

The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Thirteen): Jacob's Trouble

The Necessary Punishment of Israel

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No one looks forward to disaster. If you do, you are a sadist or maybe a masochist, it just depends on where the disaster is hitting. On the other hand, people do tend to gleefully relish their enemy's destruction, but many of them have to learn the hard way that what goes around comes around.

Schadenfreude is a German term that means "the joy one feels at the misfortune of an enemy," is often followed by karma, which is not a German term, but it is commonly defined as "the payback a person receives for his actions."

Now, if you are Hindu or Buddhist, you know that it is more broad than that, but that is how we think of it in terms of just the way it works out. We talk about people doing something and karma hits them immediately. But the Bible agrees with this. It says, in this vein, in Proverbs 17:5, "He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished." Also in Proverbs, this time in chapter 24, verse 17 where God says, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls." And it says in the next verse, "Lest the Lord notice and it displease Him." The whole book of Obadiah is all about this thing, this principle of getting what you gave because they benefited and prospered and laughed at the people of Judah as they were going into captivity and God promises them they are going to get it just as bad from the Babylonians themselves.

In my last sermon on the prophetic blessing given to Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, one of the points that Jacob makes right at the beginning of his prophecy is that at the time of the end, because Joseph is so rich and powerful, because he has sway over the world and has had sway over the world for such a long time, that his people will have many enemies. Genesis 49:23 says that "archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him, and hated him." But God then tells him in subsequent verses there, God gave him strength to defeat his enemies and continue to dominate the world, that all along God was their strength. God was making good on His promise to Abraham to give his descendants all those blessings and all that power.

And it is all working in terms of His purpose, but there is no telling how many nations out there in the world today would love for the nations of modern Israel to suffer some kind of humiliating defeat. Even now, even though we are still in our strength, anything that undercuts the United States is just fine to the nations of this world. You remember when the Islamic terrorists took down the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001, that they showed Muslims and various nations across the Middle East dancing in the street and handing out candy to children.

It became a festival to them. It was a time of rejoicing and gladness to them. America's enemies poured into the streets and jubilantly shouted "Death to America!" rejoicing that the "great Satan," as they call us, had been brought low. Think about what they would do, what joy they would have if one of our cities was nuked. Or even if, let us say, an EMP just blasted over part of America and we were reduced to third world conditions in a moment. Or if we suffered some sort of catastrophic defeat in battle, they would go crazy with glee.

Just this past Sunday, September the 13th, FoxNews.com ran an article titled "Chinese Military Calls US Destroyer of World Peace Following Critical DOD Report." Part of that reads, "Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Colonel Woo Cheon called the September 2 report a, 'wanton distortion' of China's aims and the relationship between the People's Liberation Army and China's 1.4 billion people, 'Many years of evidence shows that it is the U.S. that is the fomenter of regional unrest, the violator of international order, and the destroyer of world peace.'" He said Sunday [this is the Defense Ministry spokesman Cheon], 'More than 800,000 people have been killed and millions displaced because of the actions of the U.S. in Iraq, Syria, and Libya over the past two decades.'"

You know that President Trump's patriotic "America First" and "Make America Great Again" nationalism irks them terribly. I am sure that that just sticks in their craw. They think that he is some pompous fool. All he is talking about is America this and America that. That just highlights their own hatred.

But this is typical of how many nations and many people view the United States. We are the big bully. Of course I used the term, "the great Satan." We are the nation that gets in everybody's way. They scoff at our belief that we are the world's policeman. Not that I think that is a good thing, but they do not like the U.S. intervening everywhere. They hate the fact that we have our navy all over this planet. And it is the navy actually that makes us so powerful. We could be anywhere very quickly on the face of the earth with a huge navy and all the armaments that that navy can take quickly from one place to another.

This is the same way they viewed the British during the empire days. British ships were everywhere. British colonists were everywhere. British industrialists were everywhere. British open mines here, there, and everywhere—they raped (that is the word they used) the nations of Africa and Asia for all kinds of resources and took them back to their little island in the North Sea there and used them for their own benefit. They did. I will not deny that. America has done the same. That is the way of the great nations of this world—take every advantage—and it does make enemies.

That is just the way it is. And because of that the peoples of this world long for the time when the U.S. and its allies, I should add Britain in there by name, when they no longer hold sway over this world. They think it would be a time of great progress if America and Britain got out of the way. Then they could have *their* way. And they do their best to undermine the US and Britain at every opportunity. I mean, just look at the U.N. Enough said about that.

Please go with me to Psalm the 83rd chapter because this is typical of how the nations think of the nations of Israel. We will read the first four verses just to get a flavor of it. This is a psalm of Asaph and he is complaining to God. He is asking for help because of what is going on in the nation and outside the nation. So it is a plea from him.

Psalm 83:1-4 Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted

together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more."

Like I said, this is fairly typical. Because of Satan's influence, these people, these nations of this world have an unreasonable hatred against Israel. And the reason is very clear here in these first four verses. Actually, it is clear in the first verse because Asaph calls upon God, it is these people's hatred of God that they are really complaining about or they want to get away from. They want to get rid of God somehow and they feel like if they could get rid of Israel, then they could somehow get rid of God too. You go after God's people, then God will be diminished. So it is this hatred of God that Israel still carries around with them. The name Israel does mean prevailer with God. It is God that they see through the people of Israel and their identity with God that causes them to hate them so much. We see this principle in John 15:18, it is a spiritual one as well, where Jesus says that "the world will hate you because it hated Me first."

So, anyone associated with God is, in this world, something to be hated. That is why they hate Israel so much, because God is behind Israel. But the time *is* coming, and it seems like it is coming sooner than we may have considered, that the nations of Israel will face God's wrath for their sins. They have *not* been faithful. They have squandered their tremendous blessings. They have repudiated their Creator and Benefactor. Most people do not even think He exists anymore. They believe that chance created all this and not Him. They do not believe that they are blessed. They have done all these things by their own power.

They have not been the model nation that they promised God they would be, that kingdom of priests. Far from it, almost exactly the opposite. Instead, they have heaped up sin until God is entirely sick of it and His justice will fall on them with terrible wrath. And when it falls, you do not want to be anywhere around. They will pay the price for their unfaithfulness. As Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that His justice cannot sleep forever." It is going to happen. It just depends on how patient God is and how the timing for all of these events at the end plays out. Like we heard this morning, that has not been given to us to know.

So on this Feast of Trumpets, we will be looking in the time remaining into the end time punishment of the nations of Israel, which is a necessary part of the process that eventually leads to the return of Christ to establish His government over the earth—and particularly to establish His government over a repentant Israel. The Great Tribulation, known as the time of Jacob's Trouble, is part of God's humbling of Israel to prepare them for their role in the Millennium. They have to go through this, they are not fit to represent Him at this time. So they have to go through a period of intense punishment, intense humbling until a people is refined and have the right attitude to follow through with their promises in the covenant.

If you will, let us go to Ecclesiastes 1. I want to pull out a principle here from verses 3 through 11. I think it is important that we establish this early. These are sermons on the doctrine of Israel so every once in a while I throw in these principles so we have a foundation for the way we interpret prophecy on these things. And this is one of those things here. Because, in this passage, Solomon gives us the underpinnings of a significant biblical principle.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 [he writes here] What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?

Now, do not be thinking of any of these things in detail. I want you to get the overall message of his point here. I want you to grasp why he is giving all these examples from nature and so forth so that you understand what his overall point is. So do not get bogged down in the details of things. Think of what it is that he is trying to get across.

Ecclesiastes 1:4-11 One generation passes away, and another generation come; but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit.

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with

seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those by those who will come after.

Pretty much everything that he said there had to do with a circle or a cycle. Things go, things come, the sun rises, the sun goes down, has its circuit that it runs every day. The winds, they swirl about and they come back to the place where they started. The waters run down to the sea and then they escape the sea somehow and they end up coming back again. A generation rises, a generation falls, and another replaces it. Things happen and then they happen again, and then they happen again, and they happen again. This is what he is talking about.

This overall principle of this circle, not a circle of life, but a circle of events. A cycle of things that happen again and again. They repeat naturally. God has set them in a cycle. And by the laws of that He has set up there, that is how they run and they are not slowing down. They always happen again. You know that stupid water does not stay in the ocean. It somehow gets back to the top of the mountains and runs down again. It is an inexorable cycle of things that happen just rhythmically almost. And He throws human beings in there too. That even though we are the pinnacle of God's creation and have a fair amount of choice in our actions, we end up doing the same things over and over again. And it is not just each individual, but generations repeat the same mistakes and do the same things.

And inventions; can we say this is new? Did not somebody a long time ago try this out, tried to do the same thing? What is a tank but a chariot with an engine. They have both got horsepower. They are both designed to kill. It was inevitable that somebody at some point would think of doing the same thing but with the advancements that we have from modern technology. It is not really new.

So people live and die and the next generation succeeds them and they do the same thing. And this occurs over history as well, over long swaths of human history. The same old things happened to each generation. Or maybe they skip a generation and they happen to every other generation. Or perhaps this thing happens every 100 years or so or maybe it is 1,000 years ago. But even though we think the events of our day are new, that there is something novel about them, that we are so much better than they were back when, that we have advanced, we find that if we look at them objectively, we have to conclude that we have only forgotten and something similar happened a while back or even a long time ago.

But the basic structure of the things that happen today happened to our ancestors in this country and in the countries they came from, and way back in the Middle East when they were a young people. If we have forgotten the past and doomed ourselves to repeat it, so will our descendants forget and they will repeat our woes. It is inevitable. Why is it inevitable? Because we have the same nature. We are the same kind of people. Human nature worked in them, brought them to times, events, mistakes, even successes, and that same nature is in us and it does the same thing for us. The circumstances, the minor details might be a little different, but the overall result is the same. It has already been in ancient times before us. And so will it be in the future should time move forward to that extent.

In prophetic terms, Solomon, in a way, describes the principle of type /antitype. That is, there is a historical fulfillment of a certain prophecy and later there is a larger fulfillment, at least from our perspective it seems like a larger fulfillment. Sometimes the type is physical and the antitype is spiritual. That something happens in Israel and then later on it happens in the church. But the principle's central structural element is this inevitable repetition of events. That if things happened back in the time of the Bible, back in the historical times of Israel (a significant event I am talking about), then it is going to be repeated in type or antitype at some other time with either spiritual Israel or physical Israel in the end.

Let us go to I Peter 3 just to give you an example of this and an understanding that the apostles in the first century understood this same principle. It is fairly clear from God's Word that they picked up on it and they made use of it in their teaching.

I Peter 3:18-22 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formally were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

There is also an antitype [meaning the antitype of this situation in which eight souls were saved through water] which now saves us—namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh [not as a washing, he is saying, of our sins], but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

So Peter makes use of the type of the Flood as a means of salvation. And he says we can correlate that to the spiritual antitype of baptism, which is part of the salvation process. And if we would go back to Roman 6, we would find out very quickly that baptism, the dying in the water to our sins and then being raised up out of the water as a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to a new life, fits the model here. That the type is the Flood, the antitype is baptism. Both of them were important in the salvation, the deliverance of God's people.

Now, like all things of this nature, analogies and whatnot, things begin to break down the more detail you try to throw at them. But Peter here is trying to get us to understand that God gave us this illustration back in the 6th, 7th, 8th chapter of Genesis. And if we are smart, we look through history 2,000 to 2,500 or whatever it is to Jesus Christ, but 4,000, 5,000 to us (whatever it is, my math has suddenly left my my brain), but we can see that the antitype is parallel. That we can learn things from what happened with Noah and his

family in terms of our own spiritual salvation. So we have something happening a long time ago and it happens again in our individual lives long, long, long, thereafter. And it teaches us something.

Overall he is saying these things that happened in the past are not just history—dull, dry history that we can learn and know a few facts. No, they are far more than that. They are precursors that we can learn from that will help us in the present day, give us warning for some of those bad things that happened in the Bible, back there to national Israel about how it is going to be in the end time when we are facing it and Jesus Christ is about to come. We could make these correlations between the two of them and say this is how it is going to be and we need to be ready for it or this is how we should react to it.

So we have all of these types and antitypes throughout the Bible. There are many, I will not go into a lot more detail, but it is important to understand that that is how prophecy tends to be taught, given to us in Scripture. We see the type and the prophets let us know by one way or another that it *is* a type, it did happen. But they are actually talking about something in the far future that is more important for us to understand because it is happening to *us*, it will happen in our time and we need to be warned about it.

The church has taught for decades that the fall of Israel in the late 8th century BC, around 720 BC, is a type of the coming fall of modern Israel, that the one prefigures the other. Now, this will not happen in all of its detail. Remember, I said the details tend to get a little smudged when we are trying to bring them from one age and culture into the modern times. So, each little detail of a prophecy is not going to come to pass in exactly the same way. But overall what happened back then teaches us about what is going to happen now, especially in terms of the emphasis that God makes in certain places in His Word about this or that. Those can really be instructive to us. So if it happened once to the people of God and they behaved in a certain way and God reacted in a certain way, then we can understand that when it happens in the end time, it is going to be very much the same.

Let us go to Jeremiah 30. My dad was here in his sermon this morning. We will read verses 4 through 15. This chapter is very foundational to us in terms of Jacob's trouble.

Jeremiah 30:4-15 Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah. "For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale?

Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. [that gives us some pretty good timing right there]

Therefore do not fear, O My servant, Jacob,' says the Lord, 'nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.' [there is the understatement of the millennia]

"For thus says the Lord: 'Your affliction is incurable, your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause, that you may be bound up; you have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitudes of your iniquities, because your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you.'

That runs the gamut of what will happen to the people of Israel during this time. We understand this time that he is speaking of, the time of Jacob's

Trouble, to be the Great Tribulation which Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24 and I want to read that before we go any further.

Matthew 24:21-22 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

Jesus predicts a *horrible* time, an unprecedented time, that this antitype of the fall of Israel is going to be so much worse than the first one—and the first one was *bad*. The reason for this is that the sins are so much worse, the culmination of centuries of selfishness and idolatry and Sabbath breaking and many other things that God has just had it up to here and He finally responds in His wrath.

So here, and especially back in Jeremiah 30, we see the broad strokes of the Tribulation, and I want to give those to you. These are the major things that the Tribulation will have as part of the flavor of it so you know that it is not a good thing when I speak of it that way.

For one, the Tribulation is unique. That is why Jeremiah opens up with this about the man being in labor. It is something that has not happened before, and Jesus echoes this in Matthew 24 by saying it has never been seen before. This is a unique time in history. It is a Great Tribulation. It is *the* Great Tribulation.

Another broad stroke: It is a time of ultimate fear. It is a time of bloody, cruel, constant war. It is a time of defeat from the Israelite point of view. It is a time of captivity for those who happen to survive. It is a time of enslavement for those who have been made captive. It is a time of great scattering of Israel, where they are taken out of their own land and placed somewhere else. And the most important piece in these broad strokes is this: *God does it*. God is its cause. This is not something that just happens. This is something straight from the throne of God. He owns it, but it is necessary, and with God, it is done in love. It is not going to be very comforting to

those Israelites that have to go through it, obviously, but this is something that has to be done and God takes full responsibility for this because it is a punishment and a correction because of sin.

God cannot leave this sin, this horrible mound of sin to go unresponded to. He *has* to react. He does say, we saw this in Jeremiah 30, that God will save a remnant of Israel. He is not going to make a complete end of them, but there will be some that will be saved and those that are saved will be restored as servants of God, with David as their king.

Now, one thing that we must note here, and I was interested to see that my dad said this this morning when he was going through here as well. I had already put this in my notes before I found out that he had said that in that sermon in 2003, but the one thing that we should note is that verse 4 in Jeremiah 30 says that this prophecy concerns Israel *and* Judah. It is not just for the ten tribes of Israel. Jeremiah, who wrote this, lived at the time of Judah's fall in the early sixth century BC. So roughly about 604 and all the way down to 586 when finally most of Jerusalem had been destroyed. He lived more than a century after Israel's fall. So his prophecy here, given, I do not know when during his lifetime, but it was before the time Jerusalem actually fell in 586, foreshadows Judah's coming destruction in 586. And so they got a really upfront and personal taste of what the Great Tribulation was going to be like. But it also served as a prophecy for the future fall of Israel in the end. So it has a dual purpose here.

Ezekiel, who also is contemporaneous with Jeremiah, is more pointed about this. Let us go to Ezekiel 5. Now, I have a Bible study tip for you. I like to, especially in these prophetic books, mark with blue when God says that He is doing this to Israel. I mark where it says that God says to Ezekiel, "Speak to the children of Israel" and I mark it in blue. Now when he says speak to the people of Judah, I mark that in a different color. I mark that in a kind of reddish-brown color. I do not know why I picked these colors, but they are different enough that I could see them quickly. So when I glance at my Bible, I can see who He is talking to.

It makes it very interesting then to look, not just at what He says in this particular part of the book, but to go through the book and see who He talks to the most. And if you do a book like Ezekiel, you will see that He does talk

to Judah. But I have a lot more blue than that reddish-brown in the book of Ezekiel, even though he is a contemporary of Jeremiah and at the time of Jerusalem's fall, Ezekiel was talking to the Israelites, not to the people of Judah specifically, even though they are included as Israel in many of them. But he is thinking about those ones that had been driven out 130 years before or so.

There is a couple of times, he says, God tells him to speak toward the north. He was way out there in Persia or wherever he was, in the land of the Medes, and He told him to speak toward the north. Well, who was going to hear that? The Jews who were still in Jerusalem or even the Jews that were brought to Babylon. Look at a map. Those Jews in Babylon were not to the north. But who was to the north? It was those Israelites who had been captured by the Assyrians and had moved out of Assyria into the north of that area. And, of course, they ended up north and west in Europe, but he is speaking mostly to the what we call the Lost Ten Tribes, not to the Jews necessarily

Ezekiel 5:1-13 "And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take balances to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with your sword, and one-third you will scatter to the wind: I will draw out a sword after them.

You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel. [this is the first time either Judah or Israel has been named and the name is Israel, not Judah] "Thus says the Lord God: "This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.'

Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in My statutes or kept My judgments, nor even according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you' [so He is saying, you have not even done up to the the ethics of the nations around you, much less what He had commanded]—therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. [This is another clue that He is not talking about what was happening in Jerusalem. This is the time of Jacob's Trouble that Jesus talks about that has never happened before nor will ever happen again. This is a tie in to Matthew 24:10.]

Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds. 'Therefore, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; I will not spare, nor will I have any pity. [And then in verse 12, he tells you what he meant by the prophecy of the hair.]

One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them.'

Here is a major prophecy of what the end time Israel will have to suffer because of its terrible sins. This chapter outlines the general shape of the Great Tribulation on the people of Israel and He, God, divides His punishment into these thirds. A third by famine and disease, a third by war, and a third by scattering and captivity. The small number bound in the garment are the remnant of Israel. Very small number. Some of which are

protected, they are put into the garment, but others are taken out of the garment. And what becomes of them? They are not protected.

Ezekiel 6:8-10 "Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries. Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evil which they committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them."

So, He leaves a remnant to witness all of these things. And to remember, finally, God. And this small number of people, captive, having gone through all the worst of these things, will finally turn to Him. Note that God said Israel should have expected this, that they knew this was coming. God had repeatedly warned them of this. Jeremiah uses that famous phrase that he had gotten up early and sent us prophets. And they cannot blame God for not warning them about it because He was warning them all the time about it. But we have here in Ezekiel 5 and Ezekiel 6 this idea that this is going to be a very, very bad time and only a few will survive it.

Let us follow this idea that He had warned them and He had warned them from the very beginning. Let us go back to Exodus 23. This is within the covenant. I have come here a time or two during this series, but I want you to see this one more time

Exodus 23:20-22 [right at the end of the Old Covenant here]
Behold, I will send an Angel before you [this is the Angel of the Lord, this is Jesus Christ] to keep you in the way and bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

Here is proof that at the very beginning of their relationship, God had warned Israel that they needed to watch their P's and Q's, as it were. This part of the Old Covenant is warning language. It is essentially this: Listen to the Angel or else! He does not tell them what He would do. But He says, you better listen to Him because if you do not listen to Him, He is not going to pardon your transgressions. You are going to have to pay the price for your transgressions. Remember, the Old Covenant did not have a way for sin to be forgiven. That is why it was incumbent upon them not to sin. They do not have the facility of the New Covenant that is all about the forgiveness of sin and redemption from those things and the grace that is given because of that. That is what makes it such a better covenant, along with the promises that are there. The Old Covenant did not have that. They made sacrifices for their sins to be covered, but they were not really forgiven. They were just kind of, you know, you put a blanket over things you do not want anybody to see. That is kind of how it is.

Now, they foreshadowed what Jesus Christ would do. But it says right here that He was not going to forgive their inequities. That was not part of the the agreement. We are talking about type and antitype. They went through a *type* of that, but there was really no forgiveness because what were they offering? Bulls, goats, turtle doves, lambs, and we find in Hebrews that the blood of those things cannot do anything in terms of forgiveness of sin. They are not worth enough to pay the price. It took the price of the blood of their Savior, Jesus Christ, to to pay for those sins.

So there is this warning from the very beginning that they better watch their ways or they would start mounting up sin and it was sin that would not be forgiven. And it would keep mounting up and mounting up and mounting up until God says, "Enough! I have to punish these people for their sins and start out again with a remnant who at least listen to Me, at least at first." Because He had to make sure that He had a remnant to work with because the Israelites and the Jews always went far beyond the bounds of any kind of human morality. God says multiple times that they were worse than their enemies.

Ezekiel himself talks about how they were worse than Sodom and Gomorrah and how the Jews at the time of the fall of Jerusalem were worse than the

Israelites, and they were really bad. They out-sinned them all. It is like a competition. Who would be the worst sinners in the world and it usually ends up being Israelites. Sorry to say it, but they should have known; and they always go to the extreme and that is why there is the Great Tribulation. God has to clean up His own people first.

Let us go to Leviticus 26. Leviticus was written in those months after the giving of the law and the and the covenant. It was very soon after what He had said in the covenant there in Exodus 23. So here we come to Leviticus 26, which is the first of what we call the blessings and curses chapters, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

One was given to the children of Israel at the beginning of their wilderness wanderings and the other is given at the end. They are kind of like nice bookends to say, this is God's warnings about their activities, their lifestyle. And He lays it out very, very clearly. He gives a section of okay, if you do what is right and good, I will bless you with all these wonderful things. And then He gets to the next section, which is much longer, and He says, if you do not follow what I have said, then these are the ways you are going to be cursed and it is going to be very bad. And so we are going to go through this first one and show that from the very beginning they knew the consequences of their actions.

They knew that if they sinned these things were going to happen and this document stayed with the people of Israel throughout their entire existence. The Israelites have been carrying the Bible and its various parts and pieces ever since the beginning. And here we are, we live in an Israelite country. And what is the best selling book? The Bible—still is, and we do not know it. People do not know it. They do not know that their futures are in here if they would just read it and respond to it properly. But I want to read a long section here, starting in verse 14. More proof that God had warned them of these things. And we get more detail about how He will react.

Leviticus 26:14-39 "But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My

commandments, but break My covenant, I will also do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart.

And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highway shall be desolate.

And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of My covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back to you your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. I will lay your cities waste, and bring your

sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it.

I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.

And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. They shall stumble over one another, as if it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away."

That was fun, was it not?

On its face, God describes an escalating series of disasters that spells their future out for them. These disasters seem to increase in severity and horror as the people continue to sin against God and refuse to repent. God is a God of His Word. And these are sure, if this comes to pass—and it will. So it begins with terror and disease and military defeat. It goes to humiliation and the inability to produce food, to ravaging animals to war and siege and disease and captivity and famine and cannibalism and desolation and scattering. It is not a very fun list of what is in the future of America if it does not repent.

Within this chapter is another feature. The repeated "seven times for your sins" or "seven times more" and prophecy buffs take this as a time element, not just as an intensity descriptor. They understand a time to be a year, as in

time, times, and half a time as in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14. And so they do a little math here. A prophetic year is 360 days so seven times or seven years equals 2520 literal days or prophetically, 2520 years using the day for a year principle. And if you want to look at that Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:6, and Daniel 9:24-27. They all use a day for a year principle.

So 2520 years from Israel's original fall in about 720 ^{BC} brings us to just after ^{AD} 1800, which just happens to be the time when England and America began their rise to world power. These 2520 years are seen as a time of Israel's destitution in the wilderness and, finally, uh when the 2520 years is over, then they can begin to grow again and have the blessings of Abraham again.

The same can be said for Judah. They did not fall until 586. But if you count from 604, which is when Nebuchadnezzar first came up against Jerusalem, you add 2520 years and that brings you out to 1917, which is when British general Edmund Allenby took Jerusalem from the Turks, and taking Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917, led to Palestine becoming a British protectorate or what they called the mandate. And of course it eventually led in 1948 to the return of the Jews as a nation to the Holy Land. So it works out mathematically fairly well to the times when Britain and America began their rise again and when the Jews finally returned to that area of the world.

Whatever the case, the punishments that God lists here in Leviticus 26 are consistent with His threats toward Israel during the time of Jacob's Trouble. So we understand, then, that these curses that are here and in Deuteronomy 28 are also prophetic of the Great Tribulation. So what we see here in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are measures of God's wrath on His people. In effect, we could say that the Great Tribulation is Israel's Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is simply the wrath of God that comes down upon those who deserve it and Israel gets its in before the rest of the world. God always, like I said, works with His people first as an example to the rest of the world.

Let us go to Amos the second chapter. We are going to hop, skip, and jump between Amos 2 to Amos 4 because I know my dad would say this and I say it too: Amos gives a very picturesque description of Israel during its time of trouble. And I think the way that he describes these things is easy for us to understand just because of the language he uses. So I want to read these

sections so we get a firm grasp of what the time of Jacob's Trouble is going to be like.

Let us start in chapter 2, verse 6 and we will read all the way through the end of the chapter. Now I want you to notice here, especially as we begin, why God is punishing Israel, the specific things that He mentions here between verse 6 and verse 8.

Amos 2:6-16 Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble.

A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazarites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?" says the Lord. "But you gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!' Behold I am weighed down by you, as a cart that is full of sheaves is weighed down.

Therefore flight shall perish from the swift, the strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself; he shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day," says the Lord.

I do want to stop before going any further. The sins that Amos highlights in chapter 2, in that verse 6 through 8 section, are particular to Israel. Now if you would go a little further, you would see that Judah is castigated for other reasons, which is funny. It is ironic and funny in that they are castigated for forsaking the law. They pervert the law. But for Israel it is a little different. The rest of Israel is castigated for the way they treat their neighbor, especially the way they treat their fellow Israelites. The sins he highlights in chapter 2 are preying on the righteous and the poor for money, corrupting the humble, that is, somebody wants to do right things and good things to be righteous and humble before God, but instead Israelites tend to corrupt one another away from that sort of thing.

Engaging in sexual perversity has always been a problem in Israel. That is a human problem obviously, but Israelites take it to an art. They also take advantage of the less fortunate for money. That is this, "they lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge." God says specifically do not do that. If you have given a loan to somebody and the cloak is supposed to be part of the surety for that loan, God says you give the cloak back to him at night so that he at least has a blanket, something to keep him warm. But Israelites are so callous to their neighbors that they would keep the pledge instead of allowing the person who has made the loan to have it for a blanket.

It also says they distort justice. We see that all the time—our courts are corrupt. And also he adds in here at the end, committing idolatry and, by the way, we can add forgetting God and muzzling those who want to teach God's way. That is what he goes into down through verses 9 through 12 to say. And I think this illustration in verse 13 is poignant. He says here, "Behold, I am weighed down by you as a cart is weighed down that is full of sheaves."

Have you ever thought seriously about what a burden your sins are to God? That is what He is meaning here. The weight of their sins was even a burden to God. It was like each sin, let us give it a round figure, is an ounce, and each sin that you do is an ounce of whatever it is that you putting on God's back. And he says their sins have mounted up so high on His back, there are so many sins that even God feels the tremendous weight of their sins, so that it is like He cannot move. The cart is so weighed down that it will not track anymore. It is not exactly what happens with God, but it is a fitting

illustration to see that our sins affect Him. That they are not just done as some kind of, you know, like a chit or something that we can spend and it does not matter. But every time we spend a sin, as it were, it burdens Him more and more. He feels it!

Remember, God does not live with sin. He cannot abide sin. It is *repugnant* to Him. He *hates* sin. He does not like feeling the sins of His people and they weigh Him down. And so it is more understandable to think of it in this in this way—the sin as a burden—that finally God says, "Enough!" and He throws it all off and says, you must pay for these sins—and He responds in wrath.

Amos 3:9-15 "Proclaiming the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: 'Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumult in her midst, and the oppressed within her. For they do not know how to do right,' says the Lord, 'who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.'"

Therefore thus says the Lord God: "An adversary shall be all around the land; he shall sap your strength from you, and your palaces shall be plundered." Thus says the Lord: "As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria—in the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch!

Hear and testify against the house of Jacob," says the Lord God, the God of hosts, "that in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions, I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end," says the Lord.

Amos 4:1-2 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity

with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon," says The Lord.

Drop down to verse 6. Let me just say before we start verse 6, that God obviously is saying here that it is going to be very terrible. And he gets down to chapter 4 and He says, essentially, the women are as bad as the men and they have to go through the same things. They are not innocent by any means. They are the ones that have goaded their men into doing what they have done and they are just as oppressive as the men. And unfortunately we are seeing that in these days in spades, as it were.

Amos 4:6-12 "Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in your all your places; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord. "I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord. "I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with the sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord. "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

And this time when they meet their God, it is not going to be a happy meeting. This passage describes His patience and His many attempts to get Israel to turn, using various crises and disasters to get them to sit up and

repent. But in each case they do not make the connection between their horrible sins and the calamities falling upon them. So they do nothing. It is not their fault. So His wrathful punishment becomes inevitable.

Let us go then and we will finish here in Matthew 24. I guess you could say with this sermon, I just wanted to give you the flavor of Jacob's Trouble so that we understand just how terrible a day it will be. And this ending is kind of just a little coda on the end to give a little bit of an idea of the timing of things.

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Jesus here kindly provides the precise timing of the Tribulation. It is immediately before the return of Christ. The heavenly signs will appear for all to see and Jesus Christ will return on the clouds. Now if we were to read Daniel 12, actually, why do we not do that? I told you we would end there, but I think it is important here.

Daniel 12:1-7 "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [this is the resurrection], some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?" Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

Daniel here tells how long this period lasts: a time, times and half a time. Three and one-half years. It begins three and one-half years before the return of Christ. When Revelation 11:2 says that the Gentiles tread the streets of Jerusalem underfoot for 42 months, it is that same period that Israel will be in serious trouble from God because of their sins, and that time is not too far away. We are seeing increasing signs of the times indicating that this nation and the rest of modern Israel have just about finished filling that cart that was illustrated in Amos 2:13 with their heavy sins.

We need to get serious and focus on overcoming our sins and on putting on the character of Jesus Christ so that we do not get caught up in these troubles as a sinner. God is coming to visit the iniquities of His people in His wrath. We do not want to be part of that wrath. We have been saved from wrath. That is part of the calling that we have been given.

But we can drift, and we can fall back and back slide, and end up having to go through those things because we need to be reminded just who God is and what we have promised Him, just like Israel is going to be reminded in the Great Tribulation.