

- I. Israel
- A. One of the strange things about being a pastor is how jumbled up things can be. And it's not just for pastors, it's for everybody. Moms and dads, you'll know what I mean.
  - B. Good and bad, happy and sad, life and death, all get jumbled together in the days of our lives.
  - C. Today is supposed to be a really good day.
  - D. We are going to celebrate one of the wonderful practices of the church, one that connects us back to 2,000 years of Christian history. That is baptism. That is something worth celebrating.
  - E. All jumbled together with this, however, is the very bad news of what is happening in our world today.
  - F. I want to take a moment to give a little Biblical teaching to give you a perspective on what is happening in Israel and why. Let me start by zooming out to see a timeline of human history.
  - G. Timeline
    1. **2023 AD - Today**
    2. **0033 AD - Jesus and his cross and resurrection**
    3. **2000 BC - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob**
    4. **DATELESS PAST - Everything before Abraham**
    5. **CREATION**
    6. **THE FALL**
      - a) Satan's hatred of the human race
        - (1) *"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."* (Genesis 3:15)
      - b) God promised that a seed of the woman would be at war with Satan. Satan would bruise his heel—a non-lethal blow. But the Seed of the Woman would bruise his head—inflict a lethal blow.
      - c) In other words, God promised a coming Seed of the Woman who would destroy evil at its source, and that includes crushing the devil's head like a grape.
        - (1) This is the birth of Satan's intense hatred of the genealogy of the Seed of the Woman.
      - d) The devil has an intense focus on following the lineage of the Seed, and doing everything he can to destroy it.
    7. **FLOOD** (Genesis 6, to infect, corrupt the line of the seed physiologically)
    8. **NOAH AND HIS DESCENDANTS**
      - a) *"May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant."* (Genesis 9:27)
      - b) **"God will dwell in the tents of Shem."**
      - c) It is at this point, that they eye of Sauron, Satan, turned all his attention to the line of Shem.
    9. And God kept narrowing it down, from the line of Shem:
      - a) **Abraham > Isaac > Jacob > Israel > Judah > David**
    10. So Satan kept narrowing down his agenda of destruction.
    11. All of these eventually bring us to **Jesus Christ**.
    12. Satan has always had a special and intense hatred of this line. All throughout history, he has bent his diabolical evil to destroy this seed of the woman. Hitler. Stalin. The Roman General Titus. Haman. Nebuchadnezzar. Nimrod. Hamas. The devil has always influenced history to eradicate Jews.
    13. All Jews are descendants of Shem. Shem is where we get the word anti-semitism. And this is me, a student and preacher of the Word of God, and your pastor, trying to show you one deep truth in scripture that I hope you never forget:
      - a) **Anti-semitism is satanic.**
    - H. The hatred of Jews is satanic. This is demonic. This is the devil's lie. This is the devil's propaganda. This is Satan's war game, only it's not a game.
    - I. In the Book of Revelation, John sees this vision:
      1. *"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth."* (Revelation 12:1-2)
    - J. This is John's vision of all the history of Israel, the people chosen by God to carry the line of the seed of the woman, culminating in the Jewish woman Mary, the mother of Jesus.
    - K. Then John sees another vision, and in this one the devil is in constant attack against Israel and Jesus.
      1. *"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born."* (Revelation 12:3-4)
    - L. And then, in the next vision, the highest archangel sent to protect the nation of Israel, comes against the Dragon:
      1. *"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,"* (Revelation 12:7)
    - M. A war broke out in heaven. Think of that. A war broke out in heaven. That war is still going. It is a war by Satan against the people of God.
      1. That's what's happening today, as it has happened before. The war is Satan's war against the line of the Messiah. This is demonic. There is no nuance here.
      2. I want to say that using colonialism—which is factually as wrong as could be—as a rationalization for this evil is only layering evil over evil.
      3. Are all Palestinians and Arabs evil? No. Of course not. God loves them all and wants them saved.
      4. Are all Israeli's evil? No. Of course not. God loves them too and wants them saved too.

5. No nation is perfect. Even so, this is not how to prosecute a war. Everything that has been done in the attack on Israel is literally a war crime.
  6. Some people don't understand this. Some people don't understand the facts. They are listening to media, or teachers or friends... Don't get confused. Please do some digging. Please study the history of this place before just going along with the crowd. Some hearing me are confused.
  7. But some are not. Some aren't confused; they're lying. They are willfully blind. They are actually speaking up in defense of atrocities. They are speaking up for a revival of ISIS. They have made themselves a mouthpiece for the doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1). They have put themselves under strong delusion, as the Bible says (2 Timothy 2:11).
  8. There is a military war, there is a terrorism war, and there is a propaganda war. Do not let yourself be fooled.
  9. All of this war here on earth is just a dim reflection of the fierce and fiery war in heaven.
  - N. God loves everybody, but there are two people groups on which God has set his special affection and love.
    1. The first is his Chosen People, the Jews. In fact, the New Testament asks, has God cast away his people? The answer is "Certainly not," and "God forbid" (Roman 11:1). As a people group, Jews are still precious to God.
    2. The second is the Church, Christians, us. We are also under the special affection and love of God.
  - O. Therefore, Satan hates *both* groups with a passion. He has declared war against *both*. Do not be fooled.
    1. **What is today a very public hatred of Jews will be tomorrow a very public hatred of Christians.**
  - P. It's coming. It's the same spirit. Actually, it's already here—slithering and hissing in the halls of power and institutions across our nation and our world.
  - Q. Satan hates us and so do his bewitched minions.
  - R. If you're going to hate Jews, you're going to hate Jesus. Jesus was a Jew. This precious Bible we've studied all our lives was written by Jews. Amos, the prophet I've been preaching from, was a Jew. Mary. Joseph. Esther. Ruth. Paul. Daniel. Everybody. All Jews.
    1. Anti-semitism is satanic, because Satan wants you to hate God, hate the Bible, hate Christians, hate Jews, and hate Jesus Christ.
  - S. One last thing to wrap this part up. You might be familiar with this verse:
    1. *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14)
  - T. There is a very powerful truth hidden in this verse that you don't really see in English. When he was made flesh and came into this world, it says he *dwelt* among us. And he did. But the Greek word says something so much deeper.
  - U. The Greek word translated *dwelt* is *skeno-o* (skay-NO-oh). It doesn't just mean dwell. It literally means **to pitch a tent**.
  - V. Get this: when God finally came to dwell among us, it says it in a way that ties it back thousands of years to that great promise from the lips of Noah that God will dwell in the tents of Shem.
    1. Jesus the Jew is God dwelling in the tents of Shem, the literal fulfillment of Noah's prophecy.
  - W. I would like to say a quick prayer for Israel and all involved, and then we have a short meditation before we get into our baptisms.
- II. Prayer
- A. Almighty God,
  - B. When a Jewish King saw the overwhelming armies sent against his tiny nation, he prayed, *"O our God... we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."* (2 Chronicles 20:10-12)
  - C. Lord, our eyes are upon you. Only you can stop these swords from rattling. Only you can heal the land. Lord, we have a sadness today for the whole region, we put them all in your hands. But we have a special sadness for Israel and your people the Jews. And we pray your special protection on them. We pray victory for them. We pray for those who grieve, comfort them. We pray for those in harm's way, deliver them. We pray for decision makers and presidents and rulers, guide them. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and all Israel and the entire region. We pray salvation for them. And we pray for miracles that only you can give. We pray against the devil and all his works... and against his violence—Lord, disrupt him. We pray against Satan's lies and propaganda, confound and silence them. And for all of us now, comfort us, and continually draw us closer to you. We pray, in Jesus name, Amen.
- III. Amos - A Maverick Spirit
- A. I said that things are jumbled. So now I'd like to start over and spend just a few minutes in our series for the fall.
  - B. We've been talking about a maverick spirit. Our focus has been a book in the Old Testament. That book is called Amos. Amos was a wild man, a brilliant thinker, an amazing writer, and a prophet from God. He was sent by God to people who were not interested in what he had to say.
  - C. Mainly, this message is a warning. You are in trouble with God. You don't even realize it. You don't know how bad it is.
  - D. But underneath the surface, everywhere, Amos has a message of grace. God is calling his people back to himself. Return to me. I love you. Come to me. Find real life in me. I will make your life worth living.
    1. *"For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek Me and live; But do not seek Bethel, Nor enter Gilgal, Nor pass over to Beersheba; For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, And Bethel shall come to nothing. Seek the LORD and live..."* (Amos 5:4-6a)
  - E. Please think with me on the topic:
    1. **Never Settle**
  - F. The context of this Scripture is really strange. The prophet Amos walks into the town square. He's probably all dressed in black. And he announces a funeral sermon.
  - G. Amos calls this a lamentation (v. 1). That means a funeral sermon, a funeral song, a dirge.
  - H. Picture Amos. By this time, he's a regular fixture in the marketplace. He's been coming there day after day, setting up shop, and he just starts preaching there in the open air. Yelling out his sermons. Calling out to anyone who will listen.

- I. This time, he's dressed differently. He's dressed for a funeral. He says, "Ladies and gentlemen, we are here to mourn the passing of the dearly departed."
    1. "Who died?" a woman in the audience says.
    2. "You died," Amos says. "And you and you and you too. All of you."
    3. "What do you mean, we died? No way. We're alive," a young man calls out.
    4. "No you're not," says Amos. "You're dead."
  - J. So I'd like to be Amos today. I'd like to say, "Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today in fond memory of someone we loved and cared about deeply."
    1. And you would say, "Who died?"
    2. And now, it's my turn to say, "You died."
  - K. By now, you would probably be very confused. So were the people who listened to Amos.
  - L. Why were they dead? What was that about?
  - M. Amos says they were dead because they did not seek the things they were supposed to seek and instead they did seek things they were not supposed to seek.
  - N. Let's look at this.
- IV. Three Cities
- A. Amos says, Do not seek Bethel. That's a city. And then he adds two more cities. Do not seek Bethel. Do not seek Gilgal. Do not seek Beersheba.
  - B. Those are cities. The Israelites knew that. They also know what those cities meant.
  - C. All three of these cities were super important in the history of Israel.
    1. **Bethel** is where Jacob wrestled with God. It is where God changed his name to Israel, and gave him a new identity, and a new nature, and a new life. Bethel represents **LIFE**. It's the equivalent of life from the dead and a new identity with Christ.
    2. **Gilgal** is where the Jews first entered the Promised Land. It is where they camped. It is where they set up a monument to the miracle-working grace of God. It is where they reconstituted the covenant of Grace and celebrated the Passover. If Bethel stands for SPIRITUAL LIFE, then Gilgal stands for **BLESSINGS AND ABUNDANCE** from the hand of God.
    3. **Beersheba** is the great city where God met personally with every member of the great trio, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And in every case, God reaffirmed the same promise: *Do not be afraid, for I am with you*. The main thing about this city, is that it represents the assurance of companionship with God. I'm going to say that Beersheba stands for **LOVE**.
      - a) Bethel should mean Life with God.
      - b) Gilgal should mean the Blessing of God.
      - c) Beersheba should mean the Love of God.
  - D. Here's the tragic thing. Here's the thing that made Amos so heavy-hearted.
    1. In the days of Amos, Bethel was a glorious city. The king made it rich and glorious. He built one of his palaces there. He also built his own glorious temple. Inside it he set his own glorious false god. That would be a golden calf, and he made that the religious center of his nation.
    2. Gilgal was another city with many idols. The prophets Hosea and Micah join the prophet Amos in warning against the false gods of Gilgal.
    3. Beersheba is another rival shrine to the pure worship of God. There, the people worshiped Baal and Asherah, Dagon, and Molech.
  - E. The people built shrines in these cities. They made holy pilgrimages to them every year. They worshiped false gods in these cities.
    1. These were God's people.
    2. They could have had life, blessing, and love straight from the throne of heaven, but they settled for a lame, boring second-best.
      - a) **You can't demote God without demoting yourself.**
    3. And that's what the funeral is for.
- V. Boring
- A. They turned relationship into ritual. They turned passion into programs. The life of God ran through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, like an electric shock. And they pulled the plug and made little statues and called them god.
  - B. They said, give me a god I can handle. Give me a god who doesn't hassle me. Give me a god who doesn't disturb me, or wake me from my nap. Give me a god who never sounds an alarm and never gets in my face. Give me a god who doesn't flinch if I ignore the world's pain. Give me a god... a lot like me.
  - C. In case you can't tell, I'm against all of this.
  - D. I am all for grabbing everything you can from God.
    1. God, if you wanna bless me, have at it. Let's go.
    2. God, I'm yours, for better for worse, for richer for poorer.
    3. But Lord, please don't make me sit in the backseat. Please don't let me retire. I want an adventure. I want passion. I want faith. Bigger better stronger deeper faith. I want to go deep with all that you have imagined for me. I want to be bold. I want to be scared. I want to be weirder than I've ever been before. I want all those dreams to come true. I want lost people to come to Jesus. I want revival in the land. I want the church to come back to you, and back to the Bible.
    4. Come on God. Let's go!
  - E. Jesus said:
    1. *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

- F. Jesus does not want you to squeak by with a minimum. He is not about telling Christians to go along to get along. The root of abundance is waves so make some waves. Push hard and see how faithful God can be.
  - G. Some of you have no idea how rich and blessed and healthy and whole your Father in heaven longs for you to be. You are settling for less. You are expecting way too little from him.
    - 1. Jabez prayed, “Lord, enlarge my territory.” I hope you pray that too.
  - H. C.S. Lewis said,
    - 1. “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” ~C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*
  - I. Amos stands before people and says, You are far too easily pleased. You’re seeking wealth, and power, and likes, and clicks. Blah. Blah. Boring. Blah. Lame.
  - J. How about you go kick the devil in the teeth. That’s fun.
    - 1. You’ve settled. And God loves you. And you’re idiots.
  - K. I’m here to tell you that you have aimed way too low. You are missing out on the abundant, blessing and grace and love and joy that could, and should be yours in Christ.
- VI. God Wants to Bless You
- A. God says I want to bless you. The people say, No thanks we can bless ourselves.
  - B. God says I have a promised land for you, a land flowing with milk and honey. The people say, No thanks, we kinda like it here in the wilderness.
  - C. God says I sent Jesus not only to save you, but he’ll give you an abundant life too. The people say no thanks, my portfolio is doing okay right now and I don’t have the energy for all that.
  - D. God says life can never be awesome if you don’t keep your heart close to me. The people say no, thanks, I’m kind of busy and I’m pretty happy without all that church stuff... who needs awesome?
  - E. So Amos stood up and said,
    - 1. “For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek Me and [really] live” (Amos 5:4)
  - F. And Jesus stood up and said,
    - 1. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His [imputed] righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)
  - G. David wrote,
    - 1. “When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ My heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek.’” (Psalm 27:8)
      - a) You can’t aim higher than that.
  - H. Don’t settle.
  - I. Don’t settle. When you walk with Jesus, you get new things. Weird things. Scary things. Costly things. Blessings that take your breath away.
  - J. Get your heart back to God, and let him take you places you’ve never been before.
  - K. And start right here. Plug in right here.
- VII. Baptism
- A. We are going to shift gears right now. That’s because we do have 48 men and women today who have refused to settle for second best.
  - B. They are doing weird stuff. They are about to stand up and declare to you and God and angels and demons and the devil and everybody, I belong to God and he belongs to me because Jesus Christ has set me free.
  - C. They are doing this through baptism.