

Returning To Israel!

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Bible Text: Jeremiah 23:3
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And our text is Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse three. That is something because one of those ladies is a graduate of Pensacola Christian College and the other one is a graduate of Bob Jones University. Now who thought we would bring those two together? And, brother Chase, if Bob Jones calls, you may be in trouble for putting Pensacola and Bob Jones together. If Pensacola calls me I will say the song leader did it and I didn't know anything about it, ok? So I will be all right on my side.

Ok. Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse three.

“And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.”¹

Now shall we pray?

Father, we want to once again rightly divide your Word. Your Word is precious, but it is also absolute. And we want your folks and your people and your children instructed in doctrine, in righteousness and to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And I pray, Lord, that this would help your people. If there is one in our auditorium today or those that may be listening by the internet who does know that if they died today that heaven is their home, I pray that today would be the day they receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior in Jesus' Christ's precious and holy name. Amen.

Excuse me.

God established the nation of Israel in fulfilling his promise to Abraham. Those priests and prophets who for filthy lucre preached and taught liberty to the flesh, tickled the ears and said, “Thus saith the Lord,” when the Lord had not spoken, are most accountable before God.

However, let me warn. They are most accountable, but all men are responsible before God. All men from the king on down in that day as well as in this day are responsible for their decisions. We may grow up and be influenced by bad surroundings, bad

¹ Jeremiah 23:3.

environments, but God is greater than all of our surroundings and environments. He has given us a free will to make right decisions regardless of the environment in which we grew up.

Now today you have a lot of seminars on the homes. There is one preacher that said, "There are no bad children, only bad parents."

I wonder if that was something they found in the Bible. I have read the thing through now ever since 1974 every year and not yet found that. I don't know how I miss it each time.

Well, that goes against our free will, does it not? And, yes, when you read Ezekiel chapter 18 you find that the Father is not held responsible for the sins of the son, neither is the son held responsible for the sins of the father. Each of us, the New Testament tells us, will give an account of himself unto God. However, bad parents, a bad environment can have an influence if a man does not walk with God and doesn't do what he is supposed to do.

I have known some well known preachers, great men of God. If I mention some of their names you would know them and you would say, "Oh, yes, those were great men of God. They must have had great parents."

Yet you find out that some of them had brothers and sisters that were no good, the dregs of society. So how do you blame that on the parents and say, "Well, that was the parents fault, but the son that followed God, we don't know what happened there"?

No, everybody has a choice. God created you with a free will. You are not a robot and you are not a dog, ok? Although there are Arabs that say we are. And some of us look like dogs. But we are not. We are not that. He gave us the ability to discern right from wrong, if we truly want to know what is right and do it.

I am reminded of Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:7.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"²

Yes, there will be temptations. There is going to be all kinds of temptations in that world that we face and in our free will we have to make a decision. But also understand, woe to that person by whom the temptation comes. It is going to be worse for those than those that give into the temptation.

Now what is being said now in this chapter is that there is a future return to the land for Israel. However, this is referring to the day of the millennium after the second advent of Christ. In other words, at the end of the tribulation, when Jesus comes back with his saints and he touches his feet on this earth and he sets up his kingdom, there is this

² Matthew 18:7.

regathering which this passage is addressing for us today. It is talking about the return to the land in which the Lord gathers these people back to the land.

Now our text says, “I will...”

Those are God’s words. God is speaking. In verses one and two he condemned the pastors, the priests and the prophets—which would be equivalent to our pastors and evangelists today—for scattering the sheep with false doctrine, for saying what the sheep wanted to hear instead of feeding them in the green pastures of God’s Word.

In other words, they followed where the sheep wanted to wander and they said, “That’s ok,” instead of leading them into God’s green pastures.

Now you will notice verse two when you look at it, it says, “Thus saith the Lord God.” And verse two also ends with “saith the Lord.” So when verse three begins, “And I will gather...” who is speaking? The Lord. I mean it is very plain. This is God speaking. And you need to get that in your mind because this, then is a promise of God.

Jeremiah writes about it, but it is God’s promise.

Now notice. “... the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them...”³

Men today speak of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, but the truth of the matter is the Bible doesn’t tell us they are lost. It tells us they are scattered. In Ezekiel 37 we see they are brought back. In Ezekiel 48 they are brought back. In Revelation seven at the beginning of the tribulation, they are brought back. They are back.

These people will be identified by their tribes. I believe that they will be identified in the Tribulation if not before the Tribulation.

Listen to Revelation chapter seven verses three through eight.

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the

³ Jeremiah 23:3.

tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.⁴

Now we are told there are distinctive tribes that will be identified and this passage I just read is from the beginning of the Tribulation. This is not the after the Tribulation is over. So this is something that will happen before the period of our text today.

Now I don't know if people are going to learn their tribes by archaeological finds, new types of DNA testing or just plain a supernatural work of God. However it is, they will know their tribe whether they are sealed Jews or unsealed Jews. They will know their tribe.

Now we look at the returning today of Jews from around the world. It is not the same as our text. It is not the same as the Second Advent. Now let me make a special note here. When I say Second Advent I am talking about at the end of the Tribulation. That is not the same as the Rapture. We say Jesus coming again, but when Jesus comes for us, he is going to meet us in the clouds. He is not going to touch earth. So it is not a literal Second Coming to the earth when we are raptured. But after the Tribulation, Jesus will return. And he will touch this earth and we call that the Second Advent. And then at that time also he will gather all those Jews scattered all over the world back in to their place.

Now let me say this. There will be a Jewish homeland that is thriving at the beginning of the Tribulation. I believe that even today's gathering is seen in the Bible. However, it is not the same as our text when God does this at the end of the Tribulation. But, nonetheless, I believe that we see the gathering together today is scriptural.

If one studies Deuteronomy 28, you will see that Israel will be scattered in all the nations of the world if they turn their backs on God and did not do his commandments. What they did and God did. They turned their backs and they were scattered.

Don't miss that he, God said, "All countries, all around the world."

There is an organized effort today in Israel to bring back Jews that are scattered around the world. Now they don't know their tribes, but they are trying to bring them back, but it is not the same as our text as when God gathers them.

However, it is important that the Jews today are going back to Israel for the beginning of the Tribulation period. Let me make this other note. If these people were driven by God to these countries, then it means they were also driven from Israel. You cannot regather the Jews if the Jews were never in the land of Israel. They were driven from their land. .

Now, I want to review the promise of God to Abraham because this is where it all lies of our understanding today. We don't need to understand what governments are saying, what political people are saying. We need to understand and know what the Bible says and bank on it totally.

⁴ Revelation 7:3-8.

In Genesis chapter 12 verses two and three, God speaking to Abraham said:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.⁵

Now we know by the Word of God that Abraham is the father of many nations. Some people get upset when Muslims in Arab nations says that Abraham is our father. Well, that is true. He is. Don't forget Ishmael was one of his sons. Later we find that Enoch was one of his sons and you see these others, Edom was one of his sons. So you have these different ones that were not what we call Jews, but they were sons of Abraham or they descended from Abraham.

However, God also specified to Abraham one of those nations would be blessed. One of those nations would be a great nation. And yet one nation in mind when he says, "Those that bless that nation will be blessed and those that curse it will be cursed." Many nations will come out of Abraham, but only one nation has that special blessing of cursing and blessing.

Now I find it interesting. I know the news media if they hear this they get upset. I know politicians get upset. Educators get upset. And I understand that. I understand them getting upset. I really do. If you don't have the Spirit of God, you don't understand the things of God. So they are going to get upset because they don't have the ability to understand because they don't have the Spirit of God. So they are not going to understand.

Now I found it interesting that right after our president said Israel has to go back to their 1967 borders, the midsection of this country got hit badly with tornadoes and not just once, a couple of different times. We hit Alabama and then we hit down there at Joplin and those areas around there. And then they were expecting good job reports and it didn't come out as they thought it was going to come out. The stock market has dipped each month since.

And that has nothing to do with politics. It has nothing to do with Democrat or Republican. It has to do with the Bible truth that says that God blesses those that bless Israel and he curses those that curse Israel. That is what it is about.

That is why when I vote for a person I want to find out where they stand on Israel, because if they stand wrong on Israel that affects me. If they stand right on Israel that affects me, ok, because I believe God.

In Genesis chapter 17 and verse 19 God further specifies this nation.

⁵ Genesis 12:2-3.

“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”⁶

Now we see, then, that the special nation that had this particular promise is, as verse 19 points out here in Genesis 17, the child of Sarah, not Hagar. His name is Isaac, not Ishmael.

Now, again, this is God’s promise. Next we see the son Isaac and God speaking to Isaac in Genesis 26 verses two and three.

And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father.⁷

Bless those that bless thee, curse those that curse thee. I will give you this land. The oath that God made to Abraham is now passed down to Isaac. And with that we read that the next son is Jacob who God renamed Israel.

And notice these promises from the book of books, the Bible. In Genesis 27:29 when Isaac blesses Jacob.

“Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.”⁸

Again, you have blessing and cursing.

Somebody says, “But, yeah, but that comes from Isaac. It doesn’t come from God.”

Well, let’s see God’s words, then, to Jacob who is Israel in Genesis 28 verses 13 and 14.

“And, behold, the LORD stood above it...”⁹

Remember the story of Jacob on his way? His parents have sent him out and he is in Bethel and he sleeps and God sends a dream and there is the ladder coming down from heaven. And he says:

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to

⁶ Genesis 17:19.

⁷ Genesis 26:2-3.

⁸ Genesis 27:29.

⁹ Genesis 28:13.

thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.¹⁰

A key to blessing for we who are Gentiles is to bless Israel ourselves. Now that is God's Word. That is not my Word.

If you read the book of Numbers chapter 34 you will see that the land is described. It tells you the borders of the land that will be given in that day. Now I believe that that is extended when they get into the millennium and you read that in the book of Ezekiel chapters 44 through 48. But right now for this era you see Numbers 34. From that day it was promised until the millennium. It was promised to Israel by God and Israel has never fully inhabited that because of their sins.

This promise was made in roughly 1450 BC, almost 3500 years ago. Let me say something. There is a roadmap for the Middle East. It is not in Washington, DC. It is not in Mr. Bush's roadmap. It is not Mr. Obama's roadmap and it is not the UN's roadmap. That roadmap is in the Word of God and it has been there long before those guys ever came on the scene. It is there and it will always be there.

You say, "Well, what about historically?"

You know, Israel was out of the land for a long time. Giving it back to them, wouldn't that be the same as us giving back Texas and New Mexico to Mexico?

Well, let us think about how the Jews claimed this land. Most importantly, above all, the land is God's promise to them. See, that is foremost. But, secondly, Israel settled and they developed the land back then. And then in our modern era, the international community granted political sovereignty in Palestine to the Jewish people. And the land that Israel now has, that they all are arguing about was won by Israel in a defensive war, not an offensive war. They didn't go out and to try to take it away from them. They were attacked and in defending themselves they took the land so that they couldn't be attacked in the same manner as before.

The history of Palestine is that the Philistine people came from the Aegean Sea area in around, oh 1200, 1300 BC. They settled along the Mediterranean Sea. They were eliminated as a race long before the Roman Empire entered the picture. In the second century AD the Romans first applied the name of Palestina to Judea, the area that we now call the West Bank. And it was Rome that called the Jews Palestinians at that time back in the second century AD.

Israel's first monarchy was actually in 1000 BC. Then went to captivity around 600 BC. They were back in the land recognized as their own but in subjection 70 years after they went into captivity. They built a second temple. That second temple was destroyed in

¹⁰ Genesis 28:13-14.

AD 70 by the Roman general Titus. However, Jewish life in Palestine flourished with large communities established in Jerusalem by AD 200. And then around AD 700, the seventh century Islam on its military campaigns destroyed much of the land and killed multitudes of the Jews.

However, a Jewish community was flourishing again by the ninth century in Tiberias. Those that have gone to Israel with me you remember Tiberias. And then after that in the 11th century, Jewish communities grew to Rotha, to Gaza, to Ashkelon, to Joppa and to Caesarea. However, in the 12th century multitudes of Jews were massacred by the Roman crusaders as Roman Catholicism killed not only Jews, but many Christians and 60 million died over a period of a few hundred years under this attack.

However, the community rebounded over the next 300 years with many rabbis and priests in Jerusalem [?] and the community surrounding the Galilee. In the early 19th century more than 10,000 Jews lived throughout the land that we today call Israel.

When Jews began to immigrate into Palestine in large numbers in 1882, there were fewer than 250,000 Arabs in that area. On top of that there was no independent Arab or Palestinian state that existed then, nor has ever existed in the past, never.

In 1917 during the Balfour Declaration a local Arab leader by the name of Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi told the Peel Commission, “There is no such country as Palestine. Palestine is a term the Zionists invented. There is no Palestine in the Bible. Our country was for centuries part of Syria.”

We shared with you some time ago how Jordan claims to be the Palestinians until King Abdulla II in 1998 changed that and gave it to these other Arabs and said, “No, now you are the Palestinians.”

Palestine Arab nationalism did not become a significant political movement until after the 1967 Six Day War with Israel when Israel captured the West Bank as we said in a defensive war.

The point is, Israel has maintained a presence for nearly 35000 years in that land. It is documented. As a matter of fact, in those areas around Jerusalem in 1948 the armies particularly of Jordan drove out many of those Jews that owned land right there and drew them, drove them out. They said, “Either leave or be killed.”

But in the 1967 war those land owners basically came back to their land. They were able to come back. Israel reclaimed what was occupied land by Jordan in the 1967 war that they fought in defense of their life and liberty.

Now look at the rest of the text verse, because, again, this speaks of the millennium.

“[He] will bring them again to their folds.”¹¹

¹¹ Jeremiah 23:3.

Israel is now in the land and they need to be there and prospering when the Tribulation starts. So I can see God's hand in Israel today although men don't see that, because men are without Christ that are in the positions of power today. And the Bible tells us they shall be fruitful and increase. And the Bible promise of the harvest being so great in the millennium that before it is all taken in, it will be time to plant again.

But even today that land that was so desolate, Israel has made it productive. It was my joy to be able to plant a tree over there one of the first couple of times I went over there to plant a tree and to do it. I had to pay 20 bucks for that thing, but I did it for Central Baptist Church. You know, and that was great. Said, hey Central Baptist Church has a place here in Israel. We planted a tree there. We are part of rebuilding.

And, you know, that was a blessing to my heart, to be able to do that.

Yes, the land belongs to Israel scripturally and historically and God will still curse those that curse Israel and he will bless those who bless Israel. But I am saying all of that to get to this point. Everything is coming together. Jews are returning to the land from around the world. When Russia with her coalition comes against Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation, Israel is thriving. They are not in danger as they are today of being attacked. Everything is coming together. But before Russia comes against Israel and maybe even before the walls are taken down in Israel, maybe before all of that, there is a Rapture. The Rapture could take place at any moment. It could take place even today.

And the reason I point that out is here is a land that the people who were away from it nearly 2000 years in the sense of being a nation, although there were people in there all the time, and you have never heard of any other peoples having that. Only Israel. Why? Because that was God's promise. He would keep them and he would preserve a remnant forever. And he has.

And now as we see them coming back together of which we will say more this evening, as we see them coming back together, it tells us the Rapture is near because these are signs of the Tribulation and we are out of here before the Tribulation. Jesus is coming.

And with that thought in mind are you 100 percent sure that if the Rapture took place today that you will be caught up to be with the Lord? Do you have a scriptural reason that you know that you would be?

And on the other hand you say, "Yes, pastor, I know that I would be taken up." Then do you have a Bible reason that says, "I would have crowns"?

You see, the Bible talks about crowns for certain things in the Christian life. Do you know that you would have crowns? Or would you be saved so as by fire? The day is approaching. The day is at hand. My friend, it is time to deal directly with God.

Let's bow our heads.

Father, in a moment, Lord, we are going to sing, "Have Thine Own Way" and I pray for that one that may be here that did not raise their hand. I just pray that that soul would get saved if nothing else, Lord, that you would just show them that you want to save them, that you love them and that you will save them. They have no sin that is greater than your divine love and power to save. And then I pray as well, Lord, for Christians, Lord, that are just living life, but not really living it for you, that if the Rapture took place today they would go in empty handed. And the pain of that on top of everything else would be that it would show they lacked love for the Lord, a lack of love for God. And I pray, Lord, that instead there would be an attitude of have thine own way in my life, oh Lord.

Father, for those that need to join the fellowship of the church, I pray that they would come down this aisle and be part of it. And we ask this in Jesus Christ's precious and holy name. Amen.