

END-TIMES ISSUES

#11 God's interaction with, and judgment of nations.

The land called "Israel" – WHO OWNS IT?

⇒ It's time for a "reality check."
 ⇒ What does God say?

People tend to argue back and forth on this issue. But it seems that everyone ignores one "small" detail...

Who owns Israel and the surrounding territory? (We might as well include the rest of the world.)

What does the Bible say?

... for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."
 1 Corinthians 10:26 (NIV)

... the earth belongs to the Lord.
 Exodus 9:29b (GW)

The heavens are yours. The earth is also yours. You made the world and everything in it.
 Psalm 89:11 (GW)

... everything in heaven and on earth is yours.
 1 Chronicles 29:11b (GW)

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.
 Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV)

["You/yours" refers to God.]

"... all the world is mine and everything in it."
 Psalm 50:12b (NLT)

In his hand are the deep places of the earth, and the mountain peaks are his. The sea is his. He made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
 Psalm 95:4-5 (GW)

Remember that the sky, the highest heaven, the earth and everything it contains belong to the Lord your God.
 Deuteronomy 10:14 (GW)

The land [of Canaan] is Mine, and you are but foreigners and residents with Me.
 Leviticus 25:23 (BSB)

Everything under heaven belongs to me!
 Job 41:11b (GW)

The whole world belongs to me, ...
 Exodus 19:5 (ERV)

THIS SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE!

["Me/mine" and "his" refer to God.]

WHY don't people pay attention to the fact that God own's ALL?

Reason #1 – Sin. It is *natural* for us to suppress this truth.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.
 Romans 1:18-19 (NIV)

Reason #2 – Ignorance. We must let Scripture *change* the way we think, before we can know the truth and learn how to live by it.

[You must] be transformed by the **renewing of your mind.**
 Romans 12:2b (NIV)

This is to undo the effects of:
Reason #1 – Sin.

Most people do not like what God's ownership implies.

- We are **accountable to God** (the land's owner, the ultimate owner of *everything* on earth).
- We **cannot live as we please** in the land, with complete disregard for the one who created and owns it.
- It **applies to every human on earth.** (It doesn't just apply to Israel or to Christians.)

★ God can **remove people** from the land – any land – and **replace them** with other people.

What this means, regarding Israel (basic issues):

- God owns the land of Israel, as well as the surrounding nations. He also owns where you live, and where I live.
- God has the right to **give** land to Israel, for as long as he wants. (Next time, we plan to see what Scripture says about this.)

Does God really do this? YES.

- ⇒ Many Scripture passages tell us that *God does it*. (We've already looked at some of them.)
- ⇒ The majority of the passages are related to Israel and the nations surrounding Israel, because *that specific part of the world is the Bible's focus*.
 - But it's not just an "Israel phenomenon"; it can happen to any nation. (There are examples of this.)
- ⇒ Even in matters that don't involve destroying and replacing nations, God uses all that occurs to accomplish his purposes – even when the people do not know him.
 - Example: God used a decree made in Rome, to control the lives of people who lived 1430 miles (2300 km) away ... in order to fulfil Scripture (Luke 2:1-7, compared to Micah 5:2).

7

**WHY does God remove/replace people?
WHY does God destroy people?**

- ⇒ Almost always, the reason has to do with the people's *wickedness* – especially if they know the truth and reject it.
 - Occasionally, there may be other factors at work, including random "time and chance."
 - Innocent people may have to suffer, because of the sins of the majority. (This is one of the horrible consequences of sin.) When this happens, the injustice will be dealt with at the final judgment. (If there are saved people, God will use the situation to accomplish *good* in their lives – Romans 8:28.)

WHEN WE LOOK AT EXAMPLES

- ⇒ We need to understand the Bible's view of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. These two concepts work together. (The *world* normally views them as being in conflict.)
 - Some passages will say God did it; others will say people (or something else) did it – all referring to the same event.

8

**HOW does God remove/replace people?
HOW does God destroy people?**

- ⇒ God can accomplish it through the direct actions of people (such as warfare).
 - He may use a more-wicked nation to punish a less-wicked nation, when that less-wicked nation has known the truth and rejected it.
 - He may use a weaker nation to destroy a stronger nation.
- ⇒ God can accomplish it in a variety of other ways.
 - He can use naturally-occurring phenomenon – earthquakes, hail, etc.
 - He can use panic, or misunderstanding by the people.
 - He can use an unexpected combination of circumstances.
 - He can directly intervene.
- ⇒ God can use combinations of any of the above.

9



Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!
Psalm 144:15b (GW)

⇒ God also **BLESSES** nations!

We've been focusing on the "destroying nations" issue, because that's the issue that most people refuse to accept. (Some won't even admit that it's in Scripture!)

10

The following slides show some of the **many** ways that God has been involved in the rising and falling of nations.

⇒ At the end are a few comments to think about.

- This issue goes far beyond the question of who owns the land called "Israel." God owns that land!
- God also owns the rest of the world – *and he can give it to whomever he wants*.
- He can also take land away from one nation and give it to another nation. (Many of the examples tell us the *reason* he did this.)



11

Examples – GOD's involvement among the nations.

- There will often be *parallel* statements, which tell us that God did something, and that the people did it. (This illustrates how, in Scripture, God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together.)

⇒ GENERAL STATEMENTS about God's involvement.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has exalted the humble.

Luke 1:52 (BSB)

He makes nations great and destroys them; He enlarges nations, then disperses them.

Job 12:23 (BSB)

He removes kings and establishes them.

Daniel 2:21 (BSB)

He drove out nations before them and apportioned their inheritance; He settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.

Psalms 78:55 (BSB)

12

General statement: God has done it in the PAST...

You have **rebuked** the nations; You have **destroyed** the wicked; You have **erased** their name forever and ever.

The enemy has come to eternal **ruin**, and You have **uprooted** their cities; the very memory of them has **vanished**.

Psalms 9:5-6 (BSB)

General statement: God will do it in the FUTURE...

... I am about to **shake** the heavens and the earth:

I will **overturn** royal thrones and **destroy** the power of the kingdoms of the nations. I will **overturn** chariots and their riders; horses and their riders will **fall**, each by the **sword** of his brother.

Haggai 2:21b-22 (BSB)

13

⇒ God's involvement in WORLDWIDE JUDGMENTS of nations.

(This can involve *billions* of people.)

The worldwide Flood in Noah's day.

- Because of the people's wickedness; only 8 people were spared.

The world was **corrupt** in God's sight and full of **violence**. God saw the world and how **corrupt** it was because all people on earth lived **evil** lives.

God said to Noah, "I **have decided to put an end to all people** because the earth is full of their **violence**. Now I'm going to **destroy them** along with the earth. ...

I'm about to send a flood on the earth to destroy all people under the sky—every living, breathing human. Everything on earth will die.

"But I **will make my promise [= covenant] to you**. You, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives ..."

Genesis 6:11-13, 17-18a (GW); see also Genesis 6:5-7; 2 Peter 2:5.

14

Jesus' return and the judgment associated with it.

- Worldwide wickedness; widespread persecution of God's people.
- Only those who belong to God will survive the judgment.

"I **will take vengeance** in anger and wrath on the nations that have not obeyed me."

Micah 5:15 (NIV)

When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and **he will rule** as king forever and ever."

... A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to defeat the nations. **He will rule** them with an iron scepter and tread the winepress of the fierce anger of God Almighty.

Revelation 11:15; 19:15 (GW)

15

⇒ God gave land to ABRAHAM'S and LOT'S DESCENDANTS.

(It wasn't just given to *Israel*.)

Descendants of Esau – the Edomites.

I **have given** Esau the hill country of Seir as his own.

Deuteronomy 2:5b (NIV)

The Lord ... **destroyed** the Horites from before them. **They drove them out** and have lived in their place to this day.

Deuteronomy 2:22 (NIV); also mentioned in v. 12.

- Since God gave this land to the Edomites, he told Israel that he would not let them have *any* of it.

Do not provoke them to war, for I **will not give** you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on.

Deuteronomy 2:5a (NIV)

16

Descendants of Lot (#1) – the Moabites.

I **have given** Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.

Deuteronomy 2:9c (NIV)

The Edomites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Edomites.

Deuteronomy 2:10-11 (NIV)

- Since God gave this land to the Moabites, he told Israel that he would not let them have *any* of it.

"Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I **will not give** you any part of their land.

Deuteronomy 2:9b (NIV)

17

Descendants of Lot (#2) – the Ammonites.

... [the] land belonging to the Ammonites. I **have given it** as a possession to the descendants of Lot."

Deuteronomy 2:19b (NIV)

That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. **The Lord destroyed them** from before **the Ammonites**, who **drove them out** and settled in their place.

Deuteronomy 2:20-21 (NIV)

- Again, God would not let Israel have *any* of their land.

When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I **will not give** you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites.

Deuteronomy 2:19a (NIV)

18

Descendants of Isaac and Jacob – the Israelites.

- God would give Israel the land of the Amorites, Canaanites, and several other nations that resided in that area.*
- **We will look at Israel next time.** But here are two examples – about Amorite kingdoms *east* of the Jordan River:

"Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, **I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon**, and his country."

Deuteronomy 2:24a (NIV)

"... **I have delivered [Og, king of Bashan] into your hands**, along with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon."

Deuteronomy 3:2b (NIV)

* (Scripture sometimes mentions *several* of these nations in a list; at other times, it mentions *one or two* of them, as *representing* the entire group.)

19

⇒ God used nations to PUNISH ISRAEL (as well as other nations).

A common feature among all the Israelite tribes:

When they trusted God, they were blessed by God. When they abandoned God, it meant the blessings were also abandoned.

A recurring theme: Increasing apostasy, until there was no option but judgment and exile.

- **FIRST: They would trust God...** they would be blessed; they were also victorious in battle.
- **THEN: They would abandon God** and go after false gods... they would lose the blessings; eventually they would become so wicked that they had to be destroyed and sent into exile.
- **LATER: God would judge the nations that destroyed them.** Although he sent them, they did it with evil motives. And so, they *also* had to be judged.

20

① ASSYRIA judges (sends into exile) the northern tribes of ISRAEL.

- FIRST, the 2½ tribes EAST of the Jordan River abandoned God, and went after false gods. God sent the Assyrians to remove them from the land.

But they were **unfaithful** to the God of their ancestors and **prostituted** themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.

So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria (that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria), who took the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh into **exile**. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara and the river of Gozan, where they are to this day.

1 Chronicles 5:25-26 (NIV)

- LATER, God used the Assyrians to punish the other NORTHERN tribes of Israel (sending them into exile), as well as the SOUTHERN tribes (punished, but *not* sent into exile).

21

② BABYLON judges (destroys) ASSYRIA.

- God sent the Assyrians to punish Israel. But since their motives were evil, God raised up the Babylonians to punish them.

Woe to Assyria, **the rod of My anger**; the staff in their hands is **My wrath**.

I will send him against a godless nation; **I will dispatch him** against a people destined for My rage, ... But this is not his intention; this is not his plan. For it is in his heart to destroy and cut off many nations. ...

So when the Lord has completed all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will say, "**I will punish the king of Assyria** for the fruit of his arrogant heart and the proud look in his eyes.

For he says: 'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, for I am clever. I have removed the boundaries of nations and plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their rulers.

Isaiah 10:5-6a, 7, 12-13 (BSB)

22

③ BABYLON judges the southern tribes of Israel (JUDAH).

- God sent the Babylonians to punish the Assyrians ... but also to destroy Judah for their wickedness.

I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. ...

This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:9, 11 (NLT)

- After 70 years, God will punish Babylon.

"Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 25:12 (NLT)

23

④ The MEDES/PERSIANS judge (destroy) BABYLON.

- God uses the Medes/Persians (an alliance) to destroy Babylon. One of the reasons seems to be related to Babylon's destruction of the temple.

Sharpen the arrows; fill the quivers. The Lord will stir up the spirit of the kings of the Medes because his plan is to destroy Babylon.

The Lord will avenge his temple.

"In your presence I will pay back Babylon and all the people who live in Babylon for all the evil things that they did in Zion," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 51:11, 24 (GW)

According to the book of Habakkuk, Babylon was *more* wicked in their conduct, than was Judah. However, *Judah had known the truth and rejected it* – and this is the greater sin.

24

⑤ The MEDES/PERSIANS encourage the Jews to return and rebuild the temple.

Cyrus wouldn't be born for approximately 100 years after he was mentioned by name in these passages!

[The LORD] says to Cyrus, "You are my shepherd. You will do what I want. You will say to Jerusalem, 'You will be rebuilt!' You will tell the Temple, 'Your foundations will be put in place!'"

This is what the LORD said to Cyrus, his chosen king: "I took you by your right hand to help you defeat nations, to strip other kings of their power, and to open city gates that will not be closed again. ...

I was right to give power to Cyrus, and I will make his work easy. He will rebuild my city, and he will set my people free without bribes or payment." The LORD All-Powerful said this.

Isaiah 44:28-45:1, 13 (ERV)

GOD's active involvement in the affairs of nations (not Israel/Judah).

Who	What God did	Why	Selected verses
Sodom & other cities	God rained down sulfur and fire on them.	Totally corrupt; not even 10 upright people remaining in the cities.	Genesis 18:32; 19:24-25; 2 Peter 2:6-8
Amorites (also Moab)	Land to be given to "the people of the East."	They rejoiced in Jerusalem's destruction.	Ezekiel 21:31-32; 25:10

Who	What God did	Selected verses
Canaanites	Told Abraham that it would be 400 years before the Canaanites were wicked enough to be destroyed.	Genesis 15:13-21

Who	What God did	Why	Selected verses
Egypt	God drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea	Because they mistreated Israel as slaves. Result: God would be honored.	Exodus 14:18
Egypt	God would destroy them by means of a civil war.	Ongoing idolatry; a snare to Israel, etc.	Isaiah 19:2

Who	What God did; Judah interferes	Selected verses
Egypt vs. Babylon	God told Neco, king of Egypt, to fight against the Babylonians.* Josiah (king of Judah) interferes, was wounded, dies.**	2 Chronicles 35:20-25; vs. 21-22 says it was God who gave the command.

* Neco probably considered Israel's God to be just one of many gods (instead of the one true God).

** Ironically, the Babylonians will later attack Judah.

GOD's active involvement in the affairs of Israel/Judah.

- Examples, when Israel DID NOT trust God, but went after false gods.

Occasion	What God did	End result	Selected verses
In the wilderness; Israel turned to idolatry	God threatened to 100% destroy them.	Moses interceded; appealed to God's promises to their ancestors; it did not happen.	Deuteronomy 9:13-14+
Totally evil under the leadership of King Manasseh	God would send them into exile.	They had reached "the point of no return"; judgment was inevitable.	2 Kings 21:9-15

- Examples, when Israel (or individuals in Israel) DID trust God.

Occasion	What happened	End result	Selected verses
Tribes east of Jordan River; a battle against 4 nations	They trusted God and prayed for help.	God answered their prayer, and fought against their enemies.	1 Chronicles 5:19-20, 22
5 Amorite kings attack.	God promised to protect Israel	God threw the Amorites into confusion, and killed more of them with hailstones, than were killed by the sword.*	Joshua 10:8-11

* He also stopped the Sun and the moon – which was an attack against two of the Canaanite deities. (Joshua 10:9-11).

Occasion	What happened	End result	Selected verses
Gideon & 300 men vs. an alliance of 3 armies.	God told him to fight with only 300 men; Gideon obeyed.	God instilled panic among the armies. They started killing each other and ran away.	Judges 7:16-22
Jonathan and his helper, vs. the Philistines	They trusted God and were able to kill 20 Philistine soldiers at an outpost.	The Philistines panic and flee. The ground quakes (whether from their panic or from an earthquake) – which probably intensifies their panic.	1 Samuel 14:14-15
David vs. Goliath	David trusts God, and kills Goliath.	The Philistines panic and flee.	1 Samuel 17:45-47, 51

Occasion	What happened	End result	Selected verses
Civil war – David vs. his son Absalom	David commits the end-result into God's hands.	God thwarted a wise person's good advice, so that David's enemies made a disastrous decision, and were defeated.	2 Samuel 15:25-26; 17:14
Assyrian army	The king said insulting things about God.	God killed 185,000 soldiers.	Isaiah 37:36
An alliance of 3 armies vs. Judah	The Jewish soldiers trusted God, who had promised that they wouldn't have to fight.*	God caused the armies of the alliance to attack <i>each other</i> , instead of attacking Judah.	2 Chronicles 20:14-23

* They just stood there, singing praises to God, and watching their enemies kill each other!

31

The book of DANIEL: God at work during times of "silence."

- There would be 400 years of "silence" between the Old and New Testaments. Daniel wrote down what God said would happen in that "silent" time... *and it did happen.*
- ★ Based on this, we can be confident that God is actively involved in the affairs of people, even when he seems to be "silent."
- On several occasions in this period, God gave land controlled by *one* nation to *another* nation. (From the *human* perspective, it was a matter of one nation *conquering* another.)
- God also used the events that happened in this period to prepare for Jesus' first coming. (There are also "second-coming" implications in some of what Daniel wrote.)

The book of REVELATION: God uses "everything" to destroy evil.

- God will bring all things under his control, using famine, disease, war, earthquakes, meteors, celestial catastrophes, ecological disasters, heavenly hosts, etc. He will personally finish the job.

32

Summary

God has a *right* to judge or destroy nations – or to bless them.

1. God owns not just the *land*, but *everything*.
2. God has a right to remove wicked people (nations) from the land where they live.
3. God has the right to 100% *destroy* a nation – or even the entire world – if the people become exceedingly wicked.
4. Scripture gives plenty of evidence that God has destroyed nations in the past, and will continue to do so into the future.
5. According to Scripture, the two main reasons for God to destroy nations are:
 - They have become exceedingly wicked.
 - They have seriously mistreated Israel (Genesis 12:3).

33

How should a NATION respond to all this?

A nation that does not follow the God of Israel – the *true* God – will not agree with what Scripture says on this matter. *But if they become wicked enough, their end result will prove that what Scripture says is true.*

1. Nations that promote wickedness (as ours does) *cannot* go on forever, without experiencing *some* form of judgment from God (even if it isn't total destruction).
2. The only *right* way to respond is to submit to the God of the Bible, and to reject all other gods... and then to deal with any national wickedness that may be present.
3. We (individuals) who belong to God need to do what we can, to influence the "moral climate" of the nation. But regardless of the way the nation goes, *our ultimate loyalty must be to the true God and his righteous ways (Matthew 6:33).*

34

OUR MISSION:

1. As the end-times draw to a close, unpleasant things will happen. The final outcome will result in God's glory and the resurrection of God's people. But there will be many catastrophes and trials before we get there.
2. The book of Revelation represents "heaven's perspective" – God will be pouring out judgments upon the wicked. Other Scripture passages present "earth's perspective" – such as "wars and rumors of wars"; and also the persecution of God's people.

★ OUR DUTY:

1. **BE AWARE** that God does work in this world, to bring all things to that final conclusion, where righteousness will reign supreme. He may even use *evil* people (and their sin) to move us in that direction.
2. **TRUST GOD** for the final outcome. The end will be *good* for all who are willing to trust him.

35

Credits

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36