

The Controversy of Zion and the Time of Jacob's Trouble

THE CONTEXT OF THE AGE-ENDING OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

- A. Joel 2:28-32 assures us that “**before**” the “**Day of the Lord**” and the return of Jesus the Holy Spirit will be poured out on “**all flesh**” as the spirit of “**prophecy**” is given and “**signs and wonders**” are released. This outpouring of the Spirit will far eclipse that seen in the book of Acts and every revival in history. It will be global and eschatological. It will be sufficient in scope and magnitude to prepare the Church and the nations for the trauma of the events described in the book of Revelation.
- B. While it’s critical that we understand what the Lord is doing in and through the outpouring of the Spirit, it’s essential that we understand the context in which it will be released: unprecedented global crisis.
- C. Remember that the outpouring of the Spirit in the book of Acts was given as a gift to the city of Jerusalem a few decades from the greatest judgment in Israel’s history when the Temple was destroyed and the 1 million Jews were slaughtered.¹ Many who witnessed and lived through the Jerusalem revival lived to see the city leveled in a brutal military invasion. The city that God poured His Spirit upon was the same city that He poured out His judgment upon. The outpouring was followed by the siege of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews from the Land. **Pentecost preceded a Holocaust.** And so it will be in the generation of the Lord’s return.
- D. We must wrestle with the implications of the prophetic context of the age-ending outpouring of the Spirit promised in Joel 2. As we contend for the promise of Joel 2:28-32 let us understand the context in which the Lord will fulfill His word. We must prepare for both dimensions: the glory and the crisis.
- E. The generation of the Lord’s return will mirror that of the generation of the apostles in that both will witness an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit and an unprecedented military invasion of the city of Jerusalem. These two great events will occur simultaneously. Both will sift the Church. And their impact will be felt in all nations.
- F. I believe New Zealand has a significant role to play as these events unfold.

THE CONTROVERSY OF ZION AND THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

- A. This consummation of this present Age will be centered around what Isaiah called “**the controversy of Zion.**” This issue will take center stage in international affairs in the coming years and will dramatically impact the Church and the unbelieving nations. **The**

¹ Jesus pronounced the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-44 as judgment.

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Holy Spirit is emphasizing this issue in an increasing way and we need to understand it.

*“For the Lord has **a day of vengeance**, a year of **recompense** for **the controversy of Zion**.” (Isaiah 34:8)*

*“Hear, you mountains, **the controversy of the LORD**, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has a **controversy against his people**, and he will contend with Israel.” (Micah 6:2)*

*“...a clamor has come to the end of the earth, Because **the LORD has a controversy with the nations**. He is **entering into judgment with all flesh**; As for the wicked, He has given them to the sword,' declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 25:31 NASB)*

1. The controversy of Zion is the historical continuum of (a) **Gentile contention** and (b) **divine jealousy** over the Jewish people, the Land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. The source of the controversy is God's historical election of and future commitment to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah (where the term "Jew" comes from) and the blood line of David.
2. The Lord has an appointed time to decisively resolve the controversy; it's called the "**Day of vengeance**." This is otherwise known as "**the Day of the Lord**." This is the hour of history of which all the prophets spoke in which God would restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) first overthrowing the hostile Gentile powers that have for so long oppressed the people of the covenant. Jesus called this the completion of "**the times of the Gentiles**" in Luke 21:20-24.
3. The hostility of Gentile nations and individuals against the people and the Land of Israel will have its most gruesome expression in the generation of the Lord's return.

*“Because you cherished **everlasting hatred** and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, **at the time of their final punishment**, therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you.” (Ezekiel 35:5-6)*

- B. The season of crisis that precedes this “**Day of the Lord**” is referred to as "**the time of Jacob's trouble**.”

*“These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah: “Thus says the Lord: We have heard a cry of **panic**, of **terror**, and **no peace**. Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? Alas! That day is so great there is*

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*none like it; **it is the time of Jacob's trouble**; yet he shall be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 30:4-7)*

1. The time of trouble: (1) is unprecedented, (2) has its inception in the Land of Israel and (3) culminates in the salvation of "all Israel" (Rom. 11:25-28).
2. Jesus referred to this "**trouble**" in Matthew 24:15-22 as did the angel in Daniel 11-12. This was the foundational prophecy that NT eschatology is built upon.

*"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then **let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains**. Let the one who is on the housetop **not go down** to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field **not turn back** to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that **your flight** may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. **For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be**. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." (Matthew 24:15-22)*

*"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been** since there was a nation till that time. But **at that time your people shall be delivered..when the complete shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end**" (Dan. 12:1-2, 7)*

- C. The "**time of Jacob's trouble**" will include (a) the invasion of the Land of Israel, (b) the decimation of the city of Jerusalem and (c) the expulsion of a substantial percentage of the Jewish population now residing in the Land. This hour of crisis will have its inception in the Land of Israel (Mt. 24:15-22) & will impact all the nations of the earth.

*"Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2 For **I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle**, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then **the Lord will go out and fight against those nations** as when he fights on a day of battle. 4 On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two... (Zechariah 14:1-4)*

*"I will also gather **all nations**, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and **will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel**, whom they have **scattered among the nations**, and **parted my land**....Hasten and come, all you surrounding **nations**, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord. Let the **nations** stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for*

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*there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations....Multitudes, multitudes, **in the valley of decision!** For the day of the Lord is near **in the valley of decision.**" (Joel 3:2, 11-12, 14)*

THE FUTURE ASSAULT ON THE PRESENT-DAY STATE OF ISRAEL

A. The Scriptures emphatically declare that a large-scale return of Jews to the Land of Israel (as we've witnessed over the past century) is a **providential prerequisite** that makes possible a yet future time of "**trouble**,"² "**trampling**,"³ "**shattering**,"⁴ "**flight**,"⁵ "**sifting**,"⁶ "**desolation**,"⁷ "**devastation**,"⁸ "**scattering**,"⁹ "**captivity**,"¹⁰ "**exile**"¹¹ and "**judgment**"¹² that, of Scriptural necessity, must have its inception "**in the Land**"¹³ of Israel itself.

B. According to Scripture, great trouble will befall the Jewish people before they can once and for all rest in their Land free from the threat of future expulsion (as was promised in Amos 9:11-15); such devastating trouble that two-thirds of the Jewish population will not survive:

*"**In the whole Land**, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, "They are my people"; and they will say, "The LORD is my God." (Zechariah 13:8-9)*

C. This prophecy of Israel's final hour of attrition presupposes Jewish presence on Jewish soil "*in the Land*" of Israel. This is no minor insignificant detail. It suggests that the present return to the Land in unbelief and Covenantal infidelity is occurring under the ominous shadow of a yet future dispersion as a result of this future "*time of Jacob's*

² Jeremiah 30:7

³ Revelation 11:2

⁴ Daniel 12:17

⁵ Matthew 24:20

⁶ Amos 9:9

⁷ Ezekiel 36:33-34

⁸ Isaiah 51:19-23

⁹ Jeremiah 30:11

¹⁰ Isaiah 49:24-26

¹¹ Zechariah 14:1-2

¹² Isaiah 4:4

¹³ Zechariah 13:8; Matthew 24:15-22

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trouble” when “*the vengeance of the Covenant*”¹⁴ will be satisfied on the same soil upon which it was kindled so long ago¹⁵ resulting in a swift “*flight*” from Jerusalem;¹⁶ the proverbial eye of the coming storm.¹⁷

THE COST AND REWARD OF THE CHURCH'S IDENTIFICATION WITH ISRAEL IN THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

- A. Standing with Israel in the coming days as a **praying, providing and prophesying** people will be **the most difficult mandate to which the End Time Church will be called to obey**. It will be a costly sacrifice to say "Yes" to this. Even to declare it will be problematic; in the Church and out of it.
- B. As Israel becomes more and more politically isolated and as the Jewish people become more and more reviled in the nations and theologically dismissed in the Church, we will be pressured to forsake our loyalty to this scorned people group (as in Germany in the 1930's & 1940's but on a global scale). We cannot exaggerate the intensity of this pressure. The anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany is a precursor of what the final Antichrist and his regime harbor. The Antichrist's final assault on the Land is motivated by “**rage against the holy covenant**” (Dan. 11:28-32). Their hatred of the Jew and the God who elected them will be the wick that sets off the “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:15-22).
- C. The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 centers around the treatment of Jesus' “**brethren.**” While applicable to general mercy ministry throughout Church history, contextually and exegetically it's clear that this parable is about the generation of the Lord's return. Moreover, it's about Jesus' ethnic Jewish brethren who will be brutally oppressed or “**tormented**”¹⁸ at the end of the Age.
- D. Our identification with Israel is not about Israel; it's about the Lord. If our heart for Israel doesn't reflect Paul's anguish in Romans 9, intercession in Romans 10 and prophecy and ministry mandate in Romans 11 we should be alarmed. Subtle resistance to the issue of Israel in peace time can and will lead to aggressive resistance in war time. This hour of war time is on the horizon.

¹⁴ Leviticus 26:25

¹⁵ Luke 21:22-24

¹⁶ Reggie Kelly, in the article, “*The Time of Jacob's Trouble,*” writes: “*In the perspective of the prophets, the day of deliverance comes only after Israel has been brought once more into the wilderness for a final time of testing and divine pleading as at the first (Ez 20:34:-37; Jer 31:2; Hos 2:14-15). This raises the question of the time of fulfillment. The context is decisive; it is the critical point of transition that ends with final salvation and return to the Land. Israel's flight into the wilderness is made expedient by the violence of Antichrist; the remnant flee from 'the face of the destroyer' (Is 16:1-5; Jer 4:7; Ez 35:5,12; 36:2-5; 38:17; Ob 10-14; Mic 2:12; Matt 24:16-21; Rev 11:2; 12:6). Some of the prophecies depicting the final return represent the remnant as returning not only from many nations but also from desert locations from neighboring regions outside the Land (Is 16:4; 26:19; 27:12-13; 42:11; Ez 20:35; Dan 11:43).*”

¹⁷ Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24

¹⁸ Isaiah 51:17-23