

DON'T MESS WITH JERUSALEM!

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

*If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her skill.
May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not
remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

—Psalm 137:5–6

Those of you who know me personally know that I was born and raised in Texas. We have a saying in Texas: “Don’t mess with Texas!” This phrase was developed in the 1970s by the Texas Highway Department as an anti-liter slogan. However, it has taken on many different contexts over the years, including the general notion that you don’t mess with Texans, because they are somewhat different than folks from the other forty-nine states. Since this may be true about Texas, it is multiplied many times more when applied to Jerusalem. “Don’t mess with Jerusalem! Why? It is true because when you mess with Jerusalem you are messing with God, and no one ever wins a fight against Him.

OBAMA’S WAR ON JERUSALEM

The last few weeks the Obama administration has basically assumed a hostile position toward the Netanyahu government, Israel and especially Jerusalem. Obama, vice president Biden, and secretary of state Hilary Clinton have all insisted that Israel freeze all building in their capitol, Jerusalem. The United States and the Palestinians presume that East Jerusalem, which is historic Jerusalem known as the Old City, will be the capital of a new Palestinian state. Yet, Israel annexed the old city after the six-day war in 1967 and made it part of greater Jerusalem, Israel’s capitol.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu responded clearly to the Obama pressure at the AIPAC meeting in Washington in March with a clear statement of Jewish sovereignty over their historic capital:

The Jewish people were building Jerusalem 3,000 year ago and the Jewish people are building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement. It is our capital. . . . Today, nearly a quarter of a million Jews, almost half the city’s Jewish population, live in neighborhoods that are just beyond the 1949 armistice lines. . . . They are an integral and inextricable part of modern Jerusalem. Everyone knows that these neighborhoods will be part of Israel in any peace settlement. Therefore, building in them in no way precludes the possibility of a two-state solution.ⁱ

MK Tzipi Hotovely (Likud), supporting Netanyahu, said it was offensive to compare Tel Aviv with Jerusalem. “We love Tel Aviv, but it’s 101 years old, whereas Jerusalem is 3,000 years old and Hebron is 4,000 years old,”ⁱⁱ she said.

The Obama administration has adopted a new approach in their attempt to solve the Middle East crisis, one that none of the other U. A. administrations have attempted since Israel became a nation in 1948. That new approach is that Obama came to the conclusion that he should impose a “peace plan,” according to former state department official Elliott Abrams. Obama is “the first to suggest imposing terms on Israel,” notes Abrams.ⁱⁱⁱ Israel is increasingly being isolated from the rest of the world, as it appears

the Muslims are getting stronger. What should Israel do? They should turn to the Lord. Jeremiah tells us: “‘For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds,’ declares the Lord, ‘because they have called you an outcast, saying: “It is Zion; no one cares for her”’” (Jer. 30:17). Only a return to the Lord will ultimately solve this problem.

WHOSE JERUSALEM?

Ever since King David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites 3,000 years ago (996 B.C.), when it was called Jebus, it has been the Jewish “national capital whenever they were sovereign in the land.”^{iv} Eliyahu Tal notes concerning the history of Jerusalem: “At no other period of history did any other people living in, or having suzerainty over the land, declare Jerusalem its capital, with the single exception of the Crusaders. Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem, kept the city as the capital of his Latin Kingdom for a period of 87 years, a short episode in the long march of time.”^v Even under the 1,300+ years of Islamic rule they never made Jerusalem their capital or valued it to any degree. Tal says, “Ramle is, in fact, the only town in Palestine that was built by the Muslims. . . . Ramle, not Jerusalem, [was] the capital of the province of Palestine, which it remained for centuries.”^{vi} Never did the Muslims make Jerusalem their capital or place much importance on it. Under Mamluk rule, “the administrative centers of the northern and southern provinces of Southern Syria (Palestine) were Safed and Gaza, respectively.”^{vii}

Even during the Diaspora, thousands of Jews endured the hardships involved and made their residence in Jerusalem. Jews have always lived in Jerusalem, except during a few relatively brief periods when they were not allowed to reside within her walls. The Romans banned their residence for a while, as did the Crusaders when they controlled the city of David. For the last 800 years, Jews have lived continually in their capital city. “From the beginning of the 19th century, until its expulsion by the Jordanian army in 1948, the Jewish community constituted the largest single population group in Jerusalem; since about 1875 it has formed the majority of the city’s population.” Tal goes on to ask: “By what logic, then can the area recaptured in a defensive war by the Israeli army in 1967 be described as ‘Israeli-occupied territory,’ and its Jewish residents as ‘new settlers.’”^{viii} Even during the nineteen years that Jordan occupied the old city of Jerusalem, they never attempted to make it their capital. So why has Jerusalem in the last couple of decades suddenly become a place where the Palestinians have to have their capital?

I believe the answer to sudden Arab and Muslim interest in Jerusalem arises from the fact that the Jews have returned in masse to their ancient capital and it is out of jealousy that the Muslims now value Jerusalem. They want it to be their capital to prevent Israel from fulfilling her end-time destiny to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. Don’t forget that for almost 2,000 years the Diaspora Jews would end their annual Passover meal with the declaration, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

GOD’S VIEW ON JERUSALEM

Ultimately, at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is what does God think on an issue. The only God there is, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible says that He owns everything in the world since He created it out of nothing, and He has chosen Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and His future dwelling place forever.

Isaiah 62 tells us of the Lord’s passion for Zion, which is Jerusalem. “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning”

(Isa. 62:1). As Paul says in Romans, “If God is for us who is against us” (Rom. 8:31b)? Anyone plus the Lord equals a majority. Jerusalem is God’s city and Israel is His people. Thus, He will eventually deliver and bless Israel and Jerusalem. This is why the Lord has set up a watch over Jerusalem. “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:6–7). Even now the Lord cares and is watching over His city Jerusalem. The Lord has great plans for his people Israel and His city Jerusalem. “Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Lo, your salvation comes; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.’ And they will call them, ‘The holy people, the redeemed of the LORD’; and you will be called, ‘sought out, a city not forsaken’” (Isa. 62:11–12).

CONCLUSION

Jerusalem has a great destiny as God’s city and the place where our Lord Jesus Christ will one day dwell in person. However, before that day arises Jerusalem is also destined to experience great trials and tribulations (Zech. 12—14). “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around. . . . And it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it” (Zech. 12:2–3). History is moving toward an international showdown between the Lord and all the Gentiles when they come up to war against Jerusalem. Guess who is going to win?

Today we see the early stages of an unbelieving world’s building animosity against the Lord’s people Israel and against His city, Jerusalem. In fact, it will get so bad in the tribulation that Jesus Christ Himself will have to personally intervene in history, otherwise the Jewish people would be wiped off the face of the earth. In the mean time, I want to be on the Lord’s side of this looming battle for Jerusalem, since there is no middle ground. Either one supports Israel’s God-ordained right to the land and Jerusalem or they don’t. The issue today is whether to divide Jerusalem and Israel’s right to build in its capital city. On the basis of God’s sovereignty over Jerusalem, I believe He has given Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the Jewish people and they certainly should be able to build their homes there. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Quoted in the “Stand for Israel Blog,” March 25, 2010, blog.standforisrael.org/articles/4383.

ⁱⁱ Tovah Lazaroff, “Likud MKs to PM: Don’t Capitulate,” *Jerusalem Post*, Internet edition, April 1, 2010, www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?ID=172252.

ⁱⁱⁱ Elliott Abrams, “Terms of Endearment: The Obama administration’s Middle East diplomacy goes from bad to worse,” *Weekly Standard.com*, April 7, 2010.

^{iv} Eliyahu Tal, *Whose Jerusalem?* (Jerusalem: International Forum For A United Jerusalem, 1994), p. 105.

^v Tal, *Whose Jerusalem?*, p. 111.

^{vi} Tal, *Whose Jerusalem?*, p. 112.

^{vii} Tal, *Whose Jerusalem?*, p. 112.

^{viii} Tal, *Whose Jerusalem?*, p. 108.