

VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.



Dr. Mark Bailey's love for Dallas Theological Seminary began when he was a student. He went on to become professor of Bible Exposition, vice president for

academic affairs, academic dean, and provost before he accepted his role as our fifth president.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Southwestern College in Phoenix, two master's degrees from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, and his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary. Within the past five years, he authored *To Follow Him: The Seven Marks of a Disciple* (Multnomah, 1997) and coauthored *The New Testament Explorer* (Word, 1999).

Theological education and pastoral ministry have been Dr. Bailey's career passions. While teaching and holding administrative roles at the Seminary, Dr. Bailey was also the senior pastor at Faith Bible Church in DeSoto, Texas, from 1994 to 2000.

He has guided tours to Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and Rome and has served in missions in Argentina, Venezuela, and Hungary.

Dr. Bailey and his wife, Barbara, have two sons, Joshua, who is married to Emily, and Jeremy.

The Lord's Land Policy in Israel

Dr. Mark Bailey

I recently shared this message with Dallas Seminary's President's Council on campus. In light of the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East, my staff suggested that it might be one that our Veritas readers would enjoy.

What is God's perspective on what is going on in the Middle East? Today I want to talk about the Lord's land policy in Israel, to help us put some things into perspective.

First, God has promised the land of Israel to the offspring of Abraham. I sat last night at my computer and began to go through the passages in the Scriptures that talk about the land and God's relationship to that land. There are more than 1,400 passages in all. A survey of just the Pentateuch will reveal a focus on the promise of the land to Israel.

Genesis 17:8 says, "The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

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possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” God confirms the promise to Abraham that the land is not only given to him, it is given to his descendants; but watch the term “an everlasting possession.” God has given the promise of the land to Israel, but that doesn't solve the issue in the Middle East. It's not that simple. If you track it through, God gives that promise to

Abraham in Genesis 12 and repeats it to Isaac in Genesis 26, to Jacob in Genesis 35, to Joseph in Genesis 48, to Moses in Exodus 6, and to Joshua in Joshua 1.

Now what is important is that this promise is reiterated through the generations—to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. What all have in common is that they were in and out of the land at different times.

Note Psalm 105:8–11: “He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.’” Now that is important because it goes beyond Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph,

Moses, and Joshua. It is for “a thousand generations” as an everlasting promise.

Who has a right to the land? God has promised it to Israel.

Second, Israel's departure from the land does not abrogate or cancel the promise of God to give the land to Israel. Two key passages here are Genesis 31:3 and 13, but the question is, What happens if Israel vacates the land for various reasons—escape, war, famine (as they did under Jacob and Joseph)? Listen to Genesis 28:15: “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.” The implication is that they would leave the land for a while. And they did on numerous occasions as referenced in the Pentateuch. In fact, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses all were outside of the land temporarily, yet God says that the promise has been made and that even an absent Israel does not change that promise.

Third, Israel is responsible before God for the way they treat those whom they would consider aliens in their land. This has incredible application today. Consider Exodus 22:21: “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.” The plight of the Palestinians today is genuine. Yet at the same time there is a real threat from militant Palestinian terrorists. God has promised Israel the land, but He does not wink at the mistreatment of individual people. “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress

him.” Why? “For you were aliens in Egypt.” God is saying, “Remember when you were in Egypt and how you were treated?” And we all know under what conditions Israel came out of Egypt. In essence, He says, “Don’t reproduce your sufferings in the lives of other people.” The land may belong to Israel, but the freedom to mistreat other people does not. God says numerous times, “Don’t mistreat them.”

Fourth, the promise of the land to Israel remains even during those times when God will use foreign nations as tools of discipline throughout history. When God utilized the Assyrians to take the Northern Kingdom of Israel captive in 722 B.C., Sennacherib basically uprooted in horrendous fashion the Northern Kingdom, the capital of which was Samaria (Sabaste is the term used in the Greek world). Assyria took them captive to their capital, Nineveh.

In 586 B.C., Babylon became the world power, having defeated Assyria, and they came in and took the Southern Kingdom of Judah into exile to Babylon. When God was ready to return them to the land of Israel, He did so through a third world power, Medo-Persia, and through decrees by men such as Cyrus and Artaxerxes.

God gave a vision to Zechariah, in which He sent horses with riders from among the myrtle trees in the valley to scout out the earth and

come back with a report (Zech. 1). They came back and said in essence, “Everything’s cool.” “The nations are at ease.” And that’s not a compliment. They were self-indulgent in their own self-satisfaction because of their persecution of God’s people. To paraphrase, God said, “I was upset with you, but . . . I’m ticked off against the nations.” And He gives us a clue as to why: “Because they went further than I wanted them to go.” The mistreatment of Israel by others, even during times of God’s discipline, is never tolerated by God. Today as a nation, Israel is by no means obedient to the Lord, but even if God is disciplining them today—and since 586 B.C. they have been “kingless” and will be until Messiah returns—He does not countenance the

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mistreatment of His people. The Abrahamic Covenant states, “I will bless those that bless you; I will curse those that curse you.” And that promise works even during times of discipline.

Moses says, “They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down” (Deut. 28:52). This is talking about the enemies coming in

as God’s tools of discipline—don’t miss that. However, the text continues, “They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the Lord your God *is giving you*” (emphasis mine). So even the discipline of the LORD does not abrogate the covenant. The promise of the land remains

(continued on page 4)

during times when God uses foreign nations as tools of discipline.

Fifth, God has promised to bring Israel back into the land after discipline.

God promised this to Israel, in what some call the Palestinian Covenant: “Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens,” which would have been true and still is today because the majority of the Jews do not live in Israel, “from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back” (Deut. 30:4).

Is that what is happening today? I can’t say for sure. It is the first time in 2,500 years, though, that you have this kind of constitution of people in that land, but I don’t *know* what that means. This may be the prelude to end-times events, but I think we’re presumptuous if we try to give it meaning beyond that. *It may be*, that’s all we can say. “He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers” (v. 5). God has promised that no matter where Israel has been scattered, He will bring them back as a part of His future plans.

Sixth, when Israel is restored to the land, they are to treat the aliens and strangers as if they were Israelites.

Note this, especially in light of the modern situation. “You are to

distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who have settled among you and who have children. *You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel*” (Ezek. 47:21–22, emphasis added).

Now this is Ezekiel’s vision of the future. We would interpret it to take place in the future. When God brings Israel back, Messiah will come back to rule and reign on earth with a gathered nation and reconstituted worship. I believe that is what Ezekiel 40–48 is all about.

Now, does that sound vaguely familiar? Treat others as you would like to be treated. It sounds a little like Jesus, doesn’t it? According to Him, if you treat others as you would like to be treated, you fulfill the law and the prophets, Jesus says.

Do you know what is lacking in Israel? Just a minor, little plank in God’s program: treating others as you would like to be treated. By the way, do you want to know how profound that statement is? If this principle were employed and practiced, there would be no theft, no ghetto, no violence, no espionage, no terrorism, no drive-by shootings, and no drug abuse. It would remedy society’s ills. The bottom-line principle is so powerful, so biblical: Israel needs to treat others as they would like to be treated. The Palestinian authority needs to treat Israel as they would like

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to be treated. This applies to all peoples.

Seventh, until ultimately provided by the Messiah, you and I are encouraged to do what Psalm 122:6 says, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” There is a fragile peace—very fragile—that is coveted in Israel right now. Let’s just stop fighting; let’s figure out a way to exist. Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). The peace that Christ will give is totally different than a political and economic peace, but I’d rather have political and economic peace as a first step than war, terror, and killing. As helpful as a temporary peace might be, the Middle East will never experience lasting peace until Messiah comes.

Do you remember Isaiah chapter 9? “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (v. 6)—and we often stop there. But Isaiah goes on to say, “Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end” (v. 7). An everlasting rule with an everlasting peace—that’s what God has promised.

Micah says, “‘But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times,’ ” speaking of the eternity of Jesus Christ (5:2). “He will stand and

shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace” (vv. 4–5). “‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’ ” Jesus says. Why? “‘For they will be called sons of God’ ” (Matt. 5:9). We act most like Christ when we seek to bring God’s perspective and peace to a situation. The apostle Paul says, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1–2). God wants us to be praying for the peace of Jerusalem, for the peace within our own nation.

In 1992 I was standing on the steps leading down onto the plaza in Jerusalem. Dr. Charlie Dyer and I were there with a group of students from Dallas. We spent a month together studying at the Institute of Holy Land Studies, taking field trips, and seeing archaeological sites. It was the 25th anniversary of the 1967 reunification of Jerusalem, and people were packed shoulder-to-shoulder, head-to-head. Flags of Israel were flying everywhere, and the place was electric. The military presence was everywhere since

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(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

protests and demonstrations were threatened. And I wanted to get down on the plaza right next to the Western Wall, which is also called the Wailing Wall, but I couldn't go any farther.

I was standing there with a Jewish man from New York, who was wearing a yarmulke, and his wife, and the three of us got pressed together. We started talking. I asked, "Why are you here?" The man said, "I'm working on the peace process." And knowing a little bit about Israeli politics, I said, "With which party are you affiliated?" And he said, "I'm on the 'peacenik' end, as you might call it. I'm for giving the Palestinians their own homeland in exchange for peace." And I asked, "What's the biggest issue on the table?" He said, "That's easy. It's this city, Jerusalem." I said, "What's the answer?" The man replied, "I don't know." Then I asked, "Confederated? You know, divide it up and have multi-task forces lead it? Allow the Christians, the Arabs, and the Jews to have access to their sacred sites? What do you think the answer is?" He responded, "Only the Messiah, only the Messiah."

At that time, yellow banners hung on many of the buildings around the entryway in a half-circle of Hebrew text that said, "Prepare for the coming of the Messiah." So I turned to this man and said, "The real question is, who is the Messiah?" And he looked at me and replied, "I thought you'd ask that," knowing from our introductions who I was and what I did for a living.

I have a continuing burden

for that land. I have friends in the Old City who have lost almost everything. But Israel is only a microcosm of the whole world. Even in the body of Christ our needs are phenomenal, but needs around

the world give us the opportunity to share openly in ways we may never have been able to share before.

I am speaking on this because it is a personal burden and because we have a number of people asking,

"What stand should we take?" May I encourage you to be careful about getting caught up in the political divide? As a believer, simply say, "I want God's perspective." God has made promises that apply to the present and the future.

I close with two statements. First, until the Arabs realize that the Messiah happens to be Jewish, they have no permanent access to the land. In Messiah, who is Jewish, there will be access to the land. Second, until the Jews understand that the Messiah happens to be Jesus, they will have no permanent claim on the land. Only through personal faith in Christ can one be promised a share in the inheritance centered in Messiah and His future reign and rule in the land of Israel. As Haggai quotes the Lord, "In this place I will grant peace" (Hag. 2:9).

We can live in peace now in light of God's perspective. I encourage you to take a concordance and walk your way through the promises of God as they relate to the land. See what God has promised—hang on to Him.

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As We Watch, What Do We Think . . . and What Do We Say?

As the psalmist says, “I was young and now I am old” (Ps. 37:25), and all those years I have kept my eye on the Middle East.

But most important, I have striven to see it through the lens of the Scriptures. So my advice to those who ask about the Middle East today is, “See it through the Scriptures. Strive to see it through God’s eyes.”

And that’s why I am so gratified with Dr. Bailey’s presentation and why I commend it to you. **It will give you a settled peace in your mind and heart about what is otherwise a confusing and troubling scene.**

This is a biblical explanation for current Middle East struggles and their ultimate outcome in God’s plan for Israel.

Dr. Bailey’s analysis is accurate. The Promised Land *is* promised to *Israel*. But those very promises specifically allow for foreigners, or the Gentiles, to possess land there with God’s blessing.

Both sides would do well to acknowledge these truths. Yet, as this article points out, they cannot unless their eyes are spiritually opened. And in fact, no one in our country will understand it without that same spiritual birth.

And if I may say so, that is why Dallas Seminary continues to be so crucial. In fact, it is more crucial today than ever. Our students are uniquely trained to see world events—including those in the Middle East—from this biblical perspective.

And they are trained to communicate it to others.

When they do, they give information that enables the Christian community to give a confident answer to these events, an answer that will draw many around the world to God—just as Joseph’s and Daniel’s revelation-based witness gave honor to the true God in their troubled times.

Thank you for your support of this vital witness. May God continue to use your support in these days when it is most needed.



Dr. John F. Walvoord
Chancellor Emeritus

John F. Walvoord

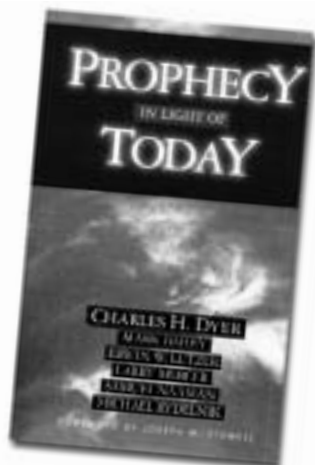
What light does prophecy shed on the dark events of today?

The events of September 11 and the global convulsions they triggered have caused many to desire a deeper understanding of how biblical prophecy relates to current events and today's culture.

In November 2001, roughly two months after the disaster, a conference was held on the campus of Moody Bible Institute called "Prophecy in Light of Today." **Speakers included Dr. Mark Bailey, president of Dallas Theological Seminary**, and scholars such as best-selling authors and Dallas alumni Dr. Erwin Lutzer and Dr. Charles Dyer.

Now these insightful presentations have been compiled into an absorbing and educational book. Dallas Seminary is pleased to offer *Prophecy in Light of Today* as our thank you for your support.

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