

GOD'S PLAN FOR AMERICA

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In my fighting with the clock last Sunday night I realized afterward that I had not had time to develop one of the things that I had really wanted to say as kind of a finish off to Ezekiel 38 and 39. We talked last Sunday night about God's plan for Russia and we specifically examined Ezekiel 38 & 39 as it relates to the idea that is promulgated by some that this speaks of a soon coming Russian invasion of Israel and the onset of World World III. One of the things I said was important was that compare the setting of Ezekiel 38 & 39 with the entirety of the book. Of course when we do that we find that Ezekiel is giving counsel to the exiles in saying it's because of your sin that God drove you out of the land. Therefore he used the nation of Babylon against you. In the later days when you are secure in the land and are in covenant fellowship with me because of that covenant fellowship I will not let even the strongest power, a stronger power than Babylon drive you out of the land because of your covenant relationship with me will keep you safe.

We then examine Israel today with the Israel spoken of in Ezekiel 38 & 39 and found contemporary Israel wanting or lacking in fulfilling the description with the Israel in covenant fellowship spoken in Ezekiel 38 & 39. What I left out is there's one additional thing we need to do with Ezekiel 38 & 39 and that is go to the New Testament. It is the law of biblical interpretation that the New Testament always interprets the Old Testament.

For example, in the Old Testament we have laws regarding ceremonial purification. We go to the New Testament to interpret those, to find out how they are to be kept and if they are to be kept.

The New Testament in Revelation 20 interprets Ezekiel 38 & 39 and puts it at the end of the millenium. When Gog and Magog come against Israel. If you're looking for a prophetic fulfillment so if you're looking for a prophetic fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 & 39 I suggest we stick with the New Testament understanding of where that battle fits with God's plan for the ages. After God through Jesus Christ has personally ruled the world for 1000 years and brought in a Messianic age there will nevertheless still be those in the world who in spite of full employment rate, low inflation, no crime rate, everybody prosperous, in spite of that the deceitfulness of sin is so strong that God will prove once and for all that men are not sinners because of their environment. People sin because of their own personal choices. That end time army will be gathered against Israel, the army of Gog and Magog, Revelation 20. It will come against them but God will keep the nation safe and will personally fight on behalf of Israel. And finally cleanse all the world of the evil.

Where that leaves us in terms of a coming World War III that has to do with Russia or the United States we'll talk some about that this evening. But I would suggest that you will look hard and fast in scripture before you find any reference that can be interpreted fairly to speak of a third world war. I think the best we have is what Jesus says in the New Testament. "There will be wars and there will be rumors of wars." That includes World War I, World War II, the Korean war, the Vietnam conflict, and if there is a World War III or whatever.

Tonight we want to look at the theme of God's plan for America. What we're going to do at the first part of this message, maybe the major part of the message is examine three different views

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that are knocking around evangelical believers. You hear them from various prophetic teachers about America's place in the plan of God. We'll look at each one of these and then we'll try at the end to put some sort of synopsis on it and draw some general principles from the scriptures regarding God's plan for America.

The first view that has been suggested by some is that you can find America specifically spoken of in the Bible if you will open to Isaiah 18. You will see it described. In fact you will find ten characteristics of our nation. It's a puzzle which can be solved by the one who has an ear to understand and an eye to see. Here are the ten characteristics:

First, woe to the land of whirring wings. That's America. Whirring wings. Here is a prophetic announcement God knew beforehand that America would have more airplanes than any nation in the world – whirring wings. We have more airplanes parked out at Orange County airport than probably 99% of the nations of the world have in the total country. We are a land of whirring wings. If you don't believe that try living under the airplane path of John Wayne airport.

Second, that this nation is beyond the rivers of Cush. The older rendition fits the view a little bit better. Beyond the rivers of Cush. Where is Cush? It is biblical Ethiopia, modern day Sudan, south of Egypt. Therefore whatever this land is it's south of the rivers of Cush. I would submit to you that if you go far enough somewhere along in the gulf you will somewhere along in the globe you will ultimately come beyond the equator and up the other side and somewhere you get America. And this is about as far beyond the rivers of Cush as any place can get. So that's the second reference to America.

Third, this country referred to in Isaiah 18 sends its envoys by sea in boats. New International Version has papyrus boats. But again it's important that we go to the older translation. For a moment forget papyrus boats and go with boats. Sends its ambassadors by sea in boats over the water. This is America. There are only two countries that we have dealings with that are not separated from us by water – Mexico on the south and Canada on the north. All the other countries of the world we must cross water to reach. And the land of the whirring wings, before it had whirring wings it had ocean liners. And its ambassadors went by sea.

A fourth characteristic is that America is a people is a people that are tall and of smooth skin. Those swift messengers tall and smooth skin. That's us. If you do a statistical study of soldiers that fought in World War II you will find that the United States soldiers averaged a higher height than any other country. We are tall and most of us are smooth skin.

Fifth, this country is feared far and wide. Verse 2. A people feared far and wide. There is no country in the world outside the Soviet Union that has the military muscle of the United States. We think we'd like to be loved by everyone but we're aware of being the ugly American. In fact in many countries in the world we are feared. Fear may have two aspects to it. It may mean dread and terror. Or it may simply mean treating with respect. We are treated with respect in the world.

Sixth, this nation beyond the rivers of Cush is an aggressive nation of strange speech. We are that. We are a nation that is not a warlike nation but we are very much goal oriented, success driven and materialistic. American people are noted all over the world, American businessmen are noted for their aggressiveness. And furthermore we certainly have a strange speech. Who in

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the Bible would have guessed that someday there would be a national language such as English which would so dominate the diplomatic and economic world as a language.

Seventh, this land would be divided by rivers. Verse 2: land divided by rivers. America is divided east from the west by the Mississippi river which flows the length and breadth of the country north to south. In the east the Ohio river divides the north from the south in the eastern sector. In the west the country is divided by a number of rivers among them the Platte river. Colorado River.

Eighth, this nation will be listened to in the world. All you people in the world, you who live on the earth when a banner is raised on the mountains you will see it and when a trumpet sounds you will hear it. This is a take off of the E. F. Hutton ad: When E. F. Hutton talks people listen. When America talks people listen. That's what verse 3 is saying. Listened to in the world.

Verses 4-6 present a ninth characteristic of this country. It will possibly be defeated in war. "This is what the Lord says to me, 'I will remain quiet and the look on from my dwelling place – like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For before the harvest when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives and cut down and take away the spreading branches. They will be left to the mountain birds of prey and the wild animals. The birds will feed on them all summer and the wild animals all winter.'" In other words this nation is reaching its full potential like a grape vine becoming ripe. Suddenly it's going to be pruned. The emphasis here not on the idea of its being defeated totally in war but just that it's going to have a major military loss.

Tenth, it eventually will worship the Lord. Verse 7, "At that time gifts will be brought to the Lord Almighty from a people tall and smooth skin [referred to earlier] from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech whose land is divided by rivers. The gifts will be brought to Mt. Zion the place of the name of the Lord Almighty." The end is that America will be true to its covenant with Israel – its economic covenant, its political covenant, its military covenant. Because of that God will spare America because it is politically aligned with Israel and it will be kept safe.

That is the view that I do not personally espouse but I put it here to intrigue your interest. Dr. Charles Taylor who has published a number of books on prophecy that is his particular view of Isaiah 18.

However whenever we look at scripture we must ask some fundamental questions. The fundamental question that always must be asked is what does scripture mean to those to whom it first came? And how has the scripture been understood by the people of God, both Old and New Testament throughout the history of that scripture?

If we will take the first setting of this that it was written in in Isaiah's time, 8 centuries before Christ, Isaiah is prophesying to Judah. He was a prophet to the south. To the north, the ten tribes of Israel were being besieged by Assyria. At that time the great northern power located in now contemporary Iraq. Assyria was coming down and threatening Israel and Judah.

Meanwhile Judah was casting around, its king was, to find out how he could defend himself from this invasion of Assyria. One of the great countries to the south was the biblical Ethiopia, the area of Cush. He is thinking about making a military alliance with these people who fit by the

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way the characteristics that are described in Isaiah 18. Biblically Ethiopia, the rivers of Cush were known as the land of whirring wings. A land heavily populated seemingly resembling the lifestyle of the teeming insect population. This area was also the home of the tsetse fly which when it flew made a sound that was akin to the whirring of wings. This particular country was beyond or alongside the headwaters of the Nile. The headwaters of the Nile remember are to the south of Egypt and therefore it fits again the biblical Cush which is Ethiopia. It sent its ambassadors by sea but the new translations point out accurately the Hebrew "They send them by sea by papyrus boat."

I would submit to you that papyrus boats are too fragile to sail on any ocean. They were designed for going on inland water ways – canals, rivers, lakes. Used by the term sea here. So that term fits the biblical Ethiopia the area of the Sudan which sent its ambassadors by means of papyrus vessels to deal in exchanges with the then powers of the southern Mesopotamian world.

They were people tall and smooth skinned. They were people feared far and wide. They had a strange speech – that is strange to the Hebrews. Their land was divided by rivers. Any geographical looking at the headwaters of the Nile would suggest that to you. It was listened to in the world. It would be defeated in a momentary war but ultimately it would have people come to worship the Lord. One of which, by the way, would be the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who comes up to Jerusalem, who was treasurer to the queen. He comes to Jerusalem and while on his way back from Jerusalem Phillip is sent down on the road to Gaza and witnesses to him.

That's what we have here. It's not really a reference to America. But a reference to biblical Ethiopia. If you want to know where a scripture occurs that has already been fulfilled you could take Isaiah 18 and simply write over it the word "fulfilled". It has come to pass. It related to counsel Isaiah was giving within the context of the book of Isaiah to Judah's king "Don't make an alliance. God himself is going to defend Judah. He will not spare Israel, the ten tribes to the north but he will spare you." To read America into Isaiah 18 would be to force the scripture. It would be to start out with a presupposition and then force the scripture to fit our presupposition and this is extremely dangerous when dealing with the scripture.

We always need to let the scripture speak to us. Some people will get a newspaper or *Time* magazine and say "Contemporary events. Let's see what proof texts we can pull out to justify this event was prophesied." All kinds of wild scenarios emerge when people try to take events and force the scripture into their events. It's better we take the scripture first and see if the contemporary events matches the scripture. Let the scripture be true and don't worry about forcing it.

A second view that attempts to find America in scripture is called the British-Israel view. It very simply is the viewpoint that the ten tribes of Israel which were carried off the land by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Almost 8 centuries before Christ, these ten northern tribes were carried away into captivity and through a process of people migration ultimately became the peoples of Great Britain and America. I'll show you how they developed this.

The British-Israel view is that the ten lost tribes are British and America and the English speaking peoples. And therefore when you read the word Israel in the Old or New Testament you need to forget about Jews because they are Judaites from which the term Jew was derived from the tribe of Judah. And Israel instead is talking about the migration of these 10 tribes as they became absorbed into other cultures and became other peoples.

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The most contemporary advocate of the British-Israel theory is Herbert Armstrong of the World Wide church of God. It can pick up the Plain Truth magazine you'll have this view in subtle ways enunciated in *The Plain Truth*. We might call that magazine the plain lie. But it's called the plain truth.

Time will not allow us an exhaustive review of the British-Israeli theory nor will it allow an extensive repetition. But I want to just summarize it for a moment. These tribes were lost because of the Assyrian captivity. In reality these lost tribes became known as the Saxae or Sycthians who surged westward from the Mesopotamian area through northern Europe. Eventually these Saxae or Sycthians became the ancestors to population migration and cultural absorption genetically into other tribal peoples. Ultimately these ten lost tribes in working around up through the Mediterranean world and out toward the west becomes the ancestors of the Saxons. And of course if you say Saxon and Isaac's son you have a similarity, don't you? So those who hold this view say it's easy to know why we have the word Saxon because those people remember they were Isaac's son. Saxons.

And these Saxons later invaded England and conquered it. They left evidences of their western migration from the Mesopotamian area such as the Danube river from the tribe of Dan. It doesn't matter if something's logical or not. What you want to do is find something that appears to have a name to it and of course the first three letters of Danube is Dan.

These tribes then migrated are the inheritors of the covenant God made with Israel and God is now honoring his promise in the later days. Modern Jews are Judeans. Not Israelites and therefore they're still under a curse. In the hay day of the Anglo Israeli theory Britain had many colonies and it was maintained that they as the lost tribes were the inheritors of the blessings and covenants that God had made with Israel. Britain for example was the biblical tribe of Manasseh and the USA was the biblical tribe of the younger brother Ephraim. Jesus therefore when he returned to earth would not set on David's throne because David's throne is Judah's throne. He would set on Queen Elizabeth's throne because she is from the lost ten tribes of Israel whom God is keeping his covenant with. With the decline of Britain the Anglo-Israeli view had to shift. It became transferred in allegiance to the United States.

Therefore using this hypothesis that these people do with Ezekiel 38 & 39 where we were last week is most interesting. Because in Ezekiel 38 & 39 Gog and Magog invade Israel. God and Magog is Russia according to that view. And Israel is none other than the United States so what you have in their particular book is a Russian invasion of the United States. A prophetic red dawn (for the teenagers).

I might simply note that this view has been very popular among anti-semitic groups. There are some "Christian" groups – although it's my conviction that a person cannot be anti-semitic and be a Christian. Cannot be anti-black and be a Christian. You cannot be anti any race and be a Christian. If I understand Jesus' teaching right about love of neighbor. But this has fueled a lot of anti semitic kind of ideas. Judah, the Jews, are cast off from God. We are Israel.

What is the response to this whole matter? I think there are two. One is it has no basis in fact anthropologically. Anthropology is the study of people, the study of man. It looks at development within civilization and there simply is no record of any migration of the ten lost tribes of Israel coming out of the biblical area of Mesopotamia, ultimately across through Europe

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and becoming England and America. There is not a shred of scientific evidence to support it. most important however is there is no teaching in scripture. I could get a little complicated here. I'll just take a moment to note one scriptural line of argument.

Genesis 10 reveals to us the three broad directions of the settlement of humanity after the flood. Noah's three sons were Japheth, Ham, and Shem. Japheth people settled in the Indo-European area, Ham settled in the areas of Africa and Shem in the Tigres-Euphrates area. The Jews and the Arabs are Shemites. The roots of western civilization are Japheth. The Anglo-Israeli people say that Ephraim and Manasseh represent England and America but that Ephraim and Manasseh are really the descendants of Shem. However England and America, according to Genesis 10 table of nations are really Japhethits. And in fact Joseph who fathered Ephraim and Manasseh was a Shemite and he married a Hammite. Biologically speaking it is impossible to make Japheth out of a union of Shemites and Hammites.

The Old Testament is very clear that there were segments of the ten tribes that were never carried away into captivity at all. In fact in 2 Chronicles 30 some of Israel had been left in the land and celebrated Passover under Hezekiah 100 years after the 722 deportation. They celebrated Passover under Josiah as well, 2 Chronicles 35. There were people left. If there is any amalgamation of the people of Israel in other cultures that's noted in the scripture it would be noted among the Samaritans. The Samaritans are the people who stayed in the land of the northern tribes after the invasion of Assyria and intermarried other people in the land ultimately becoming the Samaritans.

When you look at the New Testament you will find that there are three tribal identifications in the New Testament. Jesus is from the tribe of Judah. Paul is from the tribe of Benjamin. Those are the two southern tribes. But Anna in Luke 2 is from the tribe of Asher. If the tribe of Asher had been lost what in the world is Anna doing showing up at the purification ceremony for Jesus and it's specifically noted she's from the tribe of Asher. I believe the Holy Spirit knew long before Herbert W. Armstrong that one day Armstrong would come along and say the ten tribes were lost. So Luke was inspired by the Spirit not knowing why he did this to throw in that little detail, "Anna, from the tribe of Asher."

There's also a reference in the New Testament to Zebulun and Naphtali two of the northern tribes. Matthew 4:12-16 which talks about they were the first tribes to fall to captivity of Assyria but in the later time, the time of the Messiah, they would be the ones upon whom the light would dawn. That is the ministry of the Messiah would first come in their geographical area.

The presence of the Samaritan woman in John 4 is a typical example of the legacy of northern Israel. In Acts 2 when the Jews are being describing as coming, I think, from 16 different nations to Pentecost and the Spirit is outpoured there is not a single Jew present from Britain. Yet Peter stands up and says "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ." Peter doesn't say let all the house of Judah know assuredly... But he says let all the house of Israel calling those dispersed Jews from all parts of the world members of the household of Israel. Not a one of them is from Great Britain.

Paul also says in Acts 26:7 "This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God night and day." Paul is very conscious of the solidarity of the Jews of Israel and as the twelve tribes.

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Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 1:4 “Command certain men not to teach false doctrine any longer nor devote themselves to myths. [The Anglo-Israeli view is a myth.] and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God’s work which is by faith.”

The third view of finding America in the scripture is the view that America may be seen through the scriptural frame of Babylon. I’m using very precise language here. America may be seen through the scriptural frame of Babylon. That is to say for those of you who do frame shopping for pictures, you fall in love with a frame and then you go looking for a picture that will fit it. you keep trying out pictures till you get a picture that matches the frame.

Using this model of construction what you start out with in the Old Testament especially the book of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Revelation 18 which is spiritual Babylon, you start out in those places and create a frame for Babylon. Then you look at contemporary societies and empires and you keep on putting them into the frame until you find one that matches the frame. There are those who say that America is the picture that belongs in the biblical frame of Babylon. To arrive at this they will deal with Jeremiah’s prophecy in respect to Babylon in Jeremiah 50 and 51. There are a number of characteristics that are taught in 50 & 51 that I’m not going to take the time to read all these verses. But I’ll tick off some of the characteristics.

This Babylon described in 50-51 has a mother. America has a mother, Great Britain. Biblical Babylon was a country of unprecedented wealth. Jeremiah 51:7. America is a country of unprecedented wealth. Babylon was a cosmopolitan country. Jeremiah 50:37. It was a mingled or a mixed people. America has been known as the melting pot. Actually we’re not a melting pot as someone has said. We are a stew. In a stew the ingredients keep their unique flavoring. They just blend with one another. But carrots are still carrots and beef is still beef and onions are still onions. We have never in this country to my knowledge been a melting pot. We’ve been something like a stew enriched by the various ethnicity and languages and cultures that have flowed into our country.

Biblical Babylon was a young nation. Jeremiah 50:12. Babylon was a country of great prestige, chapter 50:23. We are. It had amazing attainments, 51:53. It had a voice of influence, 51:53. It was involved in the world, 51:53. Revelation 18:3, it was involved in giving foreign aid. The countries of the nations looked to it for supplies. Jeremiah 50:38, it was a country of blatant covetousness. Revelation 18:7, it was a society that was pleasure saturated. Hedonistic, playboy mentality. Revelation 18:5, a spiritual decadent society. Revelation 18:7, an egotistically blind society. Jeremiah 50:37, a economically dispossessed society. Dispossessing others economically.

What shall we say about America fitting the biblical frame of Babylon? Those who force this, by the way, will ten go on to say therefore when you read “Babylon” read “America”. If you want to know how World War III is going to turn out just every time you find the word “Babylon” write “USA” and you’ll get a very clear idea of what is coming down the road.

The problem with this is that the scriptures know of three Babylons. And America isn’t one of the three.

The three Babylons are historical Babylons which subjugated the people of God in 586 B.C., captured Judah. The second Babylon is Rome. And Rome is called Babylon as a code word by the early Christians. So called Babylon in 1 Peter 5:13. “Those in Babylon send you greetings.”

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Peter is writing from Rome and he's giving greetings to those who are dispersed Christians and he's saying "those in Babylon." There was no Babylon when Peter is writing. Babylon has ceased to exist in keeping with the prophecies that it would be no more. Babylon was Rome. It wouldn't be at all surprising to learn that in the first century when the early Christians read the book of Revelation and saw the word "Babylon" they thought of Rome. In fact it's even described as the city on seven hills which equates with Rome in real time and space.

The third Babylon however leads beyond historical Babylon and Rome to be eschatological or end time Babylon. That kind of society which in the end ties itself with the antichrist in agreement with him against God's people and against Christ himself. That end time godless society will be brought low, defeated at Armageddon.

Is America in this scene? True there are characteristics of America that fit the frame of Babylon and maybe we need to exercise some caution in saying America is a wonderful and godly country and God would never bring it to judgment. I am concerned when I read books like Peter Marshall's book Lights for the Nation which basically tries to assert that America has a compact with God because when the pilgrims were coming over on the Mayflower they made a covenant with God for the nation. That seems to me to be somewhat ignoring the realities of early American history and the fact that this nation was settled by saints and sinners. It's interesting that the question of religion is arising in this political campaign and the question of religion has been in major campaigns. You wouldn't believe what spiritual God fearing people said rightly I think about Thomas Jefferson when he was running for office. This nation has always been kind of a mixture between the two. I'm not for sure that it can be asserted historically that this nation was solely founded by people who had a covenant relationship with God. Some of them obviously did. But for sure the characteristic of all three biblical Babylons – historical, Rome and end time – a characteristic that commonly unites them is that all of them persecute and slaughter God's people. That unites all three.

So therefore if you're taking America and putting it in the frame of biblical Babylon in order for America to fully fit the picture it also has to become the persecutor of God's people. And the slaughterer of God's people. That has not happened. I'm not so convinced that it will always be that way myself. I see subtly in America culture a bias developing against evangelical Christians that is at this moment sort of like the beginning of anti semitism in Germany and anti black treatment in earlier parts of American history. How do you deal with a group that you despise? How do you portray a group that you would like to do away with? In American law you are not allowed to just summarily do something physical to them. So what do you do? You stereotype them. You set them up as objects of ridicule. You make them appear to the general culture as biggots and undesirables who are the cause of ills in the society. You type cast them. You demean them. You devalue them. You dehumanize them. And you mobilize public opinion against them. You take some of their spokesmen and you make those spokesmen speak for and represent the whole group and then with one wash of propaganda you obliterate the whole group by your views.

As a private citizen I wrote Tip O'Neal and Walter Mondale when the whole flack began to arise about religion and politics. I expressed as a private citizen my concern that they be aware that the direction they were taking, the Democratic party, in their public statements against evangelical Christians had the net result of driving evangelical Christians out of the Democratic party. As a party who believes in the two party system in America I felt that this was a great injury to the political process of taking position of driving evangelicals out of one of America's

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historic parties by taking the kind of one sided kind of slanted comments that they have taken toward evangelicals. I do not agree a lot with what Jerry Falwell does. I probably am more in agreement than not. I'm not so sure about the methods he uses as to whether I embrace those. But I think if Jesse Jackson has the right to participate in American life, then I think Falwell or Swaggert has a right to participate as well and they ought to be treated as such. This whole type casting... and we Christians are guilty of this too. We have been throwing around the words "secular humanist" a lot and we are very capable of broad brush stroking everybody who espouses ideas that may be different than ours. Maybe it's a legitimate difference but we immediately dispense with their theory by putting "secular humanist" on them. We don't have to engage them any more. We've already type cast them. We need to watch our mentality in treating people and groups.

I see some signs that would indicate that America's attitude toward evangelicals will not always remain a favorable disposition unless we really act to maintain our position as salt and light in this society. America currently does not persecute or slaughter God's people. It certainly on television in the programming totally ignores the 40 plus million Americans who claim the Christian testimony in this country.

If you were to watch the sitcoms and mystery stories you will search in vein for a thoroughly Christian character. You will search in vein for a minister that is legitimate and morally upright. I know there are ministers that are crooks. But I also know that there are ministers who give of themselves to people in all kinds of need. You will not see in the media a fair treatment of Christianity. We need to call in as clear a way possible for an equitable presentation of Christians. I think we need to be concerned with trends within the culture. America – bottom line, is not yet fitting the Babylon scenario. Maybe it will.

What is America? It's not Isaiah 18, that's biblical Ethiopia. It's not the British-Israel theory. It's not Babylon. Where is America in the Bible?

God's plan for America we'll find in God's plan for the nations. There are several things that can be said about America as it relates to God's plan for humanity in the nations. The families of nations. The clear teaching both from the Old and the New Testament is that God is over all the nations. The nations of humanity are symbolically set forth for us in Genesis 10, the dispersement of the nations following the flood. If you count all the family groupings which become nations in genesis 10 you will find that there are 70. And when Jesus selects 70 messengers to go out and announce his kingdom he is no doubt in Luke 10 modeling this symbolic re-enactment that he wants a messenger for every nation of the world. He wants a witness everywhere. The Old Testament is replete with illustrations where even the remotest isles are called upon to acknowledge the Lord. "say among the nations, the Lord reigns." Psalm 96:10. The Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice. Let many coastlands be glad," Psalm 97:1. "He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands wait for his law." Isaiah 42:4. "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues and they shall come and see my glory and I will set a sign among them," Isaiah 66:18. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles." Simeon: Luke 2:30-32. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," Jesus: Matthew 28:19. "When the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations." Matthew 25:31.

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Jesus will do something that Hitler tried to do and failed. That Charlemagne tried to do and failed. That Napoleon tried to do and failed. He will gather all the nations and manifest his total and complete authority to them.

“After this I looked and behold a great multitude which no man could number from every nation, from all tribes and people and tongues standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sets upon the throne and to the lamb.’” That’s a good place to find America in the scripture. The great multitude which no man could number from every nation, including this country.

“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other.” Isaiah 45:12. God is over nations.

And secondly God raises up nations to accomplish specific purposes. Acts 17:26 Paul’s great address to the Athenian philosophers on Mars hill “For from one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” Pretty fixed, isn’t it? And you can apply America to that. He determined the times set for this country and the exact place, the geographical boundaries, where this nation should exist.

What are God’s purposes then for nations? His purpose is that nations in their government might promote justice and punish wrong doing. That’s Romans 13:1-7. God’s view is that the government is meant to enforce commandments 4-10. The secular government. And it is never appropriate that any society be left with anarchy where everybody can do what they want. God has raised up the United States of America to be an instrument of the internal promotion of justice and the punishment of wrong doing as well as perhaps be a beacon of justice in the world.

Another reason why God raises up nations is to judge other nations. God uses nations as instruments of his judgment. Rather than vaporizing them or doing something mystical and supernatural out of the heavens he sends nations to judge nations. Habakkuk learned this truth when he said to God, “How long God, before you’re going to do something about the sins in Judah?” And God said, “I am going to do something. I’m sending the Babylonians.” That’d be like saying, “God when are you going to do something about the pornography in America? When are you going to do something about this blind narcissistic culture, this ego centered, mad, pleasure-centered oriented, selfish culture. When are you going to do something? And God says “I’m going to do something. I’m going to send the Russians!” That goes over like a lead balloon. But God raised up Babylon to be a chastising instrument for Israel.

God raised up America, I believe, in World War I and World War II as an agent of judgment. He used this nation as an agent of judgment on the horrible minions, hellish minions of Hitler and Mussolini. And if there ever was a righteous war that had to be it. Not that everything that happened in that war was righteous. But it was for a righteous cause.

When is God through with a nation? If he raises up a nation to judge another nation. When is he through with the nation that he raised up?

Isaiah 47 gives us four clues as to when God was through with historical Babylon. He was through with them when they gave excessive cruelty to his people, verse 6. When they totally

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relied upon self and were proud of their position, verse 7-9. When they lacked a sense of accountability to God, verse 10-11. And when they had a religious system that God would no longer tolerate, verse 12-15. He was through with them.

A third reason why God raises up nations is that they're raised up to bless other nations. They're raised up to promote justice and punish wrong doers. They're raised to judge other nations. And they're raised also to bless other nations and/or to advance God's purposes in human history. God raised up the nation of Israel to be a blessing of other nations, Genesis 12:3. And he raised up the nation of Rome to advance his purposes in history, Galatians 4:4. Christ was born in the fullness of time. The importance of Rome in the plan of God. Caesar had no idea he was being used of God, why he had been raised up. But God knew that the Christian apostles were going to need an atmosphere of peace, safe roads and safe travel ways, and a single language in order to effectively communicate the gospel within the first Christian generation. So he raised up Rome and Rome gave the world the *pax Romana*. The peace of the Romans. He gave through the Romans a safe and good network of roads and sea lanes so that anybody could go anywhere. And he gave the whole Mediterranean world one language.

That situation doesn't prevail today. The biblical apostles went from Jerusalem up to Antioch walking right through northern Israel and the Golan Heights, right up into Lebanon, went out from Antioch and marched through Syria. Can you imagine a Jewish person today getting into Damascus from Israel? Right out of that kept on going to Tarsus and over and across ultimately into Turkey which was then the Roman province of Asia and beyond that to Greece and beyond that to Rome and beyond that to Spain. All on one passport. All with a common language. They didn't have to learn to speak Arabic or anything else. Just speak Greek which every educated Jew could do. And the gospel was spread within a generation. He raised up Rome to advance his purposes.

I think God raised up America to advance his purposes. There has never been a nation in the whole history of the Christian era which has sent as much light of the gospel elsewhere. I'm convinced that God will keep America alive as long as the church remains concerned to reach the world with the gospel. I don't think America's security has anything to do with ICBMs, Tritent missiles, land based missiles, air based missiles or sea based missiles. I realize we can talk about the importance or non importance of strategic arms and star wars defense and all those kind of things. But in the last analysis it's God who raises up nations and God who brings them down. You can have the most powerful military defense system in the world and somebody can slip in under you, like happened with Medo-Persia and in one night the hand writings on the wall and it's all over. Who knows but Russia could be inventing the instrument the new super weapon and if we don't surrender they release it and it's all over. Who knows if that couldn't happen.

I believe as Christians we get meaning and purpose and identity to this country. Will God spare America? I think there are signs of impending judgment upon America. Billy Graham has said that if God doesn't ultimately judge America he'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. What saved Sodom? Sodom in biblical days was not a large town. In fact in Abraham's day there were two other towns in existence that we know something about because of archeological digs. In the north there was Hazor which had about forty to fifty thousand people and it encompassed only about 175 acres. There was Jericho that encompassed about 7 or 8 acres and had maybe five to ten thousand population. Sodom has not be excavated because it's probably under the Dead Sea. But it is estimated to have had about ten thousand population. Abraham proposed that God spare the city of Sodom for fifty righteous people. Which is a ratio of 200-

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one. He couldn't find that so ultimately he came all the way down to ten righteous people and that's a ratio of 1000-one.

If God were going to judge America and we proposed an Abraham kind of a bargain if there are 220 million people in America give or take a few million that would mean that God needs to find, using the Sodom equation, 220,000 people – one to a thousand that will intercede for this country and that would be righteous. If God uses the same principle that he used in sparing Sodom he could spare this country as well.

Think of this whole matter of looking at biblical prophecy and our need for a popular prophecy that gets people all excited about when World War III is coming. We need to back off from that kind of mode of understanding prophecy and realize that biblical prophecy leads us into the moral, spiritual and ethical ramifications of life. Not into the speculative. I'm sure there will come a time when we will see America no longer be used by God in any way if unrighteousness goes on and prevails. But we don't have to let it happen that way. We as a church of Jesus Christ here and all over can be the salt and light God has called us to be. If we'll do our part we can safely leave in the hands of God the fate of the nation. I think with a humble heart we need to pray deeply from our spirit, "God bless America. God cleanse America. God revive America. God heal America. God use America."

Our Father, we realize that in just a few days this country will come to cast another ballot for our offices on national and state and local levels. We pray, Lord, for your purposes to be accomplished in this election. We pray for the Christian citizens in this country that there will be a tremendous voter turnout of your people in this election, to exercise our calling as Christian citizens to be involved and promote righteousness. We realize that righteousness does exalt a nation. Sin is reproach to any people. We pray, Lord, for a healing in our land. We pray, Lord, for all the bountiful blessings that you have given to us in this country we will remember the poor and the needy and the homeless and the helpless. That we will seek the cause of widows and orphans and do pure and right religion. That this country will be cleansed from its racial hatreds and its class divisions. But more than all of that that through your people the church, there would come a renewed great spiritual awakening to America. That from sea to shining sea our country would be alive with young men and women and old men and women upon whom your Spirit is poured out. In the midst of this nation's young years revive it, renew it. Let it not be simply beacon of political freedom. Let it also be a beacon of spiritual freedom to the world. We pray especially for the national candidates tonight, that in the next days you will protect them from all harm. We're so aware of the act of terrorism and the evil people that are lurking to commit lawless acts. We pray your protection upon the president and vice president. Keep them from any violent act. We pray your protection upon candidates at all levels. That this nation may be kept in a way that is without deep scaring because of assassination and awful lawless acts. We pray that as we look at the issues we will indeed as Christians make a fair attempt to know what we're voting for and on and who we're voting for and pray that we'll be led by you in our choices. We thank you for giving us this great privilege of living in America. We pray, Lord, that we'll be faithful to every responsibility that comes with this privilege. In the Lord's name. Amen.