ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURES AND END TIME EVENTS

The article proposes an analysis of the Bible in relation to the events taking place in Israel. The author draws attention to the fact that the today’s development of Israel has dramatic consequences; it allows us to talk about the implementation of the Scripture. The war and political events are perceived as precursors of the last time.

Nowadays there are global disasters and wars, the peoples are moving, the powers are in crisis. So the prophets wrote of the last times. And most importantly, Israel is at the center of these events and the eyes of the whole world will be directed towards it.

By the example of Abraham, the author shows the election of Jewish people.

In addition, the author convinces that military events in the Holy Land call on believers to be in fear of God, pray, be kinder to each other.

The author invites believers to read the Revelation and the book of Daniel. He sees in the real events the phenomenon of the Antichrist, yet he declares that the process has already begun, “the plan of lawlessness has already begun to act”.

God has chosen the people of Israel to be witnesses of the glory of God.

Keywords: Israel, Jews, the last time, Revelation, Abraham.

Relevance of research is, the church has lost its roots; the culture of the Chosen People in the midst of which is was birthed. That has made it all the more complicated for the church to understand many End-Time prophecies, and events related to this prophecies described in the Bible by the prophets and Jesus Christ himself.

A very poplar opinion these days states that not only did the church was grafted into Israel, thus becoming God’s people, but that it also replaced Israel, while God forsook the nation of Israel.

Instead of supporting in prayer and through missions the work of God, the church erroneously starts taking part in movements that are directed against Israel, thus going against the very promises of God given by Him through the prophets.

The church, or better yet, certain movements and denominations, have started hindering the work of God with the people of Israel, His own chosen nation.

The aforementioned issues have been the subject of analysis among several scholars, such as: Leon Klenicki, Geoffrey Wigoder, Richard Bennet, David Brickner, Bill Sauls.

Goal of the article:
- analyse the church and Israel in light of modern day opinions and events
- reveal the role of the church in the life of Israel
- demonstrate the significance of church’s activity in the life of Israel

Antisemitism during different times and within diverse government ranks has always been very real. The Word of God says, that even children of God will be subject to those dangers, likening it to “the devil’s net”, which might catch many who will be deceived into doing the devil’s will, instead of God’s (2 Cor. 2:11). The Bible also says, that the nations will come against Israel and they will be headed by the Antichrist. “All the people of the earth be gathered together against it” (Zech. 12:3). Since we live in a constant changing world, which the New Testament calls a “rebellious and corrupt”, it is vital for the church as a whole, as well as believers individually, to stand unwavering on the foundations of God’s Word, taking into account not only separate truths, but also studying all the aspects of the Bible, thus coming to the knowledge of God’s will. That is when while living in this world and within its constant flow of different information, we might be able to differentiate truth from lies, the Spirit of God from other spirits. It is exactly what Jesus spoke about in the Gospels, when he said we are “in this world, but not of this world” (Ps.2).
From this prophetic psalm we can see that nations will rise against the Lord, which means they will reject God’s plan and His work, opposing God in every way. One of those things is – the rebirth of Israel.

Nations will not only rise against God, but also against His anointed one, the one whom He chose and anointed to do His will. When we speak about prophecies written in the Book of Psalms, we speak about a time before the birth of the church. Which means all prophecies speak about God’s nation of Israel and surrounding nations. So the nations will rise against Israel as well, which is what is taking place in our day.

One of the best examples of how nations are gathering to plot against Israel, is the very activity of the United Nations (U.N.) It is precisely the U.N. that has been actively taking part in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, during which countless of people have died, on both sides of the conflict.

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, a small country surrounded by Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon to name a few. Right next to them is Iraq and Iran. While in countries such as Syria and Iraq a bloody war takes place and thousands of innocent civilians are dying every day, hundreds of thousands have been displaced and become refugees, in this chaos when human rights are being violated every single day, national rights, religious and ethnic rights even. It is also important to note, that similar problems not only exist in the middle east, but in many continents such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, where bloody wars take place regularly and human rights are violated every day. Interestingly enough, the U.N. has decided to make Israel is focal point condemning every move it makes, while turning a blind eye to the rest of the world’s problems. While the only democracy in the middle east – Israel is continuously the centre of discussions and condemnations in the U.N., with no less than five resolutions passed against it, we find only two resolutions have been passed against Syria, and merely one against Myanmar, North Korea and Iran. This irrational waste of resources, efforts and time becomes complete unreasonable and disproportionate, to a degree that the new U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley has been very vocal about this indignant injustice that insinuates there’s a muslim plot against Israel within the United Nations.

The Bible explains that the root of this problem isn’t political at all, despite politics being one of the main platforms for the actions to take place, but from a biblical perspective - these events are to take place in the end-time, and the root of the problem is purely spiritual. The book of Revelations speaks about these events that will take place in the end-time. In Revelation 16:13-14 it says that “frogs will go forth unto the kings of the earth”. We don’t claim that the next trumpet has sounded off and we are living the events described in revelations 16, but in this scripture we can clearly see why there is so much opposition against Israel these days. There are daily events taking place on earth, that seem normal, even logical, but in reality we can see that according to this scripture, there’s a spiritual reality alongside a physical one and there are spiritual events taking place simultaneously. According to the bible we understand, that it is precisely the spiritual world, the world of God’s angels and evil spirits - is the one that precedes the physical one. It is precisely the spiritual realm in which the events unfold, that turn into spiritual battles, and it is specifically the spiritual world that determines which events end up taking place in the physical world. One of these examples is the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel, as well the book of Revelations speak in detail about the Antichrist, and despite the fact that the events we see today aren’t necessarily the same exact ones described there, it is clear that the Antichrist’s plan is is already in action.

In the book of Revelations is speaks about “satanic spirits” (sent by the evil itself, Satan). They will come out of the mouth of the dragon and the beast (from Satan).

What will be their goals? Against whom will their acts be directed? They will have access to the rulers of this earth, and it is clear their job will be to deceive using the biggest tool the devil has at his disposal; lies, so he can unite them to wage war. Verse 16 also indicates it will be the preparation for the final battle – Armageddon.

These events described in the bible remind us that in the last days, the epicentre for all these events will be Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

We believe, that today we are closer then ever in history to what the bible calls the end-time. Looking at the world through God’s eyes, we can be certain there is an active preparation taking place, and the
world is dangerous close to the fulfilment of the events described in the book of Revelations. Specifically during this time the eyes of the world are all set on Israel, fewer and fewer people remain indifferent, more and more people sincerely love Israel, recognising that God is behind these earth-shaking events, all the while there are many who fiercely oppose Israel considering it to be the reason behind all evil and suffering in the world.

A few years ago, we witnessed very disproportionate attention directed at Israel.

At the same time, a meeting took place in Israel between a Greek and Israeli pastor who both return from a walk around Jerusalem. Both sat to watch the news, the events that were taking place. It’s quite clear that the events fuelled by the disproportionate attention Israel has been receiving in the past few years, has been affecting both believers and non-believers.

The church was founded in Israel, among the Jewish culture and its biblical heritage. The word of God, or better yet the Old Testament, commandments, laws, service to God, promises, prophecies; it was all given to Israel whom God chose among the nations as His firstborn, so that Israel might be His witness of God’s glory, blessings, power, love, care and protection.

We live in very interesting times, when the world is continuously changing, when tragedy, war and natural disasters are taking place regularly. It all reminds us the words of Jesus Christ, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Mat. 24:7)

But it is precisely during this time that we see the most serious changes in Israel. It is definitely transforming, but what is most important both prophetically and strategically, is that Israel is opening up for the gospel. Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to this earth, and the gospel He preached impacted Israel, touching many. Twelve disciples of Jesus, along with many others continued his ministry, preaching the gospel all over Israel, after which His message went into the nations and spread all over the world. By that time, Israel became desolate as it was prophecied; that this nation would lose its land and will be dispersed among the nations. In modern times, 2000 years later, the people of Israel through many miracles and wonders, returned to their ancient homeland, in the midst of suffering, trials, wars and persecutions, this nation was able to survive, overcome and build their home in their historical homeland. Now, 70 years after modern Israel was born, we see how gospel is returning once again to this land. Today, as it was 2000 years ago, thousands of Jews have become followers of Yeshua, preaching Yeshua – Jesus as the Messiah of Israel to their nation, thus preparing their hearts for His imminent return. That is exactly what the prophets spoke about when they spoke about God’s salvation, and we are the witnesses to His wondrous works and His infinite faithfulness.

It’s important to note, that while the world around us continuously changes, in the light of global catastrophes and wars (especially in the middle east), whole nations are being displaced, rulers whose authority no one thought could ever be compromised are being removed or are experiencing serious crisis. This is precisely the times the prophets spoke about when they described the end-time and the events that would precede. Reading the biblical prophecies about the end-time, we see that Israel will be the epicentre of all these events and the eyes of the world will be fixed in it.

That is exactly what is happening today. While living in Israel, it is interesting to observe how even in our generation and in the past few years everything the prophets spoke about is being fulfilled, when they prophecied about the restoration of Israel as a nation, about the difficult circumstances under which all of it will be taking place, and also about the glory of God that will be revealed in the nation of Israel when God Himself will gather His nation from every corner of the earth. The bible says, that through all these things, the nations will see God’s glory and “…will know that I AM Lord”. Specifically during a time when unimaginable miracles are taking place, whole empires arose, others fell, everything in order to prepare a way for the restoration of Israel. During this time we also see an ever growing movement in the world that is trying to reject God’s work, twisting the reality and trying to make it seem as though God had nothing to do with the restoration of Israel, claiming it is merely a sequence of events and politics, thus opposing Israel and the eternal prophecies of God’s word. For those who know the bible, it has stirred in them very strong feelings, while God himself is touching many Christians, placing in their heart the understanding of Israel and the desire to stand by its side, which brings many to pray for the Chosen People of God. At the same time, many others being influenced by the mass media that’s causing them
confusion and doubt. While others still under the influence of replacement theology, are struggling to understand and agree with the restoration of Israel being somehow related to the biblical prophecies. It is crucial now more than ever to study the scriptures and the prophecies, to understand what God is doing today on earth, what will continue taking place with the nations and Israel, and how all these things will affect the Church of God and our lives as believers.

“And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces”.

As we can see through the entire bible, God has planned to create a nation for himself, one He can use to reveal Himself and His glory through, and blessing all the nations of the world! Which means, when God made Israel as His nation, He already had plans for the rest of the nations, so by taking care of His chosen people of Israel, He is taking care of the rest of the nations, for generations to come.

In order to better understand what is happening today, we can turn to the very beginning, the Book of Genesis where we can find the meaning behind God’s calling for Abraham and how God’s revealing Himself to Abraham also reveals His plan of salvation and redemption of mankind. We will also examine how later on in history, generation after generation God has been speaking to Israel, reminding the of His plan and will pertaining not only to one nation, but to the entire mankind. (2, p.69-98)

Abraham was not a jew, neither was he an Israeliite. He was born on what is today modern Iraq, and only several generations after his passing, Abraham’s great grandson, Joseph, was called an Israelite (Gen. 41:12-14). So, Abraham was someone who came out of his own land and went to a land God led him to. The story of Abraham’s calling, lineage and place of birth is described in Genesis 11:26-32.

Everything began with Abraham’s grandfather, Nahor and his father, Terah, who left Ur of the Chaldees and went to the land of Canaan, but when he reached Haran, he stayed there and died.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we can see how God himself speaks to Abraham and gives him a calling.

Interestingly enough, from the very beginning of Abraham’s calling, God told him that his life would change, that he wouldn’t find himself in the same familiar circumstances anymore when he begins this new chapter of his life, meaning: when God speaks to you, He wants change. This reminds us our life as believers, after meeting God everything changes, and even if we don’t necessarily change our physical location, we still find ourselves on a journey with God. Jesus, the Son of God came into our lives to show us the way, to reveal to us the Father, to receive us into his Kingdom of Heaven! Much like Abraham, we are called to trust God, to follow Him, to wait on His direction for our lives, so he can guide us, take care of us and lead us into the Promised Land.

Romans 11:16-36 records the illustration of the olive tree. This passage speaks of Israel the (“natural” branches) being broken off from the olive tree, and the Church (“wild” branches or shoots) being grafted into the olive tree. Since Israel is referred to as branches, as well as the Church, it stands to reason that neither group is the “whole tree,” so to speak; rather, the whole tree represents God’s workings with mankind as a whole. Therefore, God’s program with Israel and God’s program with the Church are part of the outworking of His purpose among men in general. Of course, this is not intended to mean that either program is of little significance. As many commentators have noted, more space is given in the Bible regarding God’s programs with Israel and with the Church than any of God’s other dealings!

In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (the Jews), the Jews would possess a land, that nation would be blessed above all other nations, and all other nations would be blessed from Israel. So, from the beginning God revealed that Israel would be His chosen people on the earth, but that His blessing would not be limited to them exclusively. Galatians 3:14 identifies the nature of the blessing to come to all the other nations: “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” All the nations of the world were blessed by Israel, through whom the Savior of the world came.

God’s plan of redemption is built upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David and Abraham. But Christ’s death on the cross is sufficient for the sins of the entire world, not just the Jews! Galatians 3:6-8 states, “Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you” Finally, Galatians 3:29 says, “If you belong to Christ, then you are
Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” In other words, in Christ, believers are counted righteous by faith in the same way that Abraham was (Galatians 3:6-8). If we are in Christ, then we are partakers of the blessing of Israel and all nations in the redemptive work of Christ. Believers become the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Believers do not become physical Jews, but they may enjoy the same type of blessings and privileges as the Jews.

Now, this does not contradict or nullify the revelation given in the Old Testament. God’s promises in the Old Testament are still valid, and God’s relationship with Israel as a chosen people points to the work of Christ as a Redeemer of the whole world. The Mosaic Law is still mandatory for all Jews who have not yet accepted Christ as their Messiah. Jesus did what they could not do—fulfill the Law in all its details (Matthew 5:17). As New Testament believers, we are no longer under the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13), because Christ has taken that curse upon Himself on the cross. The Law served two purposes: to reveal sin and mankind’s inability (on his own merit) to do anything about it, and to point us to Christ, who fulfills the Law. His death on the cross completely satisfies God’s righteous requirement of perfection.

God’s unconditional promises are not invalidated by the unfaithfulness of man. Nothing we do is ever a surprise to God, and He does not need to adjust His plans according to the way we behave. No, God is sovereign over all things—past, present and future—and what He has foreordained for both Israel and the Church will come to pass, regardless of circumstances. Romans 3:3-4 explains that Israel’s unbelief would not nullify His promises concerning them: “What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge”.

Promises made to Israel are still going to be kept in the future. We can be sure that all God has said is true and will take place, because of His character and consistency. The Church does not replace Israel and should not expect a symbolic fulfillment of the promises of the Old Covenant As one reads Scripture, it is necessary to keep Israel and the Church separate.

When God tells Abraham: “Go to a land which I will show you...”, He already has a plan, He knows where he will be taking Abraham, but He doesn't reveal the entirety of His plan from the beginning, God speaks in future tense: “I will show you”, meaning God is expecting obedience from Abraham, trust, expecting Abraham will follow God’s calling despite not knowing the fullness of His plans. We can only imagine how many doubts plagued Abraham’s mind and heart, but he “believed God”, he fully trusted Him and decided to follow where God would lead him. His friends and relatives probably had many questions: “where are you going”, “which land?”, “which kingdom?”, “who is waiting for you there?”, even “how can you be sure you won’t be killed on the way?”. Abraham’s response could have been: “I do not know where I am going, but God revealed Himself to me, spoke to me, told me to get up and go, that He will guide me on the way to my destination.”

Genesis 12:2, God shows Abraham what He will do to him and through him as a result of God’s work in the life of someone who responds to His calling. He gave him four promises:

1. “I will make you a great nation”

We can imagine Abraham’s reverence when he hears God telling him that through him and his children that he will have, which God will multiply, a great nation will be formed. It’s important to note Abraham didn’t have children at the time, so God’s promise must have changed Abraham and Sarah’s life, and now he could stand in faith on God’s promise and believe the impossible, believe God for a miracle, that He will not only bless him and he will have children, but that he will have so many they will become a great nation.

2. “I will bless you!” – a most powerful promise. God says, that Abraham will now experience His blessings, meaning, God will guide him, protect, provide and fill his life with joy and meaning, that the enemies will never be able to defeat Abraham. God was on his side, which meant there would be no more curses, destruction, loss, that in all Abraham does, he will have success. Reading about Abraham’s life, it was evident how God had blessed him in all things. He was successful in his battles, prospered and enjoyed abundance, the scriptures simply describe Abraham as a man blessed by God.

3. “I will make your name great!” – That mean that the whole world and all generations to come will know of Abraham, about what God has done through him and all the wonderful works of God in his
life.

4. “You shall be a blessing” – In those words we see God’s plan that wasn’t limited to only Abraham and his family, but God spoke about entire nations, many people that Abraham will encounter in his life. He will receive a gift from God, which will be to become a blessing, to transfer the blessing, to release the blessings onto others. Interestingly enough, God spoke to Abraham on several occasions repeating His promises, adding details, confirming and proclaiming that everything He had promised He will fulfil. When receiving such promises, it becomes evident that the Lord Himself singled out Abraham, that God would be accomplishing something special through him, and now Abraham can be certain all be will well with him. But the most important thing wasn’t the blessing, which undoubtably came, but the goal of this blessing. God not only wishes to bless this one chosen man, Abraham, his goal is to work through him, to establish His Kingdom, making His covenants. God needed a man to whom He might reveal His plans, and have that man believe Him and work alongside Him, praying, obeying and doing what God will instruct hum to do. That is a life of faith, it’s a difficult and unusual path, it means walking without knowing where, just trusting what God had told you and knowing it is enough. On the way, Abraham met a lot of people, and he had countless opportunities to carry that blessing with him and be a blessing to others. So God’s plan to bless all the nations of the earth for all generations, it all starts with the choosing of one man (3, p.152-153). It reminds us of the creation of the world, scripture tells us that through one man (Adam) sin, curses, death and destruction came into this world through his disobedience.

Today God is calling us to be wise, like the sons of Issachar, “men who had understanding of the times…” (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Jesus described the characterises of end-time, “Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, “These things which you see – the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Luke 21:5-6).

The temple was destroyed, Jerusalem was devastated in 70 AD, Jesus’ words came to pass, “And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”, which was a prophecy that remained unfulfilled until 1967, when Jerusalem was liberated during the Six Day war. Verses 25-28 speak about a time that hasn’t come yet, the time of Yeshua’s return: “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

We are surrounded by signs that the whole world is gearing up towards to return of the Messiah. One of the most important signs is, as we have seen, the restoration of the relationship between the nation of Israel and God.

Conclusions:

In today’s world, Israel is a country that is continuously being observed and examined by politicians, economists, military officials, etc. The existing conflict within the country has spiritual roots. Which is why the role of biblical scholars and teachers of the bible, is to continue praying for the country, the nation and spreading the word of God.

The analysis was done based on the study of the development of today’s church in Israel and its impact on all the aforementioned.

Literatura

1. Bible (digital resource) - www.biblegateway.com
4. The signs of end-time (digital resource) - http://ieshua.org/priznaki- poslednego-vremeni.htm
Ізраель Поштар

Ізраїль та Церква в світлі Писання і подій останнього часу

У статті пропонується аналіз Біблії щодо подій, що відбуваються в Ізраїлі. Автор звертає увагу на те, що сьогоденний розвиток Ізраїлю має драматичні наслідки, це дозволяє говорити про здійснення Писання. Війна та політичні події сприймаються як попередники останнього часу.

Глобальні катастрофи та війни, народи рухаються, влада переживає кризу. Пророки писали про останні часи. І найголовніше, що Ізраїль знаходиться в центрі цих подій, і очі цілого світу будуть спрямовані на це.

На прикладі Авраама автор показує обрання єврейського народу. Крім того, автор переконує, що військові події у Святій Землі закликають віруючих бути в страху перед Богом, молитися, бути добришими один до одного.

Автор запрошує віруючих прочитати Об'явлення і книгу Даниїла. Він бачить у реальних подіях феномен антихриста, проте він заявляє, що процес вже розпочався, "план беззаконня вже почав діяти".

Бог вибрав Ізраїлевих людей, щоб вони стали свідками слави Божої.

Ключові слова: Ізраїль, євреї, останній час, Об'явлення, Авраам.

Надійшла до редакції 29.04.2018 р.

УДК 27-11-4:330.831.8

© Віталій Філіп
(Львів)

МОРАЛЬНО-ЕТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ НЕОЛІБЕРАЛЬНОГО БОГОСЛОВ'Я

У статті розглядаються актуальні питання сучасного неолібералізму. Автором зроблено акцент на дискусійних питаннях у тлумаченні Біблії неолібералістами і традиційними богословами. На прикладі біблійного уривку про Содомський гріх проаналізовано різницю у поглядах двох течій.

Стаття підймає важливі для сьогодення питання моралі і етики у тлумаченні біблійного писання. Автор переконаний, що вільне трактування біблійного тексту зумовлено егоістичними потребами пересічної людини, тому не завжди є правильним з погляду «гріха».

Посилаючись на німецьку класичну філософію він доводить, що людина у поясненні Біблії керується Вищими силами.

Божественне начаło формулює мету церкви та її доручення. Він має план спасіння людини, яка не може притти до Нього без благодаті.

Незалежність і самостійність людини, в неолібералізмі, зумовлює трактування етики відносним, залежним лише від індивіда. Це унеможливлює розуміння етики іншими людьми. Правильне розуміння змісту цього метафори є залежним лише за автором. У цьому головний недолік неолібералізму, який може бути сприятий при умілій організації як позитивне явище.

Ключові слова: неолібералізм, церква, гріх, Содом, перелюб, філософія, Біблія, віруючі, квір-теологія, пропагандизм.

Актуальність дослідження. Сьогодні, як ніколи в історії людства, спостерігається урбанізація і секуляризація. Це, насамперед, пояснюється глобалізацією інформаційного простору, який розмиває духовні цінності національних культур пропагуванням насолод і переваг неконтрольованого споживання. Сучасні тенденції майбутні наслідки: урбанізація змінює людей від повсякденних питань, які були в селах і дає нові можливості; глобалізація ставить перед людством моральні питання світового значення, а секуляризація