

The Holy Nation 9, Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is a natural discussion for a Christian wanting to apply the Bible to politics. Probably 25% of the Bible was prophecy when it was written and a great part of that had to do with nation against nation. We have studied the book of Daniel which is mostly about what we would call “foreign policy.” It is all about the four kingdoms of man in their relationship to each other and finally about God’s kingdom against the human kingdoms.

These days many of the nations mentioned as participating in the end times are also in the news. Iran and Russia are major instigators of wars at the moment. They will be back at it in the future as Ezekiel 36-38 indicates. Turkey is acting aggressively against the Kurds, Syria, and Israel as they will do again in the end times. Zechariah 14 indicates that Jerusalem will be surrounded by enemies who will bring great harm which will lead directly to the coming of the Lord to rescue Israel. As we see Iran and its surrogates surrounding and attacking Israel we are seeing the same scenario as that scripture foretells.

Over the years I have preached on these topics many times. Most people who have attended Bible believing churches have heard many sermons on related subjects. But typically we emphasize the biblical prophecy and its potential fulfillment in current events. Most of the time I have not given as much emphasis to the US political component. People have been left to their own devices as to how all that affects domestic politics and US foreign policy.

As a general value, I believe the United States should support those foreign policy decisions that put us on the same side that God will be on in the end times. That should make us consider how we relate to Russia, Iran, Turkey and their allies since they are specifically mentioned as being on the wrong side in the future. We should be very careful in our relations with nations that are militantly anti-Christian as the Muslim nations are. We should be careful in how we relate to strongly atheistic nations such as the communist nations including China.

The United States has almost always been strongly pro-Israel although there has also been a contingent that is anti-Israel. For example, in 1948 the US was considering what our position should be. A strong group in the State Department did not want the US to recognize Israel should they declare their independence. They wanted to placate the Arab world. However, Harry Truman was a Christian and had learned from his days in Sunday School that Israel would become a nation again if prophecy was to be fulfilled. He literally locked himself in the White House and didn’t take calls from the State Department so that he could recognize Israel’s declaration of nationhood within 8 minutes of their declaration. As the only superpower in 1948 the US decision was pivotal for Israel.

Nearly every US President has tried to bring peace to the Middle East. US foreign policy has assumed that what the Muslims wanted was a Palestinian state, the infamous “two-state solution.” However, they had a Palestinian state in the Kingdom of Jordan but were not satisfied with that. Some presidents have been more openly critical of Israel and their settlements in Judea and Samaria known also as the West Bank. The least supportive of Israel was Obama with the Biden-Harris administration talking out of both sides of their mouth supporting Israel on one hand but limiting weapons needed for their defense while restricting what they can do to defend themselves. Obama and Biden have placated Iran with lifting of sanctions which have filled the war-making coffers of Iran. They have not been able to stop Iran from advancing toward nuclear weapons. The perception that the US does not support Israel fully causes the Muslims to believe they can press Israel and win a victory so that “Palestine will be free from the river to the sea.” Their goal is the elimination of Israel and the Jews from the land God promised to Israel.

The battle for the land of Israel is one that has many biblical aspects because God promised the land of Israel to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants. Genesis 13:14-18 *“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will*

give to you and your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." 18 So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the Lord."

The promise made to Abraham was reiterated to Jacob (but not Esau) in that exact same place. Genesis 28:10-22 *"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. **I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.** 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.** 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

A Christian today will notice these Scriptures and want to apply them politically and in US foreign policy by voting for parties and candidates that most closely apply these concepts. The relationships with other nations will also be influenced by their relationship with Israel.

It turns out that many nations and people that oppose Israel's existence also oppose Christianity. A book by Michael Oren, former Israeli Ambassador to the US, titled Power, Faith, and Fantasy, America in the Middle East 1776 to Present details US military and political interventions in the region very often in support of US missions and Christian interests. Those interventions most often came against persecution and harassment from Muslims. Indeed, President Thomas Jefferson formed the US Navy and intervened in North Africa to stop the Muslim pirates who were capturing American and British ships and enslaving the Christians they seized. That military effort freed Christian slaves and put a stop to the Barbary pirates and that episode of adventurism by the Ottomans. In cases like that US foreign policy and Christian interests ran together.

(New for October 6, 2024) Ezekiel 38 is an important chapter regarding foreign policy. That chapter describes a ten-nation alliance that will come against Israel in the future. One of those nations is *Rosh* which a number of commentators have associated with Russia both for phonetic similarity and geographic description. Daniel 11 speaks of the "king of the North" and the "king of the South" which had an early fulfillment with Alexander the Great's generals but likely has a future description of who will come against Israel in the last days. Ezekiel 38:6 and 15 use the phrase "from the far north" which may be Turkey but may include the nations even further north. The chapter goes on to refer to Gog and Magog. Some have suggested that "Magog" refers to the "—stan" nations such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and maybe even Afghanistan which are all predominately Muslim and often very anti-Israel. Meshech and Tubal, the fifth and sixth sons of Noah have been associated with Turkey. According to a Phrygian legend of the great flood (we would know it as the flood of Noah), Iconium (modern Konya, Turkey) was the first city to rise after the deluge that

destroyed humanity. An area that comes against Israel is Togarmah who was the third son of Gomer and great grandson of Noah per Genesis 10:3. Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Egypt and others get mentioned as part of the encirclement of Israel. Of course, Persia or Iran is heavily mentioned both in the Bible and in the news.

If you think of a great alliance against Israel as represented by Ezekiel 38 it is not hard to imagine such an alliance based on recent votes in the United Nations where only a handful of nations stand up for Israel while “many peoples” oppose it. In 2020 the United Nations General Assembly took 17 actions against Israel while taking only 7 for entire rest of the world’s bad actors.

Thankfully, the United States has been a consistent supporter of Israel in the United Nations and in global politics. There have been recent exceptions. In 2016 the US abstained on resolution 2334 instead of opposing the resolution which reiterated the “demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.” The resolution “underlined that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the two sides through negotiations.” Further the Council said that “Israel’s establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity, constituting a flagrant violation under international law.” These votes to undermine Israel were taken by the Obama administration while the Trump administration took an opposite view and recognized Israel’s right to East Jerusalem and also the Golan Heights.

The war of Ezekiel 38 and the UN votes all relate to the validity of God’s promise of the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants.

From the rise of the Muslims in the 7th century up to the present the foreign policy of both eastern and western empires and nations have had a strong and fairly consistent policy of containing and turning back Muslim efforts to militarily conquer Christian lands. In that policy there has been an ebb and flow of successes and failures right up to the present moment.

A subset of the policy of containing Jihad has been the criticism by anti-Christians that Christianity is violent and oppressive. This criticism has been around for centuries but has taken on greater force in recent years.

I remember the National Prayer Breakfast on February 5, 2015 where President Barack Obama suggested Christians should get off their “high horse” when it comes to criticizing Islamic Jihad (he used the term “hijacking religion”) given the “terrible things done in the name of Christ” in the Crusades and the Inquisition. He also mentioned slavery and Jim Crow laws which were representative of Christianity.

He listed those things to blunt the criticism growing around the world against Islamic Jihad and the epidemic of atrocities committed right up to October 7 in Israel. I cannot fathom why the President felt the need to blunt those criticisms. Rather than giving a full defense of those harmed in words and deeds, he chose to criticize the victims and to do it at the National Prayer Breakfast. Just a short time before he had a private meeting in the White House only with Muslim leaders with a primary topic being how to counter anti-Muslim discrimination in the United States.

That Presidential criticism of Christianity followed a line of attack that has been growing in frequency. It has returned with Biden and Harris who attempt to draw moral equivalence between the October 7 Hamas attacks and the response to Israel to try to stop

such attacks in the future. These kinds of attacks used to come only from atheists and anti-Christian types who wanted to undermine Christianity and its influence in the world. These kinds of charges has been around since the days of the so-called “Enlightenment” but it has become very common particularly since 9/11.

Ironically, the most deadly Islamic attack on the American homeland was followed by criticism of Christianity. The charge was that all religion tends towards violence and destruction. The propaganda coming from what the old communists called the “useful idiots” is that Islam’s violence comes from those who have perverted the religion of peace while Christianity gives rise naturally to violence and oppression.

CNN did a three part series a few years ago called “God’s Warriors.” It was about people who engaged in warfare in the name of God. They did cover Islamic radicals and Jewish fringe elements in Israel. I personally was included in their list of Christians who could be called “God’s Warriors.” In their mind, a pastor’s political activities were comparable to Jihadists who kill with glee. The incredible imbalance in type and scale was breathtaking in its absurdity.

I was involved in a kind of “debate” before the Seattle City Club with Rabbi Lerner the editor of Tikun. Rabbi Lerner, in his debate with me, accused Christians of fomenting war. I reminded him that Stalin killed 20 million in the name of Atheism. Hitler was a pagan who killed 8 million in his gas chambers and millions more died in the war itself. Mao killed 30 to 35 million in China as an atheist. The Moslems have killed millions in the 20th century and the numbers are on the increase into the 21st century. He had to admit that the attack wasn’t true today.

Anti-Christians are relentless in this accusation even though it is based on the weakest of evidence and the most skewed balances. But are their facts based in any kind of comparative reality?

Remember that before Islam was created the Middle East was predominately Christian at about the 95% range. There were Zoroastrians in Persia and Jews in Palestine but everywhere else it was mainly Christian. Then came a relentless surge of Jihad. Even so Syria today is still 12% Christian and Lebanon in my lifetime has ceased to be a majority Christian nation and it gets worse with every new conflict. Hopefully the current war in Lebanon will weaken the Muslim militants and allow the Christians to reassert their historic claims.

More than 200 years after militant Islam had spread its empire the rulers of Europe and the popes rallied to try to reclaim the heartland of Christianity. Later historians called them the crusades, a term unknown to any of the combatants of the times. Those series of battles were an effort to shield Europe from further Islamic conquest and to reclaim land that had been lost.

I have never understood why discussions about evil deeds done by Christians in the Crusades always begin in the 11th century rather than in the 8th. In the wars to turn back Islamic Jihad Christians did defend their homelands and often did very violently. But why is the Christian counter-attack criticized while the original centuries of Jihad are ignored? Does Islam get a free pass to conquer Christian countries while the effort to defend them represents evil? Islam has been relentlessly aggressive and violent. There is a reason so many countries have the crossed swords on their flags and symbols. For that matter, when Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS and hundreds of Islamic groups just like them

commit mass murder and unspeakable violence every day why should the criticism be leveled at Christians for things that happened 1,000 years ago.

The crimes of the Inquisition are similarly disconcerting. Henry Kamen wrote *The Spanish Inquisition* subtitled "A Historical Revision." He argued that the stereotype used about the inquisition is largely a made up picture. Kamen estimated that about 2,000 people were executed for heresy. Other historians are putting it at between 1,500 and 4,000. But this was over a period of 350 years. I am not defending even one person put to death in this way. I am arguing for a little bit of perspective. Over 3,000 people died in one moment in the World Trade Center on 9/11, as many or more as in the entire Inquisition. In one day, Islam's killers did as much as the Inquisition. Similarly, in a matter of hours on October 7 some 1200 mostly Jews were killed by Islamic warriors but the criticism is not typically against Islam but against Israel in its response.

In the 21st century, there is only one reason to bring up something which was completed centuries ago. It is to mitigate the criticism of Islam's relentless and near universal Jihad. It is an attempt to shift the conversation away from the elephant in the room. The defenders of Islam and the opponents of Christianity are often one and the same.

There are those who are completely anti-religious. They do not defend Islam but condemn its chronic Jihad. In a slight of hand and mind, they want to lump Christianity into that same mix and use the excesses of Islam to criticize Christianity as though one religion is the same as the other. They equate singing "Onward Christian Soldiers marching AS to war" with their wildly distorted history of the Crusades. They lack the grammatical skills to distinguish between "marching to war" and "marching AS to war."

One should not lose sight of the fact that this longstanding effort to revise reality and rewrite history is merely an attempt to diminish the Church and God's work on the earth. We should not allow these attacks to keep us from acting to defend those who are being harmed through persecution and violence.