Middle East *Mess!*

*From Abraham to ISIS*
ROOTS

As a tree matures, it sends out tangled, deep roots in all directions. Likewise, the current mess in the Middle East can be traced to many deeply entangled causes.

Biblically speaking, two of those causes stand out:

1. Strife in Abraham’s family
2. God’s promise of a land
ROOT Cause #1

Strife in Abraham’s Family

• Sarai proposed that Abram produce an heir with her maid, Hagar (Genesis 16:1-3).

• Hagar conceived and immediately after there was strife in Abraham’s house:
  ❖ Between Sarai and Hagar (16:4-6)
  ❖ Between Ishmael and his brothers (16:12; 25:18)
The strife continues to this day!
Application for Us

• **Life principle:** When life just will not line up with the promises of God (or what we think God should do for us), in our weak faith we are tempted to give God some human help.

• *Don’t do it!*

• **Faith waits for God’s fulfillment/provision!**

• Weak faith can create a BIG mess!
ROOT Cause #2

God’s Promise of Land

God promised a land to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac (Gen 21:12) and Jacob (Gen 28:13-15):

• Genesis 12:1, 7

• **Unconditional**
  - Gen 15:9-21

• **Forever**
  - Gen 13:15
  - Gen 17:7-8
Jezreel Valley from Mt. Carmel
NOTE that God did not promise that Abraham’s descendants would always occupy the land He had given them!

God’s Word speaks of three exiles from the land of promise and three re-gatherings to that land, all of His sovereign doing . . .
First Exile: Egypt

“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed 400 years.” --Genesis 15:13

From Luxor Tomb TT100, 15th C. BC
First Return to the Land: Exodus, Conquest, Kingdom

“But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” --Genesis 15:14
Jerusalem in the Time of Solomon

From ESV Study Bible
Second Exile
Part 1

Exile of Northern Tribes to Assyria

“The Lord will strike Israel...and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River.” —1 Kings 14:15 (fulfilled 722 BC; 2 Kings 17:6)
Second Exile

Part 2

Exile of Southern Tribes to Babylon

“Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon.”  --2 Kings 20:17 (fulfilled in three phases: 605, 597, 587 BC; 2 Kings 24-25)
Second Return to the Land: Post-exilic Period

“This whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations [i.e. Judah and surrounding nations] shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

--Jeremiah 25:11 (fulfilled 2 Chronicles 36:22-3)
2nd Return to the Land: 3 phases

1. 537 BC, 2nd temple built under Zerubbabel
   Ezra 1 – 6; Esther
2. 457 BC, spiritual reforms under Ezra
   Ezra 7 – 10
3. 444 BC, walls of city rebuilt under Nehemiah
   Nehemiah
Between the Testaments

Although no inspired prophet arose in Israel during this period of approximately 400 years, the God of history was preparing for the coming of the promised Messiah.

But God’s Messiah was rejected by His own people, condemned to death on a cross for the sins of the world, all in God’s sovereign plan of redemption.
Acts 2:22-23

Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you yourselves nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.
Third Exile: World

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!” --Matthew 23:37-38
Jerusalem’s ‘Burnt House’
Matthew 24:1-2

“And Jesus came out going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

And He answered and said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

Fulfilled - AD 70
Roman destruction of Jerusalem
Western Wall of Herod’s Temple
(Dome of the Rock marks temple’s former location.)
The Jewish Diaspora
(dispersion among the Gentiles)

• From the 1\textsuperscript{st} to the 7\textsuperscript{th} C the land became less Jewish and more Christian-populated.

• The land of promise was overtaken in the Muslim conquest beginning in 622.
The Jewish Diaspora
(dispersion among the Gentiles)

• The Crusades (1095-1291) failed to reclaim the Holy Land from Islam.

• Instead the Crusades increased tensions between Christians and Muslims.

• By the end of the 19th C the ancient land of Israel was populated largely by Arab Muslims (with minority populations of both Jews and Christians).
Third Return to the Land

- As seen Jeremiah 23:3-8
- As seen in Ezekiel 11:17 36:24-27
“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.... And I will put My Spirit within you.”
Key Question

Is the return of Jewish people to the ancient land of Israel from late 19th C on and the founding of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948 the beginning of the third re-gathering to the land predicted in Scripture?
Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)

• Father of modern political Zionism
• Founded World Zionist Organization
• Promoted Jewish immigration to Palestine
Balfour Declaration
as published in The Times of London 9 Nov 1917

PALESTINE FOR THE JEWS.
OFFICIAL SYMPATHY.

Mr. Balfour has sent the following letter to Lord Rothschild in regard to the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people:

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of his Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.
Arab Protest of the Balfour Declaration

“...we always sympathized profoundly with the persecuted Jews and their misfortunes in other countries... but there is wide difference between such sympathy and the acceptance of such a nation...ruling over us and disposing of our affairs.” --Palestinian Arab leaders, Nov 1918
The Land of Promise Following WWI

- The Muslim Ottoman Empire had encompassed the area of Palestine since 1520.
- The Ottomans entered WWI on the side of the Central Powers and were defeated.
- At the end of WWI Middle East lands were divided among the UK and France according to League of Nations mandate, guided by the Sykes-Picot Agreement between the UK and France.
British Mandate over Palestine  
1923-1948

• Palestine came under British control officially in 1923 by League of Nations mandate.

• Land west of the Jordan River known as Palestine remained under direct UK control until 1948.

• Land east of the Jordan River known initially as Trans-Jordan became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on May 25, 1946.
Arab Betrayal?

• Based on the Hussein-McMahon letters during WWI, the Arabs believed that the UK committed to recognizing Arab independence (including Palestine) in exchange for the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire.

• This the Arabs did with the help of British Army officer, T. E. Lawrence (a.k.a. Lawrence of Arabia).

• However, it was later revealed that the UK and France had planned to split and occupy parts of the promised Arab country (based on the Sykes-Picot Agreement).
British Mandate over Palestine 1923-1948

• Jewish immigration into Palestine increased in the 20th C in spite of efforts to stop the flow.

• Arabs and Jews opposed both the British Mandate and each other with atrocities on both sides.

• In 1947 the UK announced the end of its mandate and turned the future of Palestine over to the UN.

• The UN proposed a two-state solution in 1947.
Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Israel declared independence 15 May 1948 and war broke out with the Arab nations.
- The war resulted in a mass Arab (Muslim and Christian) exodus from areas W. of the Jordan R.
- Palestine Liberation Organization (1964).
- Yom-Kippur War of 1973: cease fire brokered by US and adopted by UN.
Arab-Israeli ‘Peace’

- Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1979)
- Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty (1993)
- The nature of the conflict became somewhat more localized thereafter:
  - With Hezbollah (Shiite Muslim) in S. Lebanon
  - With Hamas (Sunni Muslim) in Gaza; West Bank
  - With Syria over the Golan Heights
Exiles from Land of Promise:

**SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Return</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>400 yrs.</td>
<td>Gen 15</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>70 yrs.</td>
<td>Jer 25</td>
<td>2 Chron 36</td>
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<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Matt 24</td>
<td>Ezek 36</td>
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Other Aspects of the *Mess*

- Iran’s nuclear program and stated desire to destroy Israel.
- ‘Arab Spring’ beginning in Tunisia in Dec 2010 and eventually destabilizing many countries across N. Africa and the Middle East.
- Ongoing Syrian civil war resulting in massive humanitarian needs.
ISIL/ISIS (Ar. da’esh)
Contributing to the Mess

1999 – founded as Sunni jihadist organization.
2004 – affiliated with al-Qaeda in Iraq.
2006 – proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).
2012 – entered Syria under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.
2013 – named changed to ISIL (commonly ISIS).
2014 – proclaimed worldwide caliphate, claiming rule over all Muslims as the Islamic State (IS).
Military Situation Feb 2015
Gray: ISIS-controlled area

- SYRIA
- TURKEY
- JORDAN
- SAUDI ARABIA
- IRAN
- IRAQ
- KURDISH AUTONOMOUS REGION
Kurds awaiting relief supplies
Conclusions

• The current Middle East *mess* traces all the way back to Abram’s and Sarai’s weak faith.
• The descendants of Ishmael (the Arabs) and the descendants of Isaac (the Jews) were destined for conflict.
• The modern *mess* is the horrible outcome of sin and its magnification in both ancient and modern expressions of evil brutality.
Key Question

Is the return of Jewish people to the ancient land of Israel from late 19th C on and the founding of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948 the beginning of the third re-gathering to the land predicted in Scripture?
One Answer

In the Zionist movement of the 20th C and the founding of the State of Israel we are seeing the beginning of the fulfillment of the third re-gathering predicted in Scripture (which will find it ultimate fulfillment at the return of Jesus Christ).
Another Perspective

The modern State of Israel is man’s doing, the result of human political manipulations and wars that have nothing to do with God’s final re-gathering of His ancient people to their land.

Some believe that modern Israel could be completely destroyed and God’s plan for the culmination of history would be unaffected.

[See articles in *Christianity Today, October 1978.*]
What can **you** do about the *mess*?

- Understand God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15).
- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).
- Bless the Jewish people by sharing the Good News of the Messiah with them (Gen 12:3).
- Pray for open hearts and spiritual victories among hundreds of thousands of displaced refugee peoples in the Middle East.
Specific Prayer Requested

“We have seen God’s intervention to protect the . . . region and now there is much happening spiritually as a result of the turmoil.” --Dr. A. H.

Pray for the Peshmerga [Kurdish Military], especially those captured by ISIS, and pray for seeds planted to grow into faith in the lives of refugees.”

--Kurdish believer/relief worker
Middle East *Mess!*

God is at work in the midst of the *mess* man has created in the Middle East. We can join in His work . . .

- By prayer
- By giving
- By going
Giving and Going

• Give: Kurdistan Refugee Relief
• Go: S T E P
• www.entrust4.org
• (719) 622-1980

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