

# Sermon Notes

# REFLECTIONS



★ Israel -  
Is the Land Holy?

River Road Baptist  
Church  
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# Reflections

As you know, and the Lord willing, we will be travelling to Israel very soon. It will be a thrill of a lifetime for us to

actually walk where Jesus walked and to see the great city over which He sadly lamented her sins and her blindness as to His deity and to His being their Messiah. Matthew records His words... *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*<sup>38</sup> *"See! Your house is left to you desolate;..."* (Matthew 23:37-38 NKJ)

Jerusalem, that city that has been besieged, conquered, and destroyed all or in part some forty times over the centuries is still the focus of world-wide political and religious concern in our present time. She has historically been the part of the world where man's inability to live in holiness has been on frequent display and where the battles that will finally bring judgment on those who have rejected Jesus will be fought.

Men have for centuries fought over her, tried to control her people, profaned it, and even rejected the Messiah when He arrived there. She has been a site where God has been worshipped and where He has been blasphemed. The entire nation promised to a chosen people has been more a place of spiritual idolatry than a promised land where the people recognized and worshipped the God who promised her to the people of His choosing.

Many in the Church today, have travelled to her expecting that they will find some special spiritual awakening but have instead simply looked upon Jerusalem and Israel only to discover that God's presence is in their hearts, not in the dirt and stones of the nation to which God sent His Son. If they did not carry His Spirit in their hearts they won't find Him there simply because it's Israel, though we hope that the Jewish people will finally accept Jesus as their Messiah.

These "pilgrimages," to me, are somehow reminiscent of Jesus telling His disciples to not be deceived in the last days. *"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it."*<sup>27</sup> *"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* (Matthew 24:26-27 NKJ) He was very clear that His coming will not be a secret known only to a few in some desert place, but it rather would be an event that would be powerfully preceded by great signs so that all would see Him in His glory returning to

where He was rejected by those He came to save. John declares...*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*<sup>2</sup> *He was in the beginning with God.*<sup>3</sup> *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*<sup>4</sup> *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*<sup>5</sup> *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (John 1:1-5 NKJ) and then...<sup>4</sup> *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 NKJ) It is ultimately, and always has been about Jesus, the Messiah, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

I am personally very excited to be preparing to visit Israel, and to see Jerusalem, and other sites referenced in the Bible, but I do not expect that walking there, seeing places related to those events, is going to make me more spiritual. I rather expect to be reminded that without Jesus in my heart, the "holy land" will just be an interesting place where much history has taken place. When, on the other hand, I walk where He walked, as His disciple I am expecting to better "see" the settings and places described or named in the Biblical accounts of Our Lord Jesus as He ministered to a people that were anything but holy, and by doing so will be better able to share His Gospel with others.

I believe that the Bible clearly indicates that God is not finished with Israel or Jerusalem. The prophecies concerning His land and people in Israel indicate that when He returns He will reclaim and make new His creation. He will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and many will declare Him as their Lord. Before that happens however, Israel will be the epicenter of not only the political upheaval we see and hear about today, it will also be the location where the warfare described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 will take place and we may be the very generation who are blessed to see, not only these events, but even the return of Jesus.

You see it is not the land that is holy in an of itself, it is only when the Savior Jesus sets up His kingdom that He will declare it to be, and then it actually will become holy. When we think of the places where the Biblical accounts happened, let's not make the mistake of worshiping that which is merely part of the creation, let's look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and let's worship Him alone. What a privilege to travel to where Jesus walked, taught and eventually died and rose again, but how much greater will be the wonder and privilege of that generation that actually sees Him returning in the clouds in power and great glory. We desire your prayers as we travel and look forward to getting home and sharing the gospel here where our hearts are blessed. **Pastor Doug**