

The Dirty Side of Biblical Prophecy

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (Ezek. 36:24-26).

Many times, we read about prophecy in the Scriptures or the details of the prophesied restoration of Israel and think: “Wouldn’t that be nice but has anyone noticed what’s REALLY happening?” At our core, we often want things to be clean, without chaos and for people to do the right thing, yet that is not real life. If that were the case, we wouldn’t need any prophetic hope or require faith.

There is no faith without painful waiting and ugly struggle. Without the internal wrestling and fearful thoughts that we all experience, prophecy simply wouldn’t matter. There would be no point in talking about a tangible restoration or practical deliverance if everything was going great. But that is not our personal experience or the world around us. The same is true for the nation of Israel.

Israel today is a challenging place to live, to say the least. There’s the high cost of living, massive bureaucracy, challenging Palestinian issues, invasive world opinions, blind international hatred, national politics that more resembles a circus, small but influential ultra-religious communities on a form of national welfare who are exempt from required military service, serious growing social divisions, skyrocketing housing prices, some declaring the end to democracy and so much more.

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All of that before considering the Hamas terror organization's surprise invasion and massacre, resulting in deaths and abductions of hostages, Israel's fight against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah forces in the north, and the ongoing hateful terrorism from Islamic groups from around the world and Iran's looming nuclear program with their stated desire to wipe "cancerous Israel" off the map. There is nothing clean or pretty about any of these issues.

Yet, the undeniable fact is that Israel is back in the land, against all odds and all historical norms AND according to the words of the ancient biblical prophets. Yet, simply because it was prophesied, doesn't mean that things will unfold as "rainbows and butterflies." People are still people. The Israelites experienced the same thing after being freed from slavery in Egypt when they began asking Moses: "Have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Ex. 14:11). There are often challenging realities on the way to the promises.

Likewise, the nation of Israel was not reborn in 1948 as any spiritual renaissance. In fact, many of the founders of the state didn't have a religious bone in their body. Most were secular Jews with a basic traditional religious knowledge who were looking for safety, business opportunities or simply a new beginning after losing entire families in the Holocaust. Yet, even in the dirt and the mess that all people carry, God was fulfilling His ancient promises, spoken by almost every prophet in the Bible. After 75 years, the dirt, the problems and corruption have only continued.

Sometimes people will say to me: "I could support the nation of Israel if they were all following God" or "if they weren't trying to be the gay capital of the world" or "If they weren't _____" (fill in the blank with any offense). My response will often include the verse above along with something like

this:

“That’s a noble thought but it’s opposite of what Ezekiel foretold. Ezekiel said that God would gather His people from the nations back to their own land, and THEN He would bring the cleansing. The fact that God is now gathering “dirty” people together back to His land, shows us that a cleansing IS coming and He is doing exactly what He promised.”

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Let’s be honest, we all are dirty and we all need God to sprinkle clean water on us. But this is exactly the context that many prophecies are spoken into, especially with Israel. Prophecy simply gives us the opportunity to agree with God’s perspective and His promises and to trust Him in our world today, no matter how dark things look. If you’ve ever read the Bible, God doesn’t seem to have a problem using dirty and problematic people to accomplish His plans. We can all thank Him for that.

One hundred years ago, very few believed that Jews would return from all over the world to their homeland. Yet the prophets were right.

At the end of World War II in 1945, very few believed that just three years later, the Jewish people could overcome insurmountable odds to again become a nation. Yet the prophets were right.

With all the internal troubles, external stresses and “dirt” in Israel today, it may be difficult to believe that God will bring a cleansing to His nation. But I bet the prophets will be right.

Until that coming time, we get to decide what or Who to believe. Choose wisely.

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