

Signs in the Nations

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Signs, Times and Seasons

Text: Matthew 24:7

Our last lesson focused on wars and rumors of wars, Jesus follows this up by saying that **nation** will rise against nation and **kingdom** against kingdom. It is important to understand that in Jesus time the kingdoms of the world were already in conflict with one another. The word **shall / will** is used twice and prophetically points to events that will occur in the **future**, not to the events that were already happening in Jesus' time.

The idea of '**rising** against' describes upheavals, confusion, disorder, turmoil and instability that will be stirred up around the world at the very end of the age. There will be national unrest among the nations themselves and against each other. It speaks to type of social chaos that will emerge and increase in the nations as a precursor to the end of the age.

In the Greek, the word 'nation' is where we get the word **ethnic**. Jesus was actually forecasting a time when ethnic groups would rise against ethnic groups. He was speaking of racial and ethnic conflict. In the recent past such conflicts were localized but today ethnic conflict is spreading like an **epidemic** across the planet. You would think that conflicts especially including race would decrease as time goes on because many have suffered from the injustice of bigotry. Laws have been changed to bring equal rights to all races. Yet racial conflicts around the world seem to be escalating. We see this happening in America as Whites, Blacks and Hispanics are dealing with very real differences. This has been a generational battle in places like India and Pakistan. Different indigenous groups that border Russia and China are locked in ethnic intolerance.

Some of the main conflicts between people groups and nations are **politics** and religions. In Africa and in the Middle east Muslims are killing Christians and different branches of Islam within the same country are not only shaming but wiping out entire communities. The two groups that are prominent in this are the Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims throughout the Middle East and in **Europe**. These regional conflicts have caused entire people groups to be displaced and contributed to hunger and famine. Because of the problem of mass immigration, what were regional conflicts are now more widespread because people have brought these issues into the nations that they have moved to. This has caused problems in their new homes and caused more friction and prejudice among their host countries.

Jesus said that nation will rise against nation. The word 'against' in the Greek carries the idea of force and violence. The meaning does not come with the idea of **peacefully** learning to coexist with one another, but it carries the idea of gaining **superiority** over the other. We see this around the world with wars and in our society concerning ideology.

The idea of kingdom rising against kingdom refers to a dominion or realm of power or influence. The word 'kingdoms' presents the idea of nations, political parties and even ideological **factions** maneuvering for superiority over the others.

Around the world we see political parties behaving in the most uncivil ways. Instead of working together to unite a nation, parties are vying for superiority over one another and work to undermine and decimate one another. This is happening in America where the ideologies between parties has become a deep divide. It is happening in Britain, the European union, Venezuela, Brazil and even in China and Hong Kong.

Throughout the Bible we are told of international signs in the nations that will clearly point to the last days. According to the Bible, the regathering of the Jewish people back to their homeland is prophesied time and again.

We are also told that the consolidation of world power under a supreme leader in Europe is one of the essential events that leads to the coming of the Anti-Christ.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a day when Russia will lead an alliance of nations that will attack Israel that will start a world war like none ever seen or could be imagined. As a matter of fact, two days before writing this lesson (12/4/2019) Russia, Iran and China have just announced that they will be having joint military operations for the first time in history.

Because the world has become a global marketplace and there has been intense financial instability around the world there will be the creation of a financial world order that will create a one world currency. This will limit corruption, unfairness among stronger nations and control the flow of money around the world. Corporations, nations and banks have already been trying this out with currency's like bit-coin and crypto currency.

Israel

On May 14, 1948 was one of the most important dates in human history. After 2,000 years Israel became a nation once again in the very land that God had promised to Abraham and that Israel had been dispersed from among the nations of the world. Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled right before the eyes of the entire world. This prophecy was given 740 years before the birth of Jesus. **Isaiah 66:8, Ezekiel 37:21**

In the past 70 years Israel a nation that has a land mass about the size of New Jersey and could fit inside of Lake Erie and with a population of 6.5 million people, is mentioned in the news more than any other nation except the United States of America. It has become the center of geopolitical attention because it is at the center of God's prophetic will for the world.

The story of Israel begins in the book of Genesis. God made a covenant with Abraham who was to be the father of the Jewish nation. This is known as the Abrahamic Covenant. **Genesis 12:1-3**

God's covenant with Abraham consists of four unconditional promises:

- 1) God promised to bless Abraham. For thousands of years Abraham has been honored and revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.
- 2) God promised to make Abraham a great nation. Today more than six million people call Israel home. Five million live in the USA and a significant number are scattered among the nations of the world.
- 3) God promised to make Abraham a blessing to many. Without the Jewish people we would have no Bible, no Savior and no Christianity. Without the Jewish people we would have no foundation for our laws that have their founding in the Ten Commandments and are the very underpinning of the basis for jurisprudence among most of the civilized nations of the world.
- 4) God promised to bless those who bless Israel and to curse those who curse Israel. God has blessed America because at our founding we established our nation on Biblical principles. We are also blessed because we were instrumental as a nation in establishing the State of Israel in 1948. We have welcomed and sheltered the Jewish people since the beginning and have been Israel's closest ally and supported for seven decades.

God's covenant with Abraham reveals both the mission and future of God's chosen nation. A study of these promises will give us understanding of the present unsettledness in the Middle East and how the future of today's nations will be affected by their stance and support of Israel.

The Abrahamic Covenant is:

- ❖ An unconditional covenant. Seven times God declared what He would do for Abraham. He ratified it in a ceremony. In Abraham's day to establish and confirm a covenant two parties would walk between pieces of the sacrificial animals. It was saying may what happened to these animals happen to me if I break the covenant. **Genesis 15:1-21**
In Abraham's day if an inferior was pledging to a superior, only one would pass through the sacrifice. Because this was God's sovereign pledge and not a covenant between equals symbols of God passed between the two pieces not Abraham. The Lord made a covenant with no conditions independent of Abraham. No provision for this covenant was made to be revoked, amended or annulled.
- ❖ It is a personal covenant. God promised blessings on Abraham personally and on his descendants. In Genesis 12:1-3 God uses the personal pronouns you and yours eleven times. The promises are far reaching and eternal. They were made personally to Abraham and each has been fulfilled. God directed Abraham and his descendants to a land flowing with milk and honey. **Exodus 3:8** While God did bless Abraham's descendants, Abraham himself would also live under the blessing of God. **Genesis 13:1-2** Abraham lived in the land promised to him and in his own lifetime he was a leader who was powerful, respected and feared. **Genesis 25:7-8**

- ❖ It is a **national** covenant. God promised to make Abraham a great nation. No other nation in history was a nation that was defeated, scattered and then reborn 2,000 years later. Israel is a great nation today. It is tiny in size, yet it has withstood continual Arab assaults, wars, terrorism and boycotts. It was a poor rural country that is now an industrial, agricultural and technological powerhouse.
- ❖ It is a **territorial** covenant. God's promise to Abraham was specific in geography and in its boundaries. The land promised to Abraham and his descendants takes in all the land from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Euphrates River in the east. Ezekiel fixed the northern boundary one hundred miles from Damascus in the north and in the south at Kadesh about one hundred miles south of Jerusalem. If Israel were currently occupying all the land that God gave them, they would contain all of Israel, Lebanon, the **West** Bank of Jordan, plus portions of Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

The fact that Israel has been dispossessed of the land in three periods of History is not an argument against its ultimate possession. **Occupation** is not the same as possession. Each time that Israel was dispossessed, God brought Israel back to its promised territory. We know that the turmoil over Israel's land will not cease until the end. The boundaries of Israel's possession are at the heart of much of the hatred from the Middle East countries today towards the Jewish people.

- ❖ It is a **reciprocal** covenant. God promised protection to the nations and leaders that would be allies of Israel. He promised that those who would protect, provide and defend the nation of Israel would themselves be under the favor of God. Those who choose to stand against Israel would find themselves standing against God Himself. **Genesis 12:3, Zechariah 2:8** Throughout the Bible we see examples of those who stood against Israel being soundly defeated and destroyed. Egypt, the first nation to enslave the Israelites, was brought to its knees by the ten plagues. The Amorites who resisted Israel as they came out of Egypt to enter the promised land were defeated. When the Midianites joined with the Moabites to stop Israel all of their cities were burned to the ground and their wealth was given to the people of Israel. Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and deported the Jewish people to the land that is modern day Iraq, was defeated by the Persians (modern day Iran).

Russia in our times confined Jews to ghettos and under communism were forbidden to practice and worship. They were arrested, deported and executed. The **USSR** was collapsed and is now many separate countries. In Germany under Hitler over six million Jews were killed in one of the greatest holocausts known to human history. Germany was crushed in World War 2.

In Israel's **Six Days** war of 1967, the Palestinians and the Islamic states surrounding Israel refused to recognize Israel as an independent nation even though it had been so since May of 1948. The United Arab Republic allied with Jordan, Syria and Palestinian guerrillas to attack Israel from the north, south and east. Israel was outnumbered. The Arab armies numbered 500,000 to Israel's 75,000. The Arabs had 5,000 tanks and 900 aircraft. Israel had 1,000 tanks and 175 planes.

Six days later Israel had destroyed their air force and taken over Arab controlled countries including the Sinai Peninsula, The Golan Heights, The Gaza Strip and the West Bank and most importantly regained control of **Jerusalem**. **Psalm 91:7-16** God has promised to bless those who bless Israel and to Curse those who Curse and rise up against the apple of His eye.

~ Prime Minister Netanyahu in a speech before the United Nations General Assembly on October 1, 2015 said- "In every generation, there are those who rose up to destroy our people, in antiquity, we faced destruction from the ancient empires of Babylon and Rome. In the middle ages we faced inquisition and expulsion. In modern times, we faced the Holocaust, yet the Jewish people persevered. Now another regime has arisen, swearing to destroy Israel. That regime would be wise to consider this; I stand here today representing Israel, a country 67 years young (now 71) But the nation state of a people nearly 4,000 years old. Yet the empires of Babylon and Rome are not represented in this hall of Nations. Neither is the thousand-year Reich. Those seemingly invincible empires are long gone. But Israel lives. The people of Israel live.

America is blessed in part because we continue to support, protect and defend the nation of Israel. Our current President (Trump) has taken bold steps to honor our relationship with Israel and by recognizing Jerusalem as the rightful capital of the Nation of Israel. It is vital that we stand with Israel if we hope to thrive as a nation.

More than any single event, the most prominent sign that we are living in the final days before the return of Jesus is the fulfilment of Israel becoming a nation once again.

- ❖ It is a **universal** covenant. **Genesis 12:3** "In You all the nations of the earth will be **blessed**." It is through the Jewish people that God gave us a Savior and that the blessing of Abraham would come on all the nations of the world that were Gentile. (Not Jewish)
Galatians 3:13-14
- ❖ It is an **eternal** covenant. **Genesis 17:7-8** The promise God gave to Abraham is an everlasting promise because it is based on the grace, sovereignty and the Word of Almighty God. He is God who cannot and will not lie because He cannot deny Himself. He is truth.

It is important to understand that while Israel returning to its land is a fulfillment of prophecy and one of the signs of the last day, it is only **part** of what God promised. The return of the Jews to the land of Israel is only the first stage of the regathering promised by God. God's promise is not only **physical** but **spiritual**.

Ezekiel 36:24, 26-28, Zechariah 12:10, Romans 11:26-27

There are two parts of this prophecy that still have yet to be fulfilled.

- 1) Israel does not yet occupy **all** of the land that has been originally promised.
- 2) Israel has not yet **turned** to Christ as the Messiah.

Against all odds Israel **leads** the Middle East in productivity, wealth, freedom and military power. Israel is a nation surrounded by enemies but longs for peace.

The Bible says that a future leader will help to broker a “peace plan” with Israel’s enemies. We are told that Israel will also be attacked once again and will only be saved by Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation. It is then that all of prophecy is fulfilled.

Jeremiah 32:37-38, Ezekiel 39:28 It is clear that God will return every Jew back to Israel.

In Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 an attack against Israel is described. This is a battle in which several nations including Russia, Iran, a coalition of Muslim nations and China are described as rising to attack. Many believe this battle will be before the battle of Armageddon and corresponds to the 2nd seal found in the book of Revelation. Many believe that World War III will focus on Israel.

In this battle, God will personally protect Israel and destroy the nations coming against them.

Ezekiel 38:1-6, 14-39:10

What does all of this have to do with us.

The fulfilment of prophetic events concerning Israel, in spite of impossible odds, demonstrates God’s ability to accomplish His purposes.

It reveals that God in fact exists and that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The fact that Biblical prophecy concerning Israel has been fulfilled means that we can be certain that everything else that the Bible tells us is yet to come will happen.