

THE BIG PICTURE OF SCRIPTURE THROUGH THE MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS

Week 2 – Bless Israel? WHY?

January 30, 2024

God the Holy Spirit inspired all Scripture. Every word and every part of Scripture is inspired, God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16). And, the Holy Spirit illuminates. Illumination means “turning on the light” of understanding (Isa. 11:2; Psa. 119:18; Eph. 1:17-18). As we study God’s word, let us always remember to ask God the Holy Spirit to give us the understanding of His word...and to give us much joy in our study. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit of God!

Re: the big picture of Scripture, what four words broadly summarize the one narrative of the Bible? CREATION FALL REDEMPTION RESTORATION: God will restore His original creation-His original plan for the world!

Genesis 12:1-3 - *Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family And from your father’s house, To a land (“ereztz” earth; territory; piece of ground) that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* God gave to Abram unconditional promises - no strings attached – no obligations on Abram and his physical descendants. The obligation re: the fulfillment of the promises/re: God alone delivering on those promises falls on God alone (Gen. 15:12-21; Heb. 6:13)! God gave to Abram personal promises, national promises, universal promises.

Genesis 18:17-18 - *the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*

Gen. 12:1-3 and Gen. 18:17-18 are foundational in our study of Scripture.

Who are those represented in Gen. 12:2-3?

1) God, 2) Abram & his physical descendants of “a great nation,” 3) others, not belonging to “a great nation,” who bless Abram and his lineage, 4) others, not belonging to “a great nation,” who curse Abram and his lineage. God, Israel, and the world. And, within the world, there are two groups within this context...based on their view of Israel. One group blesses Israel; one group curses Israel.

Who are the parties within Gen. 18:18?

God, Abraham and his descendants, and ALL the nations of the earth!

Why bless Israel? What does bless mean? “Bless” in Hebrew: *barak* – to bow; to kneel; to be adored!? “Blessing” in Hebrew: *baraka* – a praise; a gift. “Curse” – when people are handed over to the consequences of their sin (Rom. 1:18-32).

Kneeling/bowing down before a human?

There were already 70 nations specified in Gen. 10 which came from Noah’s 3 sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. NOTE: for the first 2,000 years of the world, there were no Jews and no Gentiles. There was mankind – most worshiping multiple gods! We are introduced to Shem’s

descendants in Gen. 10:21-31. Shem, the father of all in Eber (Heber) - “from the region beyond.” Shem’s descendants are continued in Gen. 11:27-32.

In Gen. 12, God called Abram, from Shem’s lineage, away from his country and family and into a land God showed Abram – to make of him a great nation.

2

Why did God create one nation (Isa. 43:1) seemingly separate from the 70 nations?

Gen. 6:5 - *the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Gen. 8:21 – Following the universal flood, *the imagination (intent; thought) of man’s heart is evil.*

God will restore His original creation-His original plan for the world!

God chose Israel to accomplish His purposes for the world!

- Isaiah 43:10 states, “‘You are My witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘and My servant whom I have chosen.’”
- God chose Israel that the world may know that He is God! I Sam. 17:46, I Kings 8:43, Josh. 4:24, II Kings 19:19, Isa. 52:10; Ezekiel – 63X – “Then they will know that I am the LORD”!!
- God chose Israel as the channel through whom the Messiah would come – at His first coming (Micah 5:2; Luke 2) and at His second coming (Matt. 23:37-39; Zech. 12:10)
- God chose Israel to be used as an instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18)!

The reason for blessing Israel and her ultimate restoration is - God’s glory!

Our “blessing Israel” is blessing God. It is bowing the knee to God. It is acknowledging God’s sovereign choice of Israel. It is acknowledging God’s significant calling of Israel in God’s plan for the world!

- In Zechariah 12:3 God warns that “. . . all who would heave (lift) it (Jerusalem) away will surely be cut in pieces. . . .”
- When we “bless” Israel, we are acknowledging their place in God’s plan – and the focus is upon God.
- It does not mean that we are to support every decision made or each action taken by the modern State of Israel which is not restored as yet. The nation of Israel will be restored at the end of the tribulation when God pours His Spirit upon them (Zech. 12:10). Only born again people (Jewish and Gentile) will enter the Millennial Kingdom/the Kingdom of God (Matt. 25:31-46).

Re: “. . .I will curse them that curse thee. . . .”

- Who has God cursed because of their treatment of the Jews?
 - Egypt – Pharaoh wanted to make it difficult for the Jews (Ex. 1:9-11); God reversed it and sent the plagues upon Egypt (in the form of Egyptian gods!).
 - Pharaoh wanted the Hebrews’ male children killed (Ex. 1:16) – during Passover. Within the homes without the blood applied, the first born (mostly Egyptian) was killed (Ex. 12:29-30).

- Pharaoh wanted first born drowned (Ex. 1:22). In Ex. 14 – chariots and horsemen of Egypt drowned.
- In the book of Esther, Haman persuaded King Ahasuerus to issue a decree to destroy the Jews. Haman had the gallows built for Mordecai the Jew. Haman was hung on the gallows.
- The Spanish Armada was a power to be reckoned with on the high seas. During the Inquisition, Jews were forced to convert. Today, in place of the Armada, there are fishing boats.

3

- It was said that “the sun never sets on the British Empire”. After the Balfour Declaration was composed in 1917 creating a homeland for the Jews, the declaration was rescinded in Britain. The sun now sets on the British Empire. . . .“
- In the 1940’s, Jews were in hiding. Following WW II, Nazi war criminals were hiding.
- History has borne out the truth of Gen. 12:3

“Did God choose Israel and not the other nations?”

God chose Israel through whom He would showcase God’s redeeming grace (unmerited favor) and righteous judgment!

The nation of Israel was chosen to reflect God’s character to all the nations. Through Israel, neighboring peoples and all nations in the known world discovered the results following Israel’s obedience to God and Israel’s disobedience. God had Israel on a short leash!

Eze. 5:5 - “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. 6 She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations... 8 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. So that the world would know Who this God is Who graciously redeems and righteously judges!

*Psa. 67:1-2 - God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, Selah
 2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.*

God blessed Israel and brought them out of bondage showcasing His deliverance (physical deliverance pointing to transformation through the Messiah when He appears). The desire of God has always been for the world to know Him as God!

It has been said that God wanted a people who would serve as an example to the world – NOT of how they behave, but of how GOD behaves – more theologically – of WHO GOD IS!

Through the Hebrew Scriptures, God pointed the Jewish people and the world to Jesus the Messiah (Luke 24:44 – through the law/the promises, the prophets and the writings).

God chose Israel to be the channel through whom the Messiah/the Savior of the world would come (John 4:42).

God chose Israel “FOR” the other nations

Based on Gen. 12:1-3 and Gen. 18:18, let’s re-visit Isa. 1:1-4

The vision of Isaiah... Isaiah means “Yahweh/Jehovah is salvation”

...the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw because it was a “vision” literally concerning Judah and Jerusalem

...during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. During their reigns there were great struggles. Isaiah ministered for at least 58 years from approx. 739 BC to 681 BC. The Kingdom of Israel in the north fell to the Assyrian Empire in 722 BC. Babylon conquered Assyria. The book of Isaiah primarily foretells the fall of the southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon a little more than 100 years later in 586 BC. Isaiah's message to the Kingdom of Judah was to trust in God Who had promised them a glorious kingdom through David).

² *Listen, heavens, and hear, earth;* This appears to be a courtroom scene! God intended Israel to be a channel of blessing to the nations. Instead, God must call the nations to look on Israel's shame and in calling upon creation, it appears that God is stating that creation would agree. God promised that through the nation of Israel, the nations will be redeemed and CREATION will be transformed from the curse and its effects [Rom. 8:19-22]) Because of man's sin, the creation

4

was subjected to futility/uselessness. Creation will benefit from the ultimate redemption of man (Rom. 8:21). During the Millennial Kingdom when Israel is restored, there will be harmony among the animals and people and animals (Isa. 11:6-9). But, until that day, *creation groans and labors with birth pangs* (Rom. 8:22).

(continuing with Isaiah 1:2b...)

...for the LORD has spoken: 'Sons I have raised and brought up we observe a close relationship.

...but they have revolted against Me. God is stating that Israel, His children, have rebelled against Him, speaking about disobedience to the Mosaic covenant.

³ *An ox* (known for being submissive) *knows its owner, and a donkey* (known for its stubbornness) *its master's manger* (feeding trough; food supply).

...but Israel - this is the nation that God created through Jacob whose name was changed to Israel [Isa. 43:1] *does not know, My people do not understand.* How is Israel God's people? Through God's unconditional covenant with Abraham – the fulfillment of God's promises will be in the FUTURE. The rebelling on the part of Israel was against the Mosaic Covenant which is a conditional covenant.

Israel did not know God nor did they realize that He was her Provider. By being rebellious, the nation failed to carry out God's commands, which proved that they did not really "understand" God.

⁴ *Oh, sinful nation, people weighed down with guilt, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly.* All the effects of sin are noted!

They have abandoned (left) *the LORD, they have despised* (abhorred/hated) *the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him* (have become estranged – alienated; have become a stranger).

Throughout the prophetic books: judgment and HOPE! After hearing such offenses weighed against Israel by God in Isa. 1:1-4, we read of His mercy!

Isa. 1:9 - *Unless the LORD of hosts* (hosts-the angel armies engaged in warfare) *had left to us a very small remnant* (survivors; leftovers), *we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.* In other words, if there was no remnant, Israel would've been destroyed. Remnant - A remnant is a left-over amount from a larger portion or piece. Although

remnants are typically looked upon as worthless, God assigns high value to those of His people whom He has set aside for holy purposes, those He labels as “remnants” in several places in the Bible. “Remnant” designates the faithful Israelites. God’s judgment rained down and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Had God’s grace not intervened upon Israel, He would have judged Israel in the same way. God had obligated Himself in delivering on His promises to Israel based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Hope continues amidst the judgment:

Isa. 1:18 – ‘*Come now, and let us reason together,*’ says the LORD, ‘*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*’” God, in His graciousness invited His sinful people to come to their senses and admit their sin. The word “reason” is a legal term used of arguing, convincing, or deciding a case in court. The people were to be convinced by their reasoning with God that He is right and they were wrong about their condition. Their sins are seen in this verse as blood-colored stains on their souls (scarlet, a red dye made from a worm, and crimson, red-colored cloth. God would cleanse them, making them white as snow.

5

ISAIAH - The Bible in Miniature

How many chapters does Isaiah have? 66. How many books are in the Hebrew Scriptures? 39.

How many books are in the NT? 27

- There are two sections in Isaiah regarding the historical narrative.
- First section – chapters 1 through 39 represent the 39 books in the OT.
- Second section – chapters 40 through 66 represent the 27 books in the NT.
- The first section is clearly different from the second:
- Genesis 1-3 speaks of how God created the heavens and the earth, how He created Adam and Eve, and how they sinned against God. God placed enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Genesis 1-3 lines up with...
 - In Isaiah 1:2 – “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken (creation of the world), I have nourished and brought up children (Adam & Eve) and they have rebelled against me.”
 - Malachi, the last of the 39 books, ends in vv. 4-6 with ‘*Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.* ⁵ *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.* ⁶ *And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*’!! This is the way the OT ends!
- Isaiah 40 is the beginning of the second part of Isaiah lining up with Matthew which is the 40th book of the Bible.
 - How does Isaiah 40 begin? *Comfort yes, comfort My people.* “Comfort” – to console; to express compassion; to speak to the heart. God’s heart for the Jewish people continues. This should speak to us!
 - Isaiah 40:3 - *The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’*

○ NT counterpart – Matthew 3:1-3 – *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying. . . ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.’*

QUESTIONS:

Any “aha” moments? Share....

What impacted you? Why?

What are your questions?

What are your thoughts re: Israel? Have they changed since studying this lesson?

What are your thoughts re: Isaiah thus far?

Will you be sharing any of what you learned with someone? If so – what?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread Week 2 with the Bible references.

Begin a journal. Jot down your observations and questions.

Pray about with whom God would have you share what you’re learning.

Read through Week 3’s handout when you receive it.