

GateCity Church

Cry Out- Standing with Israel in the Last Days

Hazen Stevens - Sunday, May 21, 2023

I. Introduction

- A. Review: In the previous weeks Hannah took us through God's covenants with Israel that characterize His heart of mercy, and span the generations of the story from Abraham to Jesus. In the next two messages, we are going to hone in on God's purpose for Israel in the last days, and how the Church must prepare herself to stand with Israel through the most trying times of antisemitism in human history. Through rightly understanding the prophecies of scripture concerning the last days, we can be ready to partner with God's plan in prayer, proclamation, power, and perseverance through the adversity of the days to come.
- B. Today we are going to explore a way to approach the Bible called 'Biblical Theology'. This approach looks at the story of scripture as a whole as the means by which we interpret and derive meaning from its various parts. We will see that when we take a 'Biblical Theology' approach toward scripture the subject of Israel becomes of paramount importance. God's story shows us Israel is important.
- C. We also understand that it isn't just valuable to grasp God's past dealings with Israel, but also through interpreting the story of scripture, we discern God's future purposes for Israel in the last days. The specific details of which, we will explore in greater detail in part 2 of this message: Standing with Israel in the Last Days.
- D. In that teaching, we will glean from the contemporary example of Nazi Germany, and be inspired by heroic believers who stood with Israel and for God's purpose during those perilous times. Just as Hitler and Nazi Germany serve as a foreshadowing of the corruption and evil of the future Anti-Christ's rule, so too believers of that time are an inspiring example of how we can heroically stand against tyranny and anti-semitism.
- E. A forerunner people who are preparing the way for the King of Israel must understand the story, so they can partner in faith with His coming.

II. Biblical Theology

- A. D.A. Carson's Definition: Carson says that "biblical theology . . . seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of all the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves."² So what does that mean? It means that biblical theology is particularly concerned with the diverse

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literary and historical contexts of the story, and so attempts to relate the meaning of the story in the terms of the story itself. For example, biblical theology traces out the development of sacrifice and covenant, *not because those are particularly relevant contemporary terms*, but because these are the **terms and agenda that the story itself gives us**. As Tom Schreiner has summarized, biblical theology “asks what themes are central to the biblical writers in their historical context, and attempts to discern the coherence of such themes.”¹

- B. The world does have a true story. The Bible tells it... **To do biblical theology is to think about the whole story of the Bible.** We want to understand the organic development of the Bible’s teaching so that we are interpreting particular parts of the story in light of the whole. As an acorn grows into an oak tree, Genesis 3:15 grows into the good news of Jesus Christ.² (See Appendix)
- C. One of the primary aims of biblical theology is to understand and embrace the worldview of the biblical authors. In order to do this, we have to know the story we take for granted, the connections they see between the events in that story, and the ways they read later parts of the story by the light that emanates from its earlier parts. *The Bible has a narrative arc that begins at creation, rises over all that has been and will be, and lands at the end of all things.*³
- D. The prophetic and poetic parts of the Bible provide interpretive commentary on the story, and **the apocalypses unveil the way things are and will be.** The Bible’s big story, this overarching narrative, is also built out of smaller stories. At the same time, the stories told in the Old Testament work together to set up a mystery resolved in Christ.⁴ Biblical Theology gives value to what the whole of scripture has to say, it doesn’t allow us to pick and choose the parts of the story we like or find helpful and only ascribe value and meaning to those.
- E. Jesus Himself was a proponent of “Biblical Theology” he contextualized and interpreted the controversy of the day, (in this case his own death!) in light of the larger narrative of scripture concerning Messiah. His critique of His own disciples on the road to Emmaus is they had lost sight of the larger story.

¹ <https://www.crossway.org/articles/3-ways-to-define-biblical-theology/>

² Hamilton Jr., James M.. What Is Biblical Theology? (p. 13). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

³ Hamilton Jr., James M.. What Is Biblical Theology? (p. 13). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Hamilton Jr., James M.. What Is Biblical Theology? (p. 13). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

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1. **Luke 24:17** He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. **18** One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” **19** “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. **20** The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; **21** but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. **22** In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning **23** but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. **24** Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.” **25** He said to them, **“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” **27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.****

F. In summary, when we interpret scripture through the lens of Biblical Theology, we are understanding the narrative and themes **in light of what the story as a whole tells us to be important and true.** This is different from letting cultural trends, people’s felt needs, or a topical approach to bible study inform what is important.

G. Where the church is emphasizing cultural battles, personal blessing, and benefits, and not emphasizing God’s unfolding narrative, we become set up for deception, in that we are only building on partial truths and an incomplete understanding of God’s unfolding story.

H. Just like the disciples on the road we discern God’s activity (‘prophet powerful in word and deed..we had hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel...they had seen a vision of angels...’) but can be left in confusion because we lack the clarity that only comes with knowing and interpreting these events in light of the larger story.

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- I. In essence, when approaching Scripture with Biblical Theology, we let God's larger story reveal to us the places of significance and importance rather than us reading into parts of the story the things we see as important or meaningful.
- J. **Why is this relevant to the study of the topic of Israel?** Topical approaches to Bible study, 'felt need' preaching and an emphasis on cultural relevance will cause us to almost entirely eliminate a paramount subject in God's great story: The topic of His purpose for Israel.
- K. The truth is you may not understand why Israel is important because you have been reading the Bible only valuing the parts that seem important to you, as opposed to reading it to understand what it can tell us about God and what is important to Him.
- L. Certain subjects like this can seem entirely irrelevant to our day-to-day lives, until we discover the hand of the master story weaver is bending the arc of history according to His sovereign purpose, and then suddenly what seemed irrelevant yesterday to our day-to-day lives, is of utmost importance today.
- M. Knowing the story that has come before helps us understand our present chapter, and the present chapter may also be the most significant part of the story; *the dramatic culmination of human history*. As the end draws closer and closer, it will become increasingly important for us to understand the prophecies surrounding Israel in the final generation, because they are a very significant part of HIS story.

III. Prophetic Vignettes of History

- A. God often will use prophetic encounters and words in the Bible to allude to the bigger themes of history. There are many places where this happens in scripture where we are given God's perspective on past, present, and future events with a global perspective. I want to highlight two of these places to show how God's view of history is very Israel Centric.
- B. We will look at the history of the anti-semitic nations as seen through the lens of the visions of Daniel and John found in Daniel 2 and Revelation 13 & 17.
- C. In the book of Daniel we get a survey of upcoming global events that also are tied to the events at the end of the age through both Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, and the later visions and angelic encounters of Daniel.

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Today we will just start with the former because it is the most simple to understand.

- D. For those unfamiliar with the story, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar of that day (who had taken Daniel and his companions captive from Israel) had a troubling dream that was so important to him, he wanted to be sure the interpretation was really of divine origin, and being skeptical that none of his 'wise men' could really give a divine answer, he threatened to kill them if they did not both tell Him the dream and interpretation. Young Daniel and his companions courageously ask for more time to receive an answer from their God. They fast and pray and cry out to God for understanding, and Daniel is given both the dream and its interpretation.
- E. We pick up the story where Daniel stands before the King preparing to hopefully give the dream and its meaning. Imagine the suspense of that moment, you are about to give a prophetic word that if it is wrong, you could lose your life.
1. Daniel 2:27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, **28** but there is a **God in heaven who reveals mysteries.** He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these...
 2. Daniel 2:31 "Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue —an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. **32** The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. **34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands.** It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. **35** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. **But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.**
 3. Daniel 2:39 "After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. **40** Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. **41** Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. **42** As the

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toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. **43** And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. **44** **“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.** **45** This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

- F. In Daniel 2, commentators mostly agree there are 4 specific nations that both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar receive revelation concerning. These were the future global powers, and they also each would play a role regarding the Jewish people. Those nations are: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then the final Anti-Christ Empire is represented by the clay and iron mixture.
- G. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, these are the successive world empires that will rule over Israel until the time of Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD by the Romans, but the statue that represents these gentile nations will ultimately be shattered by the coming Messiah and his ever-increasing Kingdom.
- H. It is a prophecy that is “near-far” in that the near fulfillment of Messiah’s coming came during the rule of the Roman Empire, but the final shattering of those anti-semitic nations is reserved for the final generation of the Lord’s return when a composite nation will arise that is representative of those nations that have persecuted the Jewish people.
- I. The message is simple, every idol of humanity, and the Kingdoms of this age that oppose the Kingdom of God will be subdued and supplanted in the second coming of Israel’s Messiah. When you see this survey of history from the time of Babylon to the destruction of Jerusalem, we understand that God views history with an Israel-centric lens.
- J. Revelation also paints a similar picture that tells this same story. Revelation 13:2 combines features of the four beasts described in the prophecy in Daniel 7: 2-8, including the appearance of a leopard, the feet of a bear, a lion’s mouth, and ten horns. The beasts in Daniel’s prophecy are named as specific kings and political kingdoms, that rule as successive empires. (Daniel 7: 17, 23) Thus, the wild beast of Revelation chapter 13 represents a composite political organization of

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the anti-semitic world powers up to that time, with two remaining to appear on the world stage.

1. Revelation 13:1 And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. **2** The beast I saw resembled a leopard (*Greece*), but had feet like those of a bear (*Medo-Persia*) and a mouth like that of a lion (*Babylon*). The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. (*Italics added*)

K. In Revelation 13 & 17 we see a beast representing the Anti-Christ's empire in the last days, most commentators agree this beast empire is composed of all 7 of the predominant anti-semitic nations that ruled throughout history.

1. Revelation 17:9 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. **10** They are also seven kings. **Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. 11 The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.**

L. These nations are most commonly understood to be: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece (5 that have fallen), Rome (6th that is), and 7th mystery kingdom that 'has not yet come' and 'remains for short time', and an 8th king that is said to "belong to the seven" which is that of Anti-christ that is "going to his destruction".

M. This could be understood to mean the final anti-christ will be both a culmination of the proceeding power and draw upon their historical legacy to establish its global power. We see an example of this in how Hitler appropriated previous historical legacies to try to create credibility and seeming divine destiny.

1. See "Why was Nazi Germany called the third Reich?" <https://www.britannica.com/story/why-was-nazi-germany-called-the-third-reich>

N. It has been conjectured that Nazi Germany may be the 7th antisemitic kingdom that 'is not yet' and will remain for a short time.

O. If that is the case, we may find ourselves at the moment where 7 of the 8 anti-semitic nations have come and gone from the world stage, and the final culmination of the eighth that composes all the horror and oppression of the previous seven anti-semitic empires is about to come to power in the earth.

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P. We don't need to be fearful, because these kingdoms and their confederation go to destruction and will be shattered by the stone 'not carved with human hands'. But we must understand and prepare for what is coming upon the whole earth, and how it will geo-politically and interpersonally effect our lives. The most adverse time in history is coming, and the issue of Israel will be at the heart of it.

1. Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. 22 “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive...

IV. God's Israel-Centric View of History

A. Consider when God tells the history of the rise and fall of nations, the thing that binds the narrative together is how those nations related to and treated Israel.

B. There are so many nations that have affected the course of history, but God chose to focus on these nations in telling the story of the last days because God's view of history is Israel-centric, and the controversy at the heart of the global conflict at the end of the age will involve the Jewish people.

C. Another way to say it is that when God looks at human history while we might be concerned about the geo-political machinations of great powers, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the economic power of China, the nuclear threat of North Korea, as examples. Yet God is mostly guiding the affairs of all nations in the last days toward a predetermined end game **that centers around Israeli as a land and a people, and crescendos with the return of their messiah to Jerusalem.**

1. Zechariah 12:3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.
2. Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! **38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you that you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"**

D. If Israel was insignificant they would not be so consistently the recipients of Satan's rage, as seen through events like the holocaust. Our adversary Satan

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knows this, and that is why throughout human history he has tried to destroy the people who must ultimately declare from Jerusalem, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

- E. In part 2 we will look at the best modern example of an anti-Semitic empire (Nazi Germany) and see what was required of believers to stand with Jews during the days of Hitlers ascendancy.

- V. Call to Action: An invitation to the wisdom needed to understand God's larger story and the unique role of Israel in it.

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VI. Appendix: Example of Biblical Theology, Narrative of Israel's Messiah

A. Consider the coherent prophetic narrative that exists concerning Messiah from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 19 in these 11 passages. The story is woven together over generations with coherent narrative themes, from the law, prophets, psalms, gospels, epistles, and the book of revelation.

1. The seed

a) Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[a] and hers; he will crush^[b] your head, and you will strike his heel."

2. The seed will come from the Abraham, whom God choose as the Father of Nations. But the story of this promise foreshadows that the seed must die for it to bear fruit.

a) Genesis 22:15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 **and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,[c] because you have obeyed me.**"

3. Galatians 3:8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: **"All nations will be blessed through you."**

4. The seed will be a king from David's line, and rule from Israel all people's

a) 2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; **your throne will be established forever."**

b) Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ***Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will***

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reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

- c) Luke 1:32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,
5. The king of Israel will inherit, rule, and judge the nations
- a) Daniel 2:34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. **But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.**
- b) Revelation 11:5 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, **"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."**
- c) Matthew 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. **32 All the nations will be gathered before Him,**
- d) **Revelation 19:11** 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... **15 Now out of His mouth goes a [g]sharp 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
- e) Psalm 2:1 Why do the nations conspire^[a] and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles." 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. 5 He rebukes them in his anger

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and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, **6 “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”** **7** I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father. **8 Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,** the ends of the earth your possession. **9** You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”