

## JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

### Week 1 – The Story

“The account of Jesus and the kingdom He came to establish has deep roots in the soil of Israel’s history. For centuries, the strip of land between the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea and the western boundary of the Arabian Desert has been – and continues to be – ground zero for ongoing conflict between good and evil. The conflict is – and will be cosmic, NOT political. Therefore it is no accident that Jesus was born there or that His destiny was so intricately intertwined with the future of Israel.” (Chuck Swindoll, *The Greatest Life of All, Jesus*, p. 61)

God made a covenant with Israel. A covenant is an agreement. The covenant that God made with Abraham is a unilateral, unconditional covenant which means that it’s one-sided (unilateral). The covenant is on God’s side – period! God has obligated Himself, He has committed Himself to fulfilling the promises He made to Israel through Abraham. Abraham’s descendants, the Jewish people – no matter what they do – or don’t do - are not going to thwart God’s plan to fulfill His promises re: the land, the Messiah, and salvation (salvation is always through the Messiah, Jesus!). God promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Israel, and the Messiah Who would sit on King David’s throne and rule and reign, and salvation exclusively in this Messiah.

The Abrahamic Covenant will give you the foundation for your Bible study in this class and in moving forward as you attend other classes and hear sermons. The Abrahamic Covenant is the GLUE of the Bible!

How do we define Israel? . . . the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Scripture tells us that the Messiah would come through the Jews (Gen. 12:3; Dt. 18:15-18) – He would come through the line of Judah (Gen. 49:10). It was prophesied! And it is specific! Those prophecies have been literally fulfilled. We see the profile of the Messiah through the Messianic prophecies that God gave to Israel. The Jewish people were the ones looking for the Messiah.

We cannot separate Jesus from Israel. Many Jewish people received Jesus as their Messiah – in Jesus’ day through now. The NATION of Israel as a whole, however, did not receive Jesus as their Messiah. In fact, Jesus’ rejection by the nation of Israel was prophesied (Psa. 22; Isa. 53).

God chose the NATION of Israel for His purposes. God is using the NATION of Israel to accomplish His purposes – for the world. God is setting the stage for end times – and it all surrounds Israel. There are approx. 13 to 15 million Jewish people on the entire planet. Why do we hear about Israel every day in the news? The story of Israel is the story of God! The story of Israel is the story of the Messiah. Israel, as a NATION, doesn’t yet understand this. NOTE: even Israel’s rejection of Jesus has furthered the eternal plan of God for WORLD redemption – salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Romans 11:11-15 – *“I say then, have they stumbled (temporary stumbling) that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall (temporary fall), to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. . . . For if their being cast away (temporarily) is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”*

God will fulfill His plan of redemption for the WORLD through Israel! She fills a specific role in God’s plan. Therefore, spiritual warfare rages around Israel! God has guaranteed Israel’s survival. She is the apple of His eye. *“For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you (Israel); for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.’”* (Zech. 2:8; see also Deut. 32:10). We would then expect the Jewish people to occupy the center stage of world history, and they do. And, around her spiritual warfare is raging. Thus, there is not a week that goes by without Israel being in the news.

Why are Jewish people called God’s “Chosen People”? They were chosen: to receive the law and function as the custodians of the law; to serve as God’s witnesses (Isa. 43:10), to tell the Gentile nations surrounding them about the one true God – the God of Israel; to be the channel through whom the Messiah would come; to serve as an instrument of blessing to the world (Gen. 18:18).

God choosing the NATION of Israel does NOT guarantee that every Jewish person will come to a saving knowledge of their Messiah, Jesus. However, God’s choosing Israel to accomplish His purposes does guarantee that – God’s purposes will be accomplished!

One of the threads that runs through Scripture is God’s cry to Israel. In the OT God told the Jewish people that they were to repent and return to Him as a NATION – the NATION of Israel was to embrace all God’s promises including the promises of the Messiah (Isa. 42-Isa. 53; Isa. 55; Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 36; Hosea 5; Malachi 4). The NATION of Israel, however, has not as yet come to believe in Jesus. While God has always had a REMNANT of Jewish believers throughout the ages (Isa. 1:9; Isa. 6:13; Rom. 11:5). . . while there are approx. 250,000 Messianic Jews, Jewish believers, today -- as a NATION they are unrestored – not saved – not born again.

Has God forsaken Israel? Paul tells us in Romans 9, 10, & 11 – NO – God forbid. God has not forsaken Israel! God is using Israel – as a NATION to set the stage for end times – for what God is going to accomplish for the world. In Matthew 23:37-39 – Jesus told the Jewish people during the week leading up to His crucifixion that their house (the Temple) would be left to them desolate and that they would not see Him again UNTIL they said, “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.” I love that word “UNTIL”!! What HOPE is wrapped up in that word “until.” God is a God of restoration. Will Israel say that? Will they welcome Jesus with, “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord”? YES! At the end of the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, two thirds of the Jewish people will die (Zech. 13:8-9). The one third left at the end of the Tribulation will come to faith in Jesus when God pours out His Spirit on them (Zech. 12:10).

The Bible presents to us the prophetic picture – the future picture - of Israel’s destiny as it is wrapped up in Jesus! Yes – Jesus, Israel and prophecy are intertwined – they are inseparably linked.

Psalm 121 – *“Unto the hills will I lift up my eyes, from where does my help come? My help cometh from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth!”*

Psalm 121 is one of the songs of ascent that Jewish people sang on their way up to Jerusalem for the feasts. (Jerusalem – 2700 ft. above sea level). God gave Israel seven feasts when they were in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai. We find those feasts in Leviticus 23. The seven feasts point to the Messiah. Jerusalem was PACKED during the feasts – especially three of the feasts! Jerusalem was known to hold 2M+ Jewish people at three of the seven feasts each year.

God’s directive to the Jewish males found in Deut. 16:16-17 – *“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. . . .”* Three times a year, at Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), and at the Feast of Tabernacles, all males were to appear before the Lord – in Jerusalem. All the feasts days – the seven feasts that God gave Israel (Lev. 23) looked forward to a fulfillment. The feasts are prophetic. They tell the story of Israel. They tell God’s story! All the feasts point to the Messiah – to Jesus. He is the rest of the story!

Israel was a nation in waiting. They were always anticipating. God told them to anticipate – to wait upon His fulfilling the promises He had made to them – according to His story. The priests watched, the people waited, and God delivered on His promise to send the Redeemer because. . . one day – “. . .when the fullness of time had come – God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. . . .” (Gal. 4:4)

In that day, Jesus came!

On that Bethlehem day in approx. 6 BC, Messianic prophecies were fulfilled literally – at His birth. The angel came to Jewish shepherds who were watching their flock of sheep – the sheep that were destined to be sacrificed in the Temple! These sheep that were designated to be sacrificed were kept in an area just north of Bethlehem called EPHRATHAH. That was a ruling – made by the Rabbis. Those sheep meant for sacrifice had to be born and kept at a location which was within a certain radius from the Temple in Jerusalem. Ephrathah was in that radius!

Micah 5:2 – *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”*

The Magi – Gentile astronomers/astrologers from the East – Babylon/Persia - who reported to Daniel – a faithful Jew who was carried into captivity – to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar placed Daniel in charge of the Magi. The book of Daniel is all about the time of the Messiah – when He would come. Do you think Daniel shared this with the

Magi? YES! Generation upon generation of Magi told the story. And so, in 4 BC give or take a year, Magi from the East came bearing gifts for the King of the Jews.

The Gospels are not the beginning of a new story. They are the continuation of THE story. This is how we need to understand and study the Bible. We've been given a story – it's one long sacred story. It's God's story. As our sovereign God, His will – will NEVER be thwarted! What God has decreed will come about. That's a foundational truth. The outworking of HIS story is rooted in Who God is! He is holy, just, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, loving. He does NOT change! He will deliver what He has promised – and to the people to whom it was promised!! And God has progressively unfolded that story to His people, Israel. Not all doctrine was given at once to Abraham. God gradually revealed His plan to Israel.

The Jewish people – throughout Scripture – were told to REMEMBER the story. To rehearse the story (through the feasts) and to TELL the story. *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* (Deut. 6:6-9)

Scripture tells the story of the Lamb. John 1:29 – Behold the Lamb of God – a Lamb comes on the scene in the Gospels. So? Who is this Lamb? Is this something new? Remember – the NT is a continuation of the story. We have to know what came before. Scripture teaches that there is a lamb for a person, a lamb for a family, a lamb for a nation, a lamb for the world, and a lamb for eternity.

In Genesis God introduces a lamb – it's a lamb for a person. In Genesis 22 we read of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac. BUT a ram takes Isaac's place on the altar. BUT a future Lamb is spoken of – that God would provide. And that Lamb would be God Himself (Gen. 22:8).

In Exodus 12, the first Passover is observed. The lamb is reintroduced. God provides a lamb for each household – but God specifically states that the lamb is according to each man's need. That lamb is slain and its blood is smeared on the lintel and doorpost of each home that observed the Passover instructions – that obeyed God!

In Isaiah 53 that Lamb is identified – it's the Messiah Who would be crucified for the nation of Israel – and for the world!

So we read in John 1:29 – “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.” We have a Lamb for the world.

In Rev. 22:1, 3 we read – *“And he showed me a pure<sup>[a]</sup> river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>3</sup> And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”* We have the Lamb for eternity!

In Scripture, we see foundational truths surrounding Who God is – His attributes – Who He is – His reputation – He is holy, perfect, righteous, just, loving, gracious, merciful, unchanging, longsuffering. . . .

And, based on Who God is, we see principles in Scripture – because God is God and we are not – because God is holy and mankind is sinful – we see God providing THE way to be reconciled (to have a right relationship with Him) to Him.

We see the principles that come into play in Scripture when we realize who we are in light of this holy God. God calls upon us to humble ourselves, to confess our sin, to communicate with Him because He has initiated communication with us.

And we see themes/threads in Scripture. The Lamb is a thread that we see woven through the Scriptures from the OT onward.

By these threads/themes we can understand how the teaching of Jesus at His first coming fits into/connects with the teaching of the OT/Hebrew Scriptures. And we see the continuity of Scripture!

What other themes or threads do we see in Scripture?

- Grace
- God dwelling with man
- Redemption
- Israel
- The nations/Gentiles

And so Jesus came. He ministered primarily to the Jewish people at His first coming. BUT God's plan was that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6). In that gap between Jesus' first and second comings, the Church was birthed at Pentecost 50 days following Jesus resurrection. Paul calls the Church a "mystery." The Church is a mystery! What does that mean? A "mystery" in the Bible is a hidden truth not revealed in the OT (Eph. 3:3-5, 9; Col. 1:26-27). The Church was always part of God's plan; it was not revealed in the OT, however. God's plan of redemption always included Jews and Gentiles (Isa. 49:6). However, we don't find the Church in the OT.

The OT has many verses about a time of trouble and a time of blessing. To whom was God speaking in the OT? The Jewish people/Israel. Who would experience this time of trouble that we have labeled as the Tribulation? The world of non-believers (Jews and Gentiles) – of those who have rejected Jesus – who are left – in the FUTURE – after a peace treaty has been signed between the antichrist and Israel.

What is the Tribulation? It is a future period lasting seven years during which time the world will experience the greatest suffering it has ever known. The Tribulation will be a time of God's wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. A common statement among believers: "I believe that the Church will go through the Tribulation because the Bible says that we will suffer for our faith." The Bible does tell us that believers will suffer trials and persecution – John 16:33b; II Tim. 3:12. The question is will the Church experience the trials of *the Tribulation* – the wrath of God? I Thess. 5:9 – "*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We need

to discover the meaning and purpose for the Tribulation. What is God's purpose for the tribulation? Firstly, we need to know that the tribulation in Bible prophecy is the period of time that begins with the signing of a covenant between Israel and the antichrist (Dan. 9:27) and ends seven years later at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. God's basic purpose for the tribulation is the purging of Israel and the judgment of the Gentile nations. Jer. 30:7 – “*Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.*” The tribulation is specifically called the time of Jacob’s trouble. Who’s Jacob? The father of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob’s name was changed – by God – to Israel!

Eze. 22:17-22 – “<sup>17</sup>*The word of the LORD came to me, saying,* <sup>18</sup>*“Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver.* <sup>19</sup>*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.* <sup>20</sup>*As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you.* <sup>21</sup>*Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst.* <sup>22</sup>*As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have poured out My fury on you.’”* (See also Ezek. 20:33ff)

Mal. 3:3 – “*He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD AN offering in righteousness.*”

Dan. 12:1 - “*At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.*”

Joel 3:1-2 - “*For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> 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.*”

Dan. 9:24-27 – Context: the angel Gabriel is telling Daniel of the restoration that God has carved out for Israel. The 70 week prophecy of Daniel [Dan. 9:24-27] does not speak of the Church.

In speaking to the church in Philadelphia, the faithful church, Rev. 3:10 tells us - “*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*”

The Tribulation – the entire seven years – is for the purging of Israel and for the judgment of the nations. God’s wrath comes about at the outset of the Tribulation. The Church has not been appointed to wrath (I Thess. 5:9).

THE STORY. . . TO BE CONTINUED!

"Watch the Lamb"

Walking on the Road to Jerusalem, the time had come to sacrifice, again.  
 My two small sons, they walked beside me down the road,  
 The reason that they came, was to watch the lamb.  
 "Daddy daddy, what will we see there? There's so much that we don't understand,"  
 So I told them of Moses, and Father Abraham. . .  
 And then I said, "Dear children, watch the lamb."  
 There will be so many, in Jerusalem today, we must be sure the lamb doesn't run away,"  
 And I told them of Moses, and Father Abraham. . .  
 And I said, "Dear children, watch the lamb."  
 When we reached the city, I knew something must be wrong  
 There were no joyful worshippers, no joyful worship songs.  
 I stood there, with my children, in the midst of angry men,  
 Then I heard the crowd cry out, "Crucify Him!"  
 We tried to leave the city, but we could not get away.  
 Forced to play in this drama, a part I did not wish to play.  
 Why upon this day were men condemned to die?  
 Why were we all standing here, when soon they would pass by?  
 I looked and said, "Even now they come,"  
 The first one pleaded for mercy, the people gave him none.  
 The second one was violent, he was arrogant and loud,  
 I can still hear his angry voice, screaming at the crowd.  
 Then someone said, "There's Jesus!"  
 I scarce believed my eyes, a man so badly beaten, He barely looked alive.  
 Blood poured from His body, from the thorns on His brow,  
 Running down the cross, and falling to the ground.  
 I watched as He struggled, I watched Him as He fell,  
 The cross came down upon His back, and the crowd began to yell.  
 In that moment I felt such agony, in that moment I felt such loss,  
 Till the Roman soldier grabbed my arm and screamed, "YOU! Carry his cross!"  
 At first I tried to resist him, but his hand reached for his sword,  
 So I knelt and I took the cross from the Lord.  
 I put it on my shoulders and started down the street  
 The blood that He'd been shedding, was running down my cheek.  
 They led us to Golgatha, they drove nails deep in His feet and hands.  
 And on the cross, I heard him pray, "Father, forgive them..."  
 Never have I seen such love in any other eyes  
 "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," He prayed, and then He died.  
 I stood for what seemed like years, I lost all sense of time,  
 Until I felt two tiny hands holding tight to mine.  
 My children stood there weeping, and I heard the oldest say  
 "Father please forgive us". . . the lamb, ran away.  
 Daddy daddy, what've we seen here, there's so much that we don't understand,"  
 So I took them in my arms, we turned and faced the cross. . .  
 And I said, "Dear children, watch the lamb."

**QUESTIONS:**

Any V8 moments? Share one or two.

What have you observed/heard that was new to you?

How would you explain “the story” in Scripture?

What other threads/themes have you seen in Scripture?

**SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:**

- As you study the Scriptures, begin observing what the text says and begin to decipher to whom God is speaking: Israel or the Gentiles; Israel or the Church.
- As you study the Scriptures, begin to see the foundational truths about God. Note these truths in a study journal.
- As you study the Scriptures, begin to see themes and note those themes in a study journal.
- Ask questions about your observations.
- Begin to find answers to your questions from the Bible!

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

*The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* - LaHaye/Hindson

*The Popular Bible Prophecy Workbook* – LaHaye/Hindson

*The Complete Book of Bible Prophecy* – Mark Hitchcock

*Understanding End Times Prophecy* – Paul Benware

*Exodus* – Leon Uris