

Jerusalem's Last Battle and Last Days' Prayer Power

by Jack W. Hayford

"Without Jerusalem, we are a body without a soul." - David Ben-Gurion

WE OFTEN see news about struggles in Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Because of the frequency of these reports, our thinking on the subject tends to get fuzzy. This is not a political or ethnic statement in the interest of Jews over Arabs, or Israelis over Palestinians. It is about the Bible and the people of God. We need to be careful to separate the present political situations and sectarian, ethnic issues from biblical issues, which have to do with Israel. I'm not minimizing those points of ethnic strife, but they are not the primary focus in this message. What I'm talking about is how we think in and live in the Last Times, with a special sensitivity to Israel.

There is a great prayer-awakening breaking in on the Body of Christ today. In Ezekiel 5:5 we read, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her.'" The Spirit of God is moving:

- To soften hearts, break up the fallow ground, and bring in a new season of fruitful harvest.
- To brace the Church against the spirits of deception and confusion that will surface in the Last Times.

Let us examine God's Word with this understanding, and approach several passages concerning Jerusalem and Last Days' prophecies. Prophecies in God's Word are not given to fascinate us with interesting ideas or speculative thoughts about the possible ways of their fulfillment. They are given to motivate us and to move us to a discerning lifestyle. Our study is about more than mere excitement over Last Times; it is about receiving wisdom and discernment, along with strong guidelines for prayer.

Jesus speaks of Jerusalem and the Last Days in Luke 21:20-27, encouraging His disciples to "lift up our heads." That is, He issues a summons to alertness and expectancy. We're not to be preoccupied over the issues of everyday life, but rather to be "seeing" with spiritual perspective.

At stake is not merely how much terrain Israel will have for their nation. Most people don't know that in 1917 the world governments allocated more than 25 times as much area to Israel for a Jewish homeland than they presently possess. That thin nation running down the coast of the Mediterranean gets narrower and narrower every time you hear of another "agreement" being made.

The Bible says some very strong things about a day, as we approach the End Times, in which all

the nations of the Earth will back away from standing with Israel. Then they will marshal troops against Jerusalem and surround the city. In that environment, we will precipitate the ultimate and conclusive moment of human history.

Jerusalem's Last Battle

In chapters 12-14 of Zechariah, the prophet begins to address the Last Times. The Lord says He will make Jerusalem “a cup of drunkenness” for the people. This is a picture of people reeling in uncertainty because of things happening in Jerusalem. In the 20th century alone, there were over 65 significant conflicts over the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a perennial point of confusion and tension.

This prophetic Scripture refers to an eventual precipitation of international action against the Jews in Jerusalem. The Lord says all nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem (12:3). “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city” (14:2).

In the midst of this international action against Israel, God says there will be Divine intervention.

- “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle” (14:3).
- “In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David...” (12:8a).

There will then be a powerful spiritual awakening of the Jews in Israel. The Lord says, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem...” (12:10).

That mourning will be over the recognition of having rejected the Messiah, which will result in a spirit of repentance in Israel. Chapter 13 describes the grace that will flow in the midst of that repentance:

- “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land...” (13:1-2a)

The essence of this is that God says a revival and an openness of many to the Messiah will come. “They will look on Me whom they have pierced” is a marvelous prophecy, even 500 years before the piercing of Jesus took place, that repentance will eventually come to Israel.

This will be the time of Christ’s return to Earth. Chapter 14 says, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...” (14:3-4a). This describes Jesus’ coming again. “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—the Lord is one, and His name one” (14:9).

What if we had an event today in which Israel invaded established lines, inciting an international reaction? What if the United States did not stand by Israel, believing they had violated some treaty arrangement? We could wake up one morning and find that the United Nations had met in special session, blackballing Israel for actions they’ve taken, which Israel viewed as being in its own defense. A UN force could be commissioned to invade the nation and encircle Jerusalem.

We are in a season of increasing global anti-Semitism, where it would be an easy thing for world opinion to say, “We’ve had it up to here with the Jews, Israel, and Jerusalem. We’re done with it.” This possible scenario is completely in line with the prophetic picture we see in Zechariah.

We recognize there are things happening which tell us, “The end isn’t yet.” In the meantime, the call of Scripture is to pray! Not to become fascinated by the excitement of prophecy, but rather to be focused by the reality of prophecy.

What does the Lord give as a prayer assignment for Last Days believers? Lessons can be learned from key prophetic passages in the books of Daniel and Matthew.

The book of Daniel

We look first in Daniel 9:1-23, not only because this passage of Scripture contains elements of what commonly is viewed as Last Days prophecy, but also because it focuses on Daniel as a man who shows us how to pray in the light of “yet unfulfilled” prophecy.

Here, Daniel is reading the scrolls of the prophecy of Jeremiah (see Jer. 25:8-14). Within that passage, Daniel recognized that some of the prophecy concerning the 70 years of Babylonian exile and the succeeding fall of Babylon (which gave power to the Medes and Persians) had been fulfilled. However, not a single exile had yet returned to Jerusalem. This is why Daniel is praying. He understood that with the prophesied 70 years having passed, it was possible that those in exile could be returning to re-establish Jerusalem at any time. This prophecy could happen now!

Praying in the light of prophecies has to do with an attitude that recognizes that the sovereign and omniscient God, Who is all-powerful and all-knowing, has made clear in His Word that He knows the end

from the beginning. Though He has the power to bring into being anything He wills, there are certain things He will not do (though He could) unless there are people who will invite that through prayer. This is what Daniel decided to do.

Representational Repentance

The first thing Daniel did was enter into what we call representational repentance. This is the priestly practice of coming before God on behalf of others.

We start as Daniel did, by repenting (v. 5). You and I cannot repent for a sinner. Each person must make their own repentance. We can, however, invoke the presence of God's mercy into the environment that begins a meltdown of what is causing hearts to resist God. Things then begin to change, not because the righteous posture themselves with their righteousness, but rather they change with the lostness of those for whom they pray.

Identificational Compassion

Secondly, pray with identificational compassion. Romans 12:14-15, talks about a good prayer-attitude to carry: "Bless those who persecute you. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep" (v. 14). There comes a brokenness on behalf of broken people. Hebrews 13:3 says, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also." This is not only a picture of those who are imprisoned, but also of those who are bound in any way.

The result of Daniel's prayer is shown to us in verse 23, "At the beginning of your supplication the command went out and I have come to tell you, you are greatly beloved." Two things took place. First, "the command went out." Because of this kind of prayer, in the light of prophecy, a release of God's purpose and action had begun. Daniel recognized the prophecy's fulfillment was waiting for someone who would intercede for it.

Then Scripture shares this beautiful affirmation "...you are greatly beloved." The Lord would whisper this to the heart of anyone who learns to take their place in humble intercession; to anyone willing to identify themselves with the need of the broken and the hurting. Release begins when we pray as Jesus instructed, "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." You can sense the delight of God with those who learn this wisdom.

How do we pray in the face of prophecies? By recognizing that if time lapses and the prophecy isn't yet fulfilled, then we should be prepared to pray again. But remember—no matter what it looks like on Earth, things are happening in the heavenlies. Prophecies neither magic buttons nor happen on their own. Every promise is a prophecy looking for someone to appropriate and apply it. Some promises take longer than others to find fulfillment.

The book of Matthew

With those truths in mind, let us consider five things Jesus said in Matthew 24:1-14 about the Last Days in this passage, leading us to areas where **we can be praying** in the light of prophecy.

FIRST, Jesus said there would be a flow of things that would relate to worldwide evangelism. “This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come” (v. 14)

Jesus also said, “Pray to the Lord of the harvest that there will be laborers thrust forth in the harvest.” Laboring and harvesting are not accidental. We must purposely pray for and serve systematic evangelism. I am not casting aspersions on any ministry. I simply want to alert us, as the Lord's people, to decisively ask, “Where am I going to marshal and focus my giving in a way that is maximized?” Jesus says that this Gospel will be preached to all the world as a witness. Pray for that. Pray for nations, and pray for people.

SECOND, Pray and keep your heart's altar fires warm against the cold. Verses 12 and 13 mention that there are many things that can chill our soul and cause us to cool in our passion for Jesus. We need to keep prayerful regarding the subtlety with which we can become cold and not recognize it.

THIRD, There will be an advance of spiritual deception. “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many”(v. 11). I'm troubled about some conditions in parts of the Body of Christ; there is an increase in deception, along with some careless handling of the Word of God. It is very important that we guard against such deception.

FOURTH, There will be an increase of the persecution of believers. Verse 9 says, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you...” More people have died for the testimony of Jesus Christ in the 20th Century, which has just ended, than in the 19 centuries before. There is a wide-sweeping spirit of anti-Christ in the world today. Hosts of believers are being sacrificed. It's a matter of fact that this is taking place and it calls us to a particular sense of compassion, alertness, and awareness. We need to pray for the persecuted church (Heb. 3:13). We need to care for and serve what will help our brothers and sisters who are going through fires.

FINALLY, Jesus warned there will be a constant deepening of political strife, especially in Jerusalem (vs. 6-7). “Nation...against nation” has to do with a conflict between political entities. “Kingdom against kingdom” has to do with spiritual conflict; the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. The strife at these times awakens people's sense of frailty and finiteness. When it touches right where they are, God's love and life will penetrate their hearts, and they will cry out to Him. God does not make wars; the Bible says that wars come from demon influence. But when hell works its worst, God is ready to work His best! *Hallelujah!*

Prayer is what releases prophetic fulfillment. Prayer pits “kingdom against kingdom” for “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God.” Prayer initiates the “pulling down” of kingdom strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4).

We are not to surrender or retreat in the face of things said or speculated upon regarding the Last Days. Instead, we are to stance ourselves with the recognition that the release of all God wants to do—all that has been prophesied for this Earth, including Jerusalem, as well as for you and me personally—is dependent upon people who will pray. Everything distills from what God’s people do in prayer. He has called us in these Last Days—and we are answering!

Jerusalem, the city of peace, will only know true peace when the Prince of Peace returns to rule the nations from her midst. Until then, the city will remain in the eye of the storm, and must be a focal point for our prayers.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture verses are from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

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