?? Perhaps. Perhaps this alliance of nations invades after the Arab nations surrounding Israel have been negatively impacted – after Israel has perhaps gained wealth from the spoils of war and control over multiple oil fields. Perhaps.

Russia’s motive in invading Israel will be to take plunder and booty – to take Israel’s wealth. In this passage, Israel is noted as a land of unwalled villages, a peaceful people who are dwelling safely without walls and having no bars or gates. Is that Israel today? They are back in the land after being gathered from the nations. Are they, however, dwelling “safely”? The word speaks to being secure. It can speak to having confidence. Israel is secure in that they are a confident nation militarily. However, there are currently walls up in Israel which protect Israeli populations against suicide bombers. Living

without walls and dwelling “safely” might very well be the way of life in Israel following an Arab-Israeli war based on Psa. 83 – in which Israel scores VICTORY!

God is going to cause this? The Lord is bringing about this invasion? WHY?

Eze. 38:18-23 - And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” says the Lord GOD, “that My fury will show in My face. ¹⁹ For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: ‘Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, ²⁰ so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother ²² And I will bring him (Gog) to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. ²³ Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.”’

The Lord clearly tells us that the nations will know and understand that this has happened by God’s hand. Many will know that God is the Lord! Eze. 38:20 - *The earth shall shake at My presence.* Many will come to know Jesus in the midst of judgments and catastrophes. Many will not.

Where does this War of Gog and Magog fall in light of the Tribulation? Through the War of Gog and Magog, the world will witness GOD defending ISRAEL! Wouldn’t the world desire to make peace with Israel? What a seemingly perfect time for the antichrist to step onto the scene and solve all the problems by brokering a seven-year peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:27). In Rev. 6:2 – the first seal Jesus opens on the scroll (the title deed to the land/earth) reveals a rider with no arrows in his bow! The antichrist will initially conquer via peace.

I’m suggesting that the War of Gog and Magog that we find in Eze. 38 and 39 occurs perhaps AFTER the Rapture of the Church but BEFORE the Tribulation. I’m suggesting that it is this war of Gog and Magog that precipitates/leads to the peace treaty.

What of an Arab-Israeli War? Conditions that we’re witnessing in the world today might very well be leading up to GOD making Israel’s enemies like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind – GOD severely crippling Israel’s surrounding Arab neighbors! YET – I read last week that a big oil deposit has been found in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, with enough reserves to last Israel for decades, according to the country’s media. The Israeli presence in the Golan Heights is in dispute. The region is internationally recognized Syrian territory that has been occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and several Arab states. UN Resolution 242 (1967) demands the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories occupied in the conflict. Israel disagrees with the wording of the resolution, saying the territories are disputable.

Moses' final blessing of the 12 tribes of Israel includes the tribe of Asher which is located in the extreme north of Israel – near the Golan Heights! Deut. 33:24 - *And of Asher he said: "Asher is most blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil*

How is this comforting to us as the Church – comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus? Jesus told His disciples at the last Passover Seder He shared with them the night before His crucifixion in the Upper Room: Let not your heart be troubled; . . . ² *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also* (John 14:1-3).

What we are reading in John 14:1-3 is the Rapture of the Church – the catching away of the Church – the Church meeting Jesus in the air - which I'm suggesting occurs before the Tribulation. We read about the Rapture in I Thess. 4:16-18 - *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.* ¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS. If the Rapture occurs in the middle of the Tribulation or at the end of the Tribulation – that wouldn't be so much a comfort would it? Take comfort in I Thess. 5:9 - *For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ* The Tribulation is the outpouring of God's wrath on the world – to test the world The Tribulation is for the purpose of the purging of Israel and the judgment of the nations. Rom. 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*

During the Church Age, God is saving individual Jewish people and Gentile people – one at a time. This is where we need to focus. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psa. 122:6). Jerusalem is indeed in the eye of the storm! But take comfort in God's plan. Jesus is returning to Jerusalem. AND GOD promises to make Jerusalem a PRAISE IN THE EARTH! (Isa. 62:7) If God can do this – because He is GOD – He can give us the spirit of power, love, and of a sound mind – as we watch and wait for Jesus.

And when the seven years of Tribulation are ended, the saints, the redeemed, will return to earth with Him.

WHAT IS GOD UP TO?

Rev. 19:11-16 - *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.* ¹² *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had^[e] a name written that no one knew except Himself.* ¹³ *He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.* ¹⁴ *And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,^[f] followed Him on white horses.* ¹⁵ *Now out of His mouth goes*

a sharp^[g] sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

This is Whom we worship and serve. And in HIM we REJOICE! AMEN?
AMEN!

QUESTIONS

What is your view of end times? How do you view Psa. 83? How do you view Ezekiel 38? Why?

How will you live – as a believer in/follower of Jesus – in light of what Scripture teaches about end times?

What is your “take home” from this lesson?

Any V8 moments?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Map out your view of end times with Scripture references.

Is God leading you to share with someone/some people re: salvation through Jesus?

Read the next handout when you receive it.