

Sermon Notes

Luke 19:41-46





Reflections

Israel, that enigmatic little spot of land in the area we call the Middle East, has been conquered, then liberated and then conquered again throughout her troubled history. It is a land that has been home to many tribes and nations and yet its ultimate destiny remains to be completed by the return of Jesus to rule and reign from its future capital. It is a land that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who became Israel. God's promise of the land was based on their continued obedience with the requirement that He would be their God and they would be His people. However if they chose other gods, He promised that their lives would be lived under His judgment for their spiritual infidelity and their idolatry. They failed but He, still faithful, has protected a remnant of His people throughout history.

Israel today is in the midst of fulfilling Ezekiel the prophet's (ch. 37) vision of the valley of dried bones. After many generations of dispersion into the nations of the world they are slowly becoming the bones and flesh, but presently without the Spirit of God having breathed the breath of spiritual life into their lives because the Messiah has come and was rejected. God, however, is not finished with His chosen people. The Bible describes His final work with them as His people. *I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*² *God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"?*³ *But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."*⁴ *Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* (Romans 11:1-5 NKJ)

The remnant of Israel will see Him whom they pierced and sorrow at their loss, but will ultimately rejoice in the One who has come in the name of the Lord. Today, however, Israel exists as a nation surrounded by her enemies who have threatened to wipe her from the earth. It is with their enemies' guns and missiles pointed at them every day that the people conduct their daily lives. They go to work, they raise families, they travel about the country and in much

the same way as we live, they live their lives. Many of them are still waiting for the Messiah but are blinded to the reality that He has already come and that He has promised to return. They must be vigilant in relation to their enemies, but sadly many are not as vigilant regarding the truth of God's Word.

I am reminded of the account of Elisha when he saw the city surrounded by the Syrians. His servant was frightened until Elisha prayed that God might open his eyes to the armies of the Lord that surrounded the enemy. *And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"*¹⁶ *So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*¹⁷ *And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.* (2Kings 6:15-17 NKJ) Let's pray that they might see.

How many times do we feel surrounded by evil in the world? We see the horrible crimes committed by evil men and women, we see the evil of abortion, euthanasia, and the persecution of the body of Christ and we are sometimes filled with fear. And yet, what if God allowed us to see that He has already surrounded the enemy with defeat. When we walk in fear, we walk in blindness rather than in faith. The writer of Hebrews shares with us the accounts of men and women of faith who faced persecution and even death for the name of the Lord and he then points out that they are a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us with the testimony of faith over fear, of commitment over capitulation, and of loving God more than loving life. *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*² *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJ)

As the Israelis of today live their lives while they are openly surrounded by their enemies, why don't we purpose to live in faith acknowledging this great cloud of witnesses who have lived and died for God who gave them the courage and insight to "see" the power of God to deliver them into His presence and let's follow their example of faith and commitment. Sometimes it is a good thing to be surrounded don't you think? **Pastor Doug**