

A Response to the Current Israeli Conflict

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Well, good evening, First Baptist family. Tonight, as we gather for what we typically refer to as our regularly scheduled Sunday evening service, I think each and every one of us would agree tonight, in light of the world's circumstances, tonight is anything but typical. Tonight, as we're gonna discuss, we're gonna find ourselves in a very interesting scenario. For the first time in 50 years, people that we know as Israel are at war. Israel is mentioned from the very first book of the Bible to the last book of the Bible and almost every book in between and so it bears attention tonight that we respond to what is happening. I mentioned this this morning, tonight is not a reaction, tonight is a response and there's a difference. You react to something that you did not see coming, you respond to something that is truthful, and so tonight we are going to respond from a biblical perspective in light of the current events of what we see happening in the Middle East, particularly what we know as Israel. So for those of you that are on campus, again, thank you for being here this evening. For those that are online, it's always a privilege to have you with us. I know many of you are across the street. Some of you are literally across the world. It's an honor that you would join us this evening.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, tonight as we've gathered, O God, would you still us in the presence of your word, Lord, for that which we see as remarkable days. Lord, you are the one who is seen every day from the beginning to the end all at one time. So Lord, we stand in awe of you, still our hearts tonight, focus our attention on who you are in light of your word. And I do pray, O God, that we would see you as the God who is faithful no matter the circumstances, no matter the consequences. Please, O God, tonight may you still us in this moment. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Tonight as we respond to the current Israeli conflict, there's really not a specific biblical text as you're gonna see tonight. There's a plethora of biblical text that I'm gonna refer to, but for the sake of introduction, I want to read from the book of Zechariah 2:8. It says, "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you," this is speaking of Israel, "toucheth the apple of his eye." Before we get into the specifics of tonight's response, I do want to make a few introductory comments regarding tonight's subject matter and the first one is this, the reason that you and I are here tonight is not just because we have an interest in these biblical matters or we're concerned about prophecies being unfolding, but in the last week

and a half we have seen that which at least up through the last half century has only been reported of the news of days past. The reality of what occurred in Israel the other day is monumental on two fronts. The first one is this, it is the first time that Israel has been attacked in the manner that they were and declared war since 1973. It has been 50 years. Now, it is a land of skirmishes and conflicts on a regular basis, but this is the first time in a half a century that Israel has stated publicly that they are at war. Secondly, the loss of life, not to mention the manner in which that life was lost. The loss of life was the greatest level of casualties in Israel since the Holocaust.

So today, as we gather, this is a monumental time period, not only in the history of Israel, but also in the history of the world. Secondly, tonight, I want to make something very, very clear. The response tonight, this is not a political response. This is not something that is a talking point for politicians or pundits and such. Everything we're gonna discuss tonight is coming from a theological biblical position. We live in a world where politicians and pundits have hijacked the theology of Israel, however, tonight, you'll notice throughout the response, there's not gonna be any references to peace accords or agreements, the only thing we're gonna reference is biblical passages in history. And finally, I want to make a very important historical clarification. There has never been nor is there currently a state of Palestine. The pundits and the politicians tell you it exists, but it does not. The word Palestine, or for someone to be declared a Palestinian, is actually a word that is derived through the ages, but you may be surprised about its etymology. The Palestinians of today are the Philistines of the Old Testament. So tonight, if I interchange those two words, I apologize in advance, I'm just trying to be biblical. These are the Philistines. The reason that's important is the Philistines of Old Testament days and the Palestinians of today, they are not a nation and they are not a specified sovereign state. They are a collection of multiple nations whose definition in Palestinian simply means people that reside between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. That's all that it means. And so when you hear people in the political world talk about a two-state solution, you cannot have two states if one of them does not even exist. The only state that exists and has existed is the state of Israel. That's it.

And so tonight, as you can tell from the very beginning, we're going to go against the grain of the world, most of its leaders, and its positions but we're going to be biblical, and so tonight, I want to walk through a series of historical and prophetic elements in regards to the Jewish people. We've got to begin at the beginning. We've got to talk about who are we talking about here? And I don't just mean the Israelites. Who are the players in what is happening in the Middle East today? And it actually begins with a promise. You might be surprised at the chronological order of the promise. You say, "The promise?" That's right. There was a man by the name of Abraham, we know him as Abram before Isaac was born, that the Lord made a very specific promise to, and he made that promise about a descendant, a descendant whom we know as Jesus Christ the Messiah. But he also made a promise regarding the land; we'll discuss that more in detail in just a moment. But Abraham had two sons. The child of promise was actually the second born. The child of rebellion was the first born. Ishmael was the child that was born to Hagar, not to Sarai. The idea of Abraham and Sarah not believing that God could do what only God can do. And in Genesis 16, God made Ishmael and his mom Hagar a promise and

that promise was simply this, that he, Ishmael, would be a mighty nation. He would be a mighty people. He would be at war with all other peoples and he would dwell within the wilderness.

A lot of people are surprised to find out that the first promise chronologically was not to Isaac, it was to Ishmael. So in God's way of doing things, he provided them not only a promise but also a protective measure. But then there's the promise of Isaac. Isaac was the child of promise. Isaac was the one that was conceived between Abram and Sarah. And in chapter 17, you discover that upon his birth, that it was Isaac that was given the deed to the land that we collectively know as the Holy Land or Israel today. And in Genesis 22, that really puts us at a crossroads or a fork in the road, so to speak, because in Genesis 22, Abraham would take one of his sons and would go up to the top of the mountain. I'm sure you're familiar with the story that as they went to the top of the mountain, it was a time for a sacrifice and there his child had the wood upon his arms and they laid out the sacrifice, and remember he said, "Oh dad, I see the wood, I see the fire, but where's the lamb?" Remember Abraham said, "Don't worry, God will provide." Very famous story, very prophetic and picturesque of Jesus Christ as Abraham lifted his hand to slay his child. The angel of the Lord showed up, stopped him from doing so, and provided a ram. Two things you need to know about that story. The first one is this. According to Hebrews 11, Abraham not only believed that his child would be raised from the dead, but when he went up to the mountain, one of my favorite statements in the Bible, he told his servants, "We will be back in three days." But the second most important for tonight's discussion is this, which child was it? It wasn't Ishmael. It was Isaac. And what we discover today is the current day Palestinians, Old Testament Philistines, are largely and primarily the descendants of Ishmael and what we know as the Jewish people are the descendants of Isaac.

So what's the picture that God has given us? Well, in Genesis 21, he reaffirms this promise of chapter 16, where he says he will make Ishmael a great nation, and here's the fascinating aspect, he says he will dwell in the wilderness. One of the things that you see as you not only read through scripture, but you walk through the Holy Land, this is a different picture than he gives the Jewish people. To the Jewish people, he says, "You will be in a land that is filled with milk and honey," and even to this day, when you walk into a settlement that is Jewish occupied, there is grass and greenery and fruit abounding. When you walk through an area that is Palestinian occupied, there's nothing but dust, dirt, and sand. What we see today is that all the way back in the book of Genesis, the Lord laid out, he established for us a simple observation but we know that these two individuals and their respective descendants, according to scripture, would be and will be at war with each other until Jesus Christ literally returns. This feud is not going away. I don't care how many times they meet at Camp David, those accords will continue to be broken.

How is this prophetic? How does this relate to what we've seen in the news the last week and a half? A few days ago, a terrorist organization by the name of Hamas launched an attack on Israel. They did so from the land known as Gaza. Gaza is an area, it's not very large in size, just to the north of Egypt but to the southwest of what we know as Israel. In a moment we'll put a map up and this will all kind of come collectively together. The

reason this is important is the Hamas people, the terrorists known as Hamas, they actually derive from a branch of Islam known as Sunni. Now, you may not think that's significant because there are Sunnis and there are Shiites, would you believe this, that in the Islamic world, Sunnis are known as the peaceful ones. It's the Shiites that are known as the violent ones. You say, "Well, who are the Shiites?" The Shiites are Hezbollah in Lebanon that are fueled by Iran or biblical Persia. You see, what we have today unfolding before our very eyes is a story that started all the way back in the book of Genesis and all throughout time and all throughout generations, we've observed, viewed, seen, and wondered, what could this mean for today?

Prophetically speaking, the descendants of Ishmael are being played out with Hamas and Hezbollah, the Sunnis and the Shiites, the Muslims of the 21st century, but then there's the Jewish people. The Jewish people of today can actually be categorized into three different groups. The smallest numerically but probably the most influential is what we know as the religious Jews. A religious Jew is typically associated with a respective synagogue and theological disposition. They are faithful to the feasts and the festivals. They are the ones that celebrate the Sabbath. They are the ones, more likely than not, that were in their homes a week and a half ago when on the Sabbath day Hamas struck during the Feast of Tabernacles on the day of Sabbath. Then there's what we know as Zionists. A Zionist is not necessarily a very religious Jew. They are to some level, but they believe in that land as being, shall we say, given by God and deeded to them. And then there's what we know as secular. A secular Jew has no allegiance to the synagogue, the feasts, the festivals, and such. At some level, they will even discuss and/or debate the prophetic nature of that piece of dirt we know as the Holy Land but as you've seen in the last few days, even the most secular of Jews become Zionists when the missiles start flying.

So when, when did all this begin? When did this all begin to unfold? This actually started in the book of Genesis 12. If I can remind you about chapter 11, humanity formed and created what we know as the Tower of Babel and the Lord's consequence and result of that was he dispersed humanity throughout the world. He went to a place known as the Ur of Chaldees. He found a man by the name of Abram. Abram would not become Abraham until Isaac was born. He called Abram and his wife Sarai and I want to quote for you what it says in Genesis 12. He said, "I want you to go," listen to this, "unto a land that I will show you." From the very beginning of the Abrahamic covenant, the aspect of land and a place was of the most critical nature. And then there's the picture. I mentioned earlier Genesis 17. This is not only the calling of Isaac as the heir of this covenant, but it says that, "My covenant," it says, "thy seed will receive a land," and I want you to hear this last phrase, "for an everlasting possession."

Now I know there are many people in today's contemporary world that say, "Well, that was then, this is now. There's been a whole lot that's happened in the last 4,000 years." Let me share with you, if you are here tonight, and you are a believer in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you have no biblical standing to claim that land for anybody but for Israel and I'm going to share with you why. Because if you go in the Old Testament, and if you were to do what they did at the time of Jesus, and you were to take those passages, and you were to translate them into Greek, the language of the day, you

know what you would discover? That in Genesis 17, when the Lord said that they would have an everlasting possession, it's the exact same word in John 3:16 when it says, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You cannot claim that Jesus is the way to heaven and that that land is not the possession of Israel. You cannot make both of those statements at the same time. It is called the law of non-contradiction. You cannot have the word mean one thing in one place and a different thing in another place.

So the picture that we have is that from the very beginning of the Abrahamic covenant, when Isaac was conceived and born, the Lord said that this place, this land is given to, it is deeded to the descendants of Isaac, whom we know as the Jewish people today. In fact, if you look at the totality of planet Earth, what we know as Israel today is the only land that was ever deeded by God himself. That being said, there's a prophetic element to when all this took place. Beginning from the days of Isaac to Jacob, who by the way, the grandson of Abraham, his name Jacob literally got changed to Israel. That's where the name comes from. It means one who wrestles with God. There couldn't be a better picture of those individuals throughout time in history. There is the promise and the picture of an everlasting covenant, however, prophetically speaking, there have been days and there have been times where even though they possessed the land and it was deeded to them, they did not actually live within the land.

The first such time is known as the Babylonian captivity. For hundreds of years, the Old Testament prophets warned the Jewish people if they would not repent of their sins, if they would not turn from their wicked ways, they would be taken captive. And in 586 BC, that's exactly what happened. A famed character of history by the name of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came in and not only did they tear the temple to the ground, they evacuated the residents of the Jewish people from the land known as Israel. And for 70 years, which by the way was prophesied by Jeremiah in chapter 30, it would be 70 years, for 70 years they lived in Babylon. These were the days of Daniel. These were the days of Ezekiel. But after 70 years, there was a woman by the name of Queen Esther. There was Ezra. There was Nehemiah. All those books of the Old Testament are the story of the Jewish people returning back to their land to reside in a place that I want you to hear me clearly, was never voided out of their ownership. They just simply returned back home.

They resided in the land until roughly 70 A.D. It's a time period that we refer to as the dispersion or the diaspora when the Roman entities ransacked Jerusalem, much like Nebuchadnezzar did in the sixth century BC. The temple was torn to the ground. The people were dispersed. For those of you who either A, have been there, or B, have seen the movie, the last holdout was a place on the southern side of the Dead Sea known as Masada. For 1,900 years, They would be a people in possession of the land, but not present in the land.

Matthew 24, days before his ultimate crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus is on the Mount of Olives. If you've ever been to the Mount of Olives, it literally overlooks the Temple Mount. And there gathered Peter, James, John, and Andrew and Jesus makes this

statement, he said that this temple is going to be torn down. He said it took 46 years to build it, but I'm gonna rebuild it in three days and the Bible makes it clear they did not understand he was speaking of the fact that the veil would be torn and that we as believers in him would now, our bodies would be the temple of the Holy Spirit. But nonetheless Jesus prophesied that this would occur and those four men asked two very important questions. The first question was this, "When shall these things be?" And secondly, "What shall be the sign of your coming?" For the next two chapters, Jesus began to give a very explicit detail about what we call the last days, or formally we might call eschatology. But in the middle of chapter 24, verse 32 through 34, Jesus gives a parable. He gives an illustration, and he makes this statement. He said, "When you see the fig tree begin to bud, know that it is the last generation." The fig tree in the Old Testament is overwhelmingly a reference to Israel. Before the temple was ever torn down, before the Jews were ever dispersed, Jesus basically said, there's gonna come a time where you come back. There's gonna be a time where you return. For 1,900 years, the Jewish people were displaced.

Now I want to make a very clear theological observation. Just because they were absent from the land for 1900 years did not mean they were not still the possessors of the land. Much like in today's context, if you went on vacation for two weeks, you would never say that was not your home. You would say it's just going to be a matter of time before you return. It was a very long, unfortunate vacation. But nonetheless, in 1917, as we found ourselves as a world coming to the end of the war to end all wars, which we know today is World War I, the Prime Minister of England, a man by the name of Balfour, declared that the land that we know as Israel was rightfully to be inhabited by the Jewish people. Now, contrary to what you might hear in the public media today, Israel in 1917 was not owned by the Palestinian state. It was under jurisdiction of the Crown of the British Monarchy and they declared publicly what the Bible had been saying for years. It would be 30 years at the close of World War II and after the slaughter of 6.5 million Jewish people, they would return and they would return not only to dwell in the land that they had possessed for thousands of years, but the world did something phenomenal. The United Nations, you know, every now and then we say a blind squirrel finds a nut. They found one in that one in 1948. They actually declared that that land was the land of the Jewish people and that Israel had the right to possess it.

Now that being said, I want to put a map up on the screen for you because when we talk about Israel, I think a lot of times we struggle with what does that "look like." Now originally, when Abraham was given the covenant, what we know as the land, we'll talk about this in a moment, it actually went to the river Euphrates, but we'll talk about that in just a moment. What you see before you is a modern map of what we know as the Jewish state of Israel. That which is the larger section in green is occupied Jewish territory. What you see in an orange-ish yellow, the larger piece which is just west of the Jordan River, that is what we know as the West Bank. The smaller piece to the southern side is Gaza. That's where this conflict originated. The Hamas people of the descendants of Ishmael in that little piece of land just north of Egypt are the ones who initiated the events of the modern era.

The thing that I want you to understand is this, statehood was received in 1948, but then 1967 occurred. 1967. Every neighbor of the Jewish people decided to attack them all at once. We know that war today is the Six-Day War because it only took six days for the Jewish people to not only respond to but to gain the rightful possession of the land that they already inhabited. Now over the course of the last week and a half, I've had numerous people reach out to me and ask me, "When are you going to respond to what's happening? We want your opinion on things." I said, "We've got to get past day seven." They said, "Why?" And I said, "Because the last time this happened, it only took six days. It may already be over by then." But it's not. The thing that I want you to understand about 1967 is you see those lands in the picture that are greenish yellow, the West Bank and Gaza of today. The Jewish people, rightfully won, inhabited and had the right to all of it. Here's the problem. To inhabit all of it would be to displace the Palestinian-Philistine people to a nomadic lifestyle with no sustenance and no way of survival. So out of the goodness and graciousness of their heart, here's what they did. They gave the West Bank and they gave Gaza back to the descendants of Ishmael. Do you understand what I just said? In 1967, they rightfully won those lands back and decided to give them up so that peace might take place in the Middle East.

There was another piece of land, you can't see it on the map, it's called the Temple Mount, probably the most valuable, most sacred place on earth. There's currently no temple. We'll talk about that in a moment. But you may be surprised to find out that that land known as the Temple Mount is actually Jordanian territory. They allowed the Jordanian government to maintain sovereign statehood over that piece of land. So in 1967, they "won it all," but they gave a significant portion back but here's what's critical, in 1967, they then possessed the city of Jerusalem, which obviously is key. And then 1973, 50 years and a week and a half ago, on the Day of Atonement known as Yom Kippur, from the northern section of Israel known as Syria, they were attacked and once again, the Israelite people pushed back and what the 1973 Yom Kippur War did is it essentially established those 1967 borders as a well-established statehood and picture and boundaries going forward. Until this week. It's 2023. Again, this is a biblical response. I don't know necessarily what those in political positions, if their words actually will come to fruition or not, but I do know that the Prime Minister of Israel has stated that they are about to reorganize the Middle East. I don't know what that means and neither do you. It will unfold in the days ahead. But no matter what he or others do or don't say, it doesn't change what God has already said and what the Bible says is going to take place.

Well, that map is still upon the screen. I want to talk about the where. This is the land of Israel. This is the holy place. This is the place that was given as a promise to Abraham and to David. 2 Samuel 16:7, I want you to hear what God says to David. By the way, even today, what we know as Jerusalem is called the old city of David. I mean, this is, even though Bethlehem was the place, the city of David, Jerusalem is known as the city of David. In 2 Samuel 16:7, God tells David that, "Thine house, kingdom, and throne," guess what, "will be everlasting." There's that word again. There's a re-confirmation that everything that God has done and continues to do will be forever and without end.

Here's an interesting picture. While that maps up on the screen, when the Lord told Abraham to go and possess the land, the actual verbiage of Genesis 15 says, from the river of Egypt unto the river of the Euphrates. The original land grant is much greater than what is being "fought over today." In fact, it presents itself as a very large triangle shape that essentially goes from modern day Syria and Lebanon, all the way to the east, to what we know as Kuwait, all the way to the west, to what you and I know pretty much as Cairo, Egypt. A large, massive "land grant." But here's the prophetic element. In Joshua 1, the Israelites who had struggled so much not only in the captivity of Egypt but the coming out the wilderness experience in Joshua 1 and from that point to today the Bible references the land of the Jewish people as the landmass that you see in green on the map. And I want to recite for you the words in Joshua 1, it says that every place that the sole of your foot treads upon shall be your inheritance on the other side of the Jordan.

Again, what you see biblically is a case that is being made that this land is their land. It is a covenant established by God himself and its nature is that it's everlasting. So, with all that backstory, let's get to the part that most of you showed up for. What is going on? What is happening today? Why is it important? And how do we respond to it? Let's talk about the promise of God. In Romans 11:25 and 26, God makes a promise regarding the Jewish people that, believe it or not, is irrespective of the land by which they possess and inhabit. It states there, in light of Jesus Christ who came born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, and rose from the grave, we know in the New Testament, as a whole, the Jewish people have rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah. But in Romans 11, it makes the statement that Israel now experiences blindness in part but when the times of the Gentiles are finished, you know what the last statement in verse 26 says? All of Israel shall be saved. Now for tonight's discussion what that means is this, there is never going to be a time where Israel will cease to exist. When the Palestinians of today say that they are going to eliminate the Jewish people, they are fighting against God himself because it says that they shall be saved after the time of the Gentiles.

You say, what is the time of the Gentiles? Typically, we date it about 606 BC. That's when Nebuchadnezzar actually originally came in to what we know as Jerusalem. He didn't actually take the temple and take everybody out until 586. That's when it technically started and I would say it's going to go until that famed, what we call, rapture event. There's a time coming according to 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, a host of scriptures, where those that have already deceased in Christ, those that are alive in Christ, will be caught up together to be with the Lord. And when you read the book of Revelation, that which has not yet occurred yet, you know what you'll discover? In chapter 7 it mentions the 12 tribes. In chapter 11 it talks about a temple. What we know as the Jewish people, the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, the promise by God is no matter what happens, even if for 1,900 years they wander without being in their homeland, they will never cease to exist.

What's the picture? What's it going to look like until then? Well, Matthew 24, back to the Olivet Discourse, Jesus made this statement, "There will be wars and there will be rumors of wars." In other words, there will always be conflicts. I know that today people are questioning, people are asking, "Is this the big one? Is this the last one?" I tell you, you

don't know and I don't know. Jesus just said there's gonna be wars and there's gonna be rumors of wars. But in verse 15 of Matthew 24, he gave warning to the Jewish people. He said, "When you see what Daniel spoke of called the abomination of desolation." Now let me speak to you about what that is. This is critical to what's happening in the Middle East right now. The abomination of desolation is spoken of in Daniel 9. It's also spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2. The abomination of desolation is when whom what we know as the Antichrist goes into the temple on the Temple Mount and according to 2 Thessalonians 2 he declares he is God. Now the reason that I'm so emphatic about that is there is no temple in Jerusalem right now. There is no known "Antichrist" right now. And I'm going to be transparent with you. I'm a believer in Jesus Christ and I'm still here right now.

So all that being said, this is a significant event. This is the first war in half a century on the land known as Israel. But Jesus said it gets really bad when you see this event, and that event not only has not occurred, it technically could not occur today if it had to, which leads me to Ezekiel 38 and 39. If you have not read these two chapters of scripture in light of what's happening in today's event, you might be interested to do so. In Ezekiel 38 and 39, we have a famous battle known as the Battle of Gog and Magog. Now I'm going to put that in modern terms. Are you ready? The Gog of the Old Testament is Turkey of today, and Magog is Russia. That's just the landmass. And it says that from the north, the kings will descend upon Jerusalem. They will descend upon Israel for the purpose of its destruction and the destruction of the people. Here's what's fascinating about those two chapters. This is a famed battle that has not occurred in days past, but it will in days future. When you begin to read the names of those entities, there's Gog and Magog, which is modern day Turkey and Russia, guess who else is mentioned? Egypt is mentioned. Persia, which is Iran, is mentioned. Syria. Lebanon. You say, why is that so significant? Because two, three hundred years ago, none of them were major players in the world. They had gone by the wayside and oftentimes people would read passages like that and say, "Oh, there's no way that could ever happen in the future. Those countries hardly exist anymore." And yet today, every time you turn on the news, those are the countries that are being mentioned.

Let me kind of peel away some more layers for a moment. You read chapter 39, it's very specific where that battle will be originated. It is originated in a city that is called in the Old Testament, Meshech. Now don't think Meshach of the Babylonian fire, okay? Different Meshech. Meshech of the Old Testament geographically speaking is Moscow of today. It's the same place. And if you were to pull up a map and you're to look at where Moscow of today is located in reference to Jerusalem, you might be surprised it is absolutely due north of Jerusalem. You see, when we think about Russia we think the northeast, but Moscow, Meshech, Magog. The biblical names and references is actually "due north," which is what it says will happen at that famed battle in Ezekiel 38 and 39. But don't worry, when that battle commences, if you read those two chapters, you don't have to worry about the US and an aircraft carrier, you don't have to worry about anti-missile stuff. It says the Lord takes care of it with his own divine power. He just eliminates all of the threats in one simple act.

And then there's the prophetic, Daniel 9:24 and 27. It says there's coming a day where the Jewish people will make an agreement, they will make a peace accord, and for a lack of better terms, with a character that we know in the Bible as the Antichrist. The book of Daniel says that agreement will be for seven years they will establish "peace." But in the middle of those seven years, the abomination of desolation will take place. That Antichrist figure will go into the temple and claim that he is God and at that point, according to Daniel 9, the end of wars of desolation are determined. In other words, as I've often described the book of Revelation when describing these events, literally all hell breaks loose. If you think I'm being pejorative, in the book of Revelation 9, it actually says that entities from the bottomless pit actually come up on earth to seek vengeance and violence. In other words, even though there is great conflict over there, there is no abomination of desolations, there has been no peace accord with the Antichrist, and even if there was, it has three and a half years before it spoils.

So why, why even respond? Why even discuss these matters? Because even though war has broken out today, it will probably break out again. I know it will break out again. We just don't know what layer or what level it will. I want you again to hear the promise of God. Romans 11, "Blindness is now in parts but there is coming a day where all of Israel shall be saved." No matter what we read in the news, no matter what we hear, the people of Israel, the Jewish people, will not ever vanish from planet Earth. They will always be. And the picture that I've already mentioned in Daniel 9 is that there's coming a day where because of their blindness, they will partner with the ultimate villain of planet Earth for the sake of peace. There's a lot of details that we could get in and speculation therein. But we know that the day is coming where a fake peace will come to the Middle East, when an accord will be signed that the Jewish people and the then leader of the world, who is literally the devil in disguise, and it's at that point that potentially Ezekiel 38 and 39, but most assuredly, the most graphic of wars is yet to come.

Speaking of Ezekiel again, when you read in chapter 39, that war is so grave, literally, that it says that after it is finished, it takes seven years to bury the dead. That's how "grave" that it is. But let's speak prophetically for a moment. I'm gonna quote for you tonight, Amos 9:15. You know when we talk about Israel, many of you tonight expected to hear many of the verses that I quoted. We went back into Genesis 12 and we spoke of Romans 11, you expected that. But Amos 9, it's one of those verses that it's there, but for some reason we give it little to no attention. I want you to hear what it says, and by the way, before I read it to you, and I know it's on the screen, Amos was a post-exilic prophet. Now the reason that is important is that he didn't make this statement before the Babylonian captivity. He made it after. And the only, for lack of better terms, dispersion that the Jewish people have experienced since then is between 70 AD and 1948. So prophetically speaking, what Amos is addressing is what you and I are living today and I want you to hear what God says about the Jewish people. "I will plant them in the land. They will no more be pulled out of their land, which I have given them."

Tonight, we have been and will continue to be subjected to all kinds of news reports, speculations, and strategies. You need to hang on to Amos 9:15 because God himself said once they come back, once they are established again, they will never be pulled out again.

That's not a political statement. That's a theological statement. And all the way back in Zechariah 2, God warned us about those who fought against his people. You and I today are again experiencing the biblical version of the Hatfield and the McCoys, families that have not, cannot, and will never get along. They are going to fight until Jesus literally returns again. The worst wars have yet to occur but be assured, the people of God are in the land of God. They've been planted by God. And I'm going to rest my head on my pillow tonight. I'm not worried one bit about waking up tomorrow and finding out that the Jewish people have somehow been displaced again. I'm not worried one bit because there are too many promises in the word of God that have come true in days past for me to question this just because some pundit gets on TV and tells me otherwise.

And so tonight, we can rest assured that no matter how grave it gets and how bad it gets, a couple of conclusions that we can draw. Number one, Israel is there and they're not going anywhere. Number two, they are the apple of God's eye. And number three, according to the word of God, you as an individual, we as a country, and humanity collectively, we are foolish to go against God, his word, and his people. It has prophetically been established. It will prophetically come to fruition. But here's the big question. This is how we're going to close tonight. How? How do we respond because we're so far away from what's taking place and many of us feel like there's nothing that we can do? Psalm 122:6. It's not just a verse that you have and are going to hear a whole lot in the days ahead. I'm privileged to say that I've written this verse down and I've placed it in the cracks of the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. For those of you who are not familiar, that Western Wall there on the Temple Mount, there's a place where the Jewish people and even non-Jewish people come and pray for the people in the place known as Israel and you are allowed to take prayers and write them down on pieces of paper and place them in the bricks therein. If you can go look up images and videos, you'll see them everywhere. First time I ever visited Israel, there was no war. There was no true conflict. But it didn't change that I needed to pray for them because I knew what was coming. What you and I are experiencing today is possibly the birth pangs that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24. We know there is war. We know there is conflict. And so if there's ever been a time to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, this is the time.

But I want to give you some guidance before we pray. This isn't just pray that Hamas is desolated. This isn't just a prayer that Hezbollah retreats. These people are lost. I want to make it real. Currently, roughly 3,000 people on both sides have lost their life and biblically speaking, statistically, probably every single one blew open the door of hell because even though we're talking about the people of God and the apple of his eye, most of the Jewish people are lost. They have rejected Jesus and unfortunately, they will pay the eternal consequences. So let me ask you to do something. Can you pray that maybe war will finally open their eyes to their blindness of Jesus? That maybe this is the thing that it takes for them to realize that as they walk up and down the streets of Jerusalem, there is a tomb that is still there that is still empty, that their Messiah, that their prophet spoke of came and lived and died and rose from the grave. They have military positions on the very mounts that Jesus preached from, in the very hills and valleys that he walked. We pray for peace, not just a military peace, but the peace of Romans 5:1 that says that we can have peace with God through Jesus Christ. And so I think tonight the only way to

rightfully close this response is to pray for these people, to pray for this war and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Todd's over here on the piano. He's going to play some music and I just want to invite you to enter a season of prayer. Here's what we're going to do for about the next five, six or seven minutes. I'm just going to guide you in some prayer points. You may want to stay at your seat. You can come up here at the front. I know this is a Baptist church, but we do believe you can get up and pray at the front. It's okay. Don't worry about it. You may want to have your eyes open. You may want to have them closed. It doesn't matter. But would you join me for a few moments as we simply pray for the people and the land of Israel.