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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

“Israel and the PLO Peace Accord” TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] The passage that we’re looking at really is the Bible, but I’ve selected three passages in the beginning which have to do with God’s words to Israel. And that is the foundation of the message that I want to give which is entitled, “Israel and the PLO Peace Accord.” To put it more biblically it would be something like, “Does Palestine Belong to Israel?” or the Arabs. So let’s turn to Genesis chapter 12 and we’ll read verse 1 through 3 and then chapter 13, two or three verses there, and then one verse in chapter 17. Genesis chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 3. Everyone who has studied the Bible knows how important these verses are, for the whole of the Bible gathers around the things that are stated here. Moses writes,

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

And now chapter 13, verse 14 through verse 17. This promise is repeated and we read,

“And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.”

And then chapter 17 and verse 8, one verse, “Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” May the Lord bless this reading of his Word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we turn to Thee with thanksgiving and praise, for when we turn to Thee we turn to the Father who is responsible for the blessings of life that are ours in Abram’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. We praise our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Father who has elected, the Son who has died, the Spirit who has administrated the benefits of the death of Christ, in accordance with the eternal plan of our triune God. We thank Thee Lord for the blessings that have come to be ours by Thy grace, not by our works. And we give Thee praise for the love, eternal love, manifested toward us who belong to Thee. We pray for each individual in this congregation who has a personal relationship with Thee, who knows Jesus Christ as their own personal savior and we pray Thy blessing upon them, upon their families. We pray that Thou wilt continue to build them up in the faith. For the friends who may be with us who perhaps do not know our

Lord we pray that, through the preaching of the word of God, they too may experience the blessings that belong to those who know Christ as their own savior.

We pray for this country of which we're all a part. We pray for our President and for those who are associated with him in the government of the United States. We pray for wisdom, understanding, and we pray for divine enablement for the United States of America to the end, that Thy purposes may be accomplished on the face of this globe. For President Clinton particularly we pray. We ask Thy blessing upon him. Give him wisdom and guidance as he and those associated with him seek to give direction to this country. We pray Lord for those who've requested our prayers, those who are in the midst of serious difficulties and trials, physically and otherwise, and we ask that Thou wilt minister to them in a way that will give them the sense of Thy presence, the comfort of Thy presence, the support of the promises of God to them. We pray for each one of them.

We ask Lord especially for Dan and pray Thy blessing upon him that he will be able to recover quickly from the flu that he has and for the difficulties that he's been having in the past few days. We commit him and Janette and the family to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon them. We're grateful Lord for all of the blessings that are ours through Christ. And we ask Thy blessing upon our service, may it bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] The subject, as I mentioned, for today is “Israel and The PLO Peace Accord.” Or put more biblically, “Does Palestine Belong to Israel?” Those of us who read the newspapers, and I'm sure that you as an audience do remember that on August the 31st of 1993 the Israeli government approved a draft of principles designed to implement extensive Palestinian self-rule in the areas of Gaza and Jericho in the land. The principles were officially adopted on a very significant day, September the 13th, my birthday.

[Laughter] They are supposed to be steps toward a permanent agreement in other

contested areas. For example, the principles include such things as an interim Palestinian self-government arrangement extending over a five year period, elections for a Palestinian ruling council in nine months, although immediately, matters that pertain to education, health care, social services, taxation, and tourism are to be undertaken by the Palestinians. So, immediately these matters belong to them in these areas. Israeli Palestinian cooperation on a regional Middle East economic plan has been agreed to. Israel is to redeploy its military forces to strategic areas and withdraw from the occupation administration of Jericho and Gaza within four months of the signing of the agreement. Jerusalem remains as Israel's undivided capitol under Israeli sovereignty. Jerusalem and Jewish settlements, Israeli citizens, and military areas are excluded from Palestinian authority. In other words, Jewish settlements in the midst of the Palestinian areas will still be under the control of the Israelis, and under Israeli authority and their defense forces will support them.

Time Magazine, in the discussion of the signing, says, or asks the question, “Is this the first sign of a thaw in a life or death struggle?” Well, of course I don't want to answer questions like that as if I speak as a prophet. I can only say this, that from the standpoint of the word of God as we understand the word of God in the Bible before us it's very evident that this is not a final settlement. And in fact, cannot be the final settlement that the word of God has set forth without any question that that land belongs to Israel and will be Israel's. And so consequently, any kind of agreement that does not include that is an agreement that cannot possibly succeed. Naturally anyone would like to say, “Well it would be nice if there would be some peace.” No one likes to see Arabs killed or Israelis killed. Wouldn't it be nice, you might say, if everybody would just say, “Let's agree with what the Bible says” and then we should have something like peace? But we know that this is not going to happen.

The Scriptures have already set forth what is going to happen and they do not include that kind of thing. Jewish survival is both a riddle and an offense to the natural

man. It's not surprising that individuals are divided over the question of Jewish survival. It's very much like people are divided over the nature of the world in which we live. The Scriptures tell us that if a man is a friend of the world he is an enemy of God. Those are very forthright words, if a man is a friend of the world he is an enemy of God. That's stated not only by one of the apostles but by several in the New Testament. That is why in the final analysis, my Christian friends, worldliness is opposition to the Lord God. It may not be recognized, we may not see it, but that's specifically what the Scripture says.

A very prominent Britisher once said that “Attempt to extirpate the Jew has been made under the most favorable auspices and on the largest scale and for the longest period of time. Egyptian pharos, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, and holy inquisitors have alike devoted their energies to the fulfillment of this common purpose; expatriation, exile, captivity, confiscation, torture on the most ingenious and massacre on the most extensive scale have been tried in vain. The Jew however, remains.”

Some of the statements with which we are familiar, made by important men, include these; Renan, the famous Frenchman, said, “The philosophy of history fails utterly to account for the Jew.” Heigl, the German philosopher, confessed that “Like a dark enigma the history of the Jew had tormented him all his life.” To make a more common man, Mark Twain, who visited the land in the last century, I'll refer to him later if we have time, said, “All things are mortal but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains.”

What's the solution to the problem? The Arabs have a solution. Their solution is, “Give us back the land.” Israel's solution is, “We'll keep it. It belongs to us.” The Pope has in the past had a solution too. His solution is, “Internationalize the land.” President Clinton, he doesn't have any solutions. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, and I don't mean that in the bad sense [Laughter] it might sound like that, but Michael Kramer in *Time Magazine* wrote a lengthy article just on the 13th of September, I believe in honor of my birthday, [Laughter] and he said that he's been trying to find out exactly what his foreign

policy is and he hasn't been able to find it out yet. In fact, the title of his article was something like, “In Search of the Clinton Doctrine,” which he has been trying to find out.

It's very interesting all these solutions, but there is a solution. And the solution, as Christians, as we Christians know, is found in the word of God. It's all there. It's all set out. The problem is, with most of us, and with particularly with those who are not members of the Christian body is they do not read the word of God because they do not regard the word of God as the word of God. But Scripture says, I'll just pick out one or two verses at random,

“The Lord has sworn in truth to David. He will not turn from it. I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body. (Psalm 132, verse 11) If your sons keep my covenant and my testimony which I shall teach them their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore. For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: This is my resting place forever, here I will dwell for I have desired it.”

That's the statement of the sovereign Lord of this universe. I do not deny no one who has any intelligence at all could possibly deny the fact that the story of Israel and the study of Israel is a complex drama. It bulges with cultural problems, historical problems, but the important thing is that the main premise of the Arabs is false.

Sometime ago, many years ago as a matter of fact, I read a statement by Thomas Moore who wrote *Lala Rookh*. He said, “Fanatic faith, once wedded to some dear falsehood hugs it to the lest.” There is no greater falsehood in history than that the Arabs are the legitimate heirs of the land of Palestine. Any one who has studied that issue at all will come to the conclusion, I do believe, that that is a falsehood. It is true of course, that if we talk about things long enough we may get people to believe them.

Joseph Goebbels, who was Hitler's propagandist you may remember, once made that statement that “A lie spreads in proportion to its size.” And one almost can find an

illustration of that in this problem. The more you say something that is false, the more you say it, often the more it will be believed. It happens to be a quirk of our fallen human nature that that is true.

So, what I'd like to do is in the time that we have make a brief survey of just what this problem does involve, and I hope that when I finish at least you will say, "Israel has a strong case. This land belongs to them." Not necessarily to the Israel of today, because the Israel of today is a disobedient people. But, it belongs to Israel. Now I read the first passage in Genesis chapter 12, then chapter 13, chapter 17. I'm sure you'll recognize that what this refers to is the sovereign call of the Lord God to one man in Mesopotamia, who was called by the Lord God to go out to a land that he did not know existed, or at least did not know the place to where he was going.

Stephen, when he spoke to the council in Acts chapter 7, makes reference to this for he says, as he stood up before them after he had been asked by the high priest, since he had been accused of various things, "Are these things so?" And Stephen replied,

"Brethren and fathers listen, the God of glory appeared to our father in Abraham, our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Heron and said to him, Get out of your country and from your relatives and come to a land that I will show you. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran and from there when his father was dead he (that is God) moved him to this land in which you now dwell."

This was a sovereign call from the Lord God to Abraham who was, if he were, the worshiper of the gods of the Chaldeans was a worshiper of Nannar the moon god. Nannar the moon god had some very interesting names that were supposed to be his. He was called the exalted lord, he was called the crown of heaven and earth, he was called the beautiful lord who shines in heaven, but Abraham, called by the Lord God, notice, it's not Abraham sought after guidance and direction, but he was called by the Lord God

through the sovereign work of God who appeared to him and called him to go into the land. In other words, right from the beginning Abraham's a Calvinist. [Laughter] That's not stated incidentally, I'm adding that, because it was a sovereign call. It was God who moved in his heart first. And he by God's grace responded and went out. It was, as someone has called it, a march without a map. It was progress without any program. It was a walk with sealed orders from God. No insistence on explanation, so far as Abraham is concerned, at least so far as the record goes.

It's precisely as the Lord Jesus called so many of his apostles, he said to them, "Follow me." That's all. "Follow me." But when the word of God comes to an individual truly, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and he calls out, "Follow me" we follow. "Follow me." Your experience, if you're a believer in Christ, can be fitted into that. There was a time when he said, "Follow me" and from that time on your life became a transformed life. Not perfect, but a transformed life. Your values changed, your dedication changed, your commitment changed, and so haltingly you have been seeking to follow him. That happened to Abraham. Scripture says, "By faith Abraham obeyed." God have him the faith, the Scriptures say, but he obeyed.

He was given specific promises. He was given personal promises, "Your name shall be great." Isn't it striking? Here is a man who is great in the three great religions of the face of this globe; great in Islam, *al Khalil*, he is called, the friend of God, great in Judaism, great in Christianity. No one ever comes into an understanding of the gospel of Christ unless he comes to it through Abraham. Yes, that's right, through Abraham, for the promises that we believe that are finally centered in Jesus Christ who is the "in thee" of "in thee shall all the families of the earth be saved." Those promises are grounded in the seed who is Jesus Christ. The word of God makes that very plain, personal promises, national promises; I underline them by selecting those passages. He was called out to a land, chapter 12, to a land, chapter 13, to a land, chapter 17. And throughout the Old Testament the land is stressed over and over again.

People often say, “Well the New Testament doesn’t say anything about the land.” Ah, my friend, we have a Bible. The Old Testament is full of that. There are many things that are not stated in the New Testament that are found in the Old Testament which you accept. Why do you lay down a principle that I’m not going to believe it unless it’s said in the New Testament when it’s been said literally scores of times in the Old Testament, God’s initial and continuing revelation of God.

Those promises were for a land of three hundred thousand square miles. Israel today is almost eleven thousand square miles. In other words, between twenty-five and thirty times the present land, Israel has been promised.

The Arabs frequently complain, “This is our land. And we don’t have” they seem to suggest, “anything but this land. If we don’t have this land we don’t have land.” It is not realized by so many people who discuss this matter that the Arabs have five hundred, the Arab world, has five hundred times the size of present Israel, five hundred times. Begin at Mauritania and sweep all the way across northern Africa, on into Asia, with Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, excluding Iran because they’re not part of the Arab world, five hundred times the size of Israel. California is about sixteen times the size of present Israel.

Now of course, the promises of the word of God include more than present Israel. This was the mistake that the infidel French philosopher, Voltaire made, because he made a slurring statement about the God of the Bible by saying, “The God of the Bible said he was calling out the people Israel to a land that was good and large. But the land is only the size of Whales.” What Voltaire did not know, evidently, was that present Israel is not the promise that God has given them. The promise that God has given them is a land twice the size of Great Britain, plus some extra acreage. But he didn’t know that. It is a good land and a large land that they are promised.

He was also given universal promises, “In Christ all the families will in thee” but who is the seed of Abraham? Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Scriptures make out. In thee, in Christ, in Abraham, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed. So, Israel has

been chosen. Why were they chosen? Were they chosen simply to exist as a nation? No, more, much more significantly, they were chosen to be the depository of the revelation of God. And they were chosen to be evangelists of the revelation of God. They were intended to be the means by which Gentiles should be blessed by the revelation of God. And of course, while it's true the Israel as we know it failed, apostatized often, failed, turned away from the Lord, read the Bible, read it over and over, “They forget me,” “They have forgotten me.” I was using the [indistinct] language of the King James Version, “They forget me,” ha, “They have forgotten me. They have rebelled against me” so on, over and over again. But even after their apostasy, various times, the promises are reiterated. Those promises in the word of God, they are given.

I know, I understand, I understand why people say the things that they say about Israel. William Norman Ewer had that little stanza, which so many people have quoted, “How odd of God to choose the Jews.” [Laughter] And then John Dryden, in one of his works, writes this stanza or so, “The Jews, a headstrong, moody, murmuring race, as ever tried the extend and stretch of grace; God's pampered people whom debauched with ease, no king could govern, nor no god could please;” some truth in that. How many political parties are there in Israel today? About thirty. How would you like to contend with thirty political parties? Contending with the democrats and republicans is enough to put grey hairs in our heads, but thirty parties. Well, that's characteristic, but it's part of the word of God.

Now these promises that were given to Abram were confirmed by a special confirmation ceremony that is so important. Genesis chapter 15, remember God called Abram out. He said, “Abram,” it was dark, “look at the sky. See how many stars there are, number them.” Innumerable. And then God said to him, “So shall thy seed be.” And we read Abraham amen God. That's what the word to believe actually is related to. The word amen, amen, is related to that Hebrew word “to believe,” so Abraham's

amened God. And Moses said he believed in the Lord and he imputed it to him for righteousness.

And then in order to confirm the promises he told Abram to take some animals. He was to take a ram, take a heifer, take a goat, and he was to take two birds, and he was to cut those animals in two, the large animals. So he did that. Incidentally, this is actually something that was well known to the ancient near eastern world. In fact, when Alexander, after his death and his kingdom was coming apart, certain individuals in Alexander's army were so anxious to succeed him that they almost came to battle, the horse guards and the infantry. And so finally they agreed that they would make an agreement. And what they did was to take a dog, I'm sorry you dog lovers, they took a dog, they cut the dog in half, put one half of the dog over here, and a half here, and then the entire army passed between the pieces in token of agreement with the principles that they had agreed upon. Now Abram was told to slice those animals in half. It was night time. He waited all day long. Nothing happened. The animals were there. As a matter of fact, the birds came down, the buzzards, they were driven off. There are many indications that passed by significances of these things, simply to say this; that when the sun was going down Abram was astonished to see a smoking oven and a torch coming towards those pieces. Now remember, later on God is known as, in the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire. So here is God as the smoking fire coming and he walks between the pieces. Butt one significant difference between the carrying out of the ordinary covenant has taken place. Notice it carefully; Abram is not invited to follow. Abram stands off as the astonished spectator of what is taking place. What's the significance of it? That covenant is an unconditional covenant. It's God's way of saying, "I take the responsibility for fulfilling these responsibilities set forth in the covenant, these provisions of the covenant." They will be fulfilled, because he, his power, his Word, stand behind it. So those promises were confirmed.

Now the question might arise, it often does, and it's a good question, didn't Israel apostatize? Yes, they apostatized from time to time. Well did they apostatize in the greatest incidence of apostasy possible? Did they not crucify their own Messiah? Yes, they crucified their own Messiah. The New Testament takes account of these things, and I want to site one passage simply to confirm the fact that, in spite of Israel's Old Testament apostasy, those promises still pertain to Israel and are still valid. Because in Luke chapter 1, verse 32 through verse 33, when the birth of our Lord is announced and the angel Gabriel is sent to Mary the virgin, among the words that the angel says are these, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.” That's all involved in the Abrahamic covenant, that there would be a king to come, chapter 17 of the Book of Genesis. “And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end” eternal throne given to the seed of Abraham. Verse 46 through verse 55 is Mary's Magnificat and in the last two verses of this magnificent song that Mary sings, incidentally filled with the Bible, quotations of phrases and clauses of the Old Testament put together, which indicated that she was reading through the Bible about three times a year. [Laughter] At any rate, in verse 54 we read this of Luke 1, “He has helped (she's speaking, he has helped) his servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy.” Now remember, Israel at this time is in apostasy. They're in the land, their in apostasy, they will fight the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, they will crucify him on the cross. “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as He spoke to our father, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” Well you can see that she speaks by the Holy Spirit and those promises are still valid in spite of disobedience.

Now, you might ask the question, “Well are they still in effect after Israel has crucified our Lord?” Well our spokesman is the Apostle Peter. The apostle was the leader of the apostles, the first among equals, and a spokesman, a tremendous spokesman. In Acts chapter 3, after the time of the cross, Peter, after the, this is his second sermon, and

you remember the lame man has been healed and so in verse 12 we read, of Acts chapter 3,

"So when Peter say it he responded to the people, Men of Israel why do you marvel at this or why look so intently upon us, as though by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilot when he was determined to let him go."

In other words, God is fulfilling his word in spite of Israel's opposition and rejection. And then, at the conclusion of the message, the apostle sates these words,

"You (verse 25 of Acts 3) You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up his Servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

Those promises are still valid after our Lord's death. They have rejected the Father, in the Old Testament. They have rejected the Son in his earthly ministry. They are now rejecting the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit brings to conviction various individuals as when Steven's speeches and they stoned Steven to death, but those promises are still valid.

Why then is Israel scattered to the four corners of the earth? Well, I'm reading a book by Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr. Netanyahu, as you may know, is the head of the Likud Party. He was the spokesman for Israel at the United Nations, frequently was on *Nightline* with answers to various questions when troubles between Israel and the Arabs were in the lime light from time to time. So always impressed with that man, so precise,

so significant, the things that he spoke were always to the point, and so filled with knowledge of the situation in Israel. It's a marvelous book, I recommend you read it. He's not a Christian, but there are some interesting things that he has said in this book. It's an evidence of just this; that the word of God has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled. The question is Israel's worldwide dispersion. As you know, when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., about 132 to 137 A.D. began the great dispersion of Israel to the four corners of the earth. Wherever you go there will be a Jewish man, a representative of the people to whom God gave these promises.

Now, it so happens that there is a little prophecy in Hosea that I think we can use as a kind of summary of what this present age is. Hosea put it all in five verses, but I'm going to try to select just two or three things from it. If you read it in the Hebrew text it's eighty-one words, in the Hebrew text. And in it Hosea the prophet says there are going to be three things that characterizes this present age, this age from the crucifixion of our Lord to the time of his coming. And the three things are so remarkably fulfilled, I must just point them out. He says in Hosea chapter 3 and verse 3,

“And I said to her, (here Hosea is speaking with reference to the harlot that God told him to marry) I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be to you. (now) For (he says) the children of Israel shall abide for many days without king or prince.”

In other words, Israel will abide for a lengthy period of time without civil polity. Since the time of Zedekiah, in the Old Testament, the last genuine king of Israel, Israel has had no king. Hosea has said, “The children of Israel shall abide for many days without king or prince.” The Old Testament speaks very plainly, particularly in, as a matter of fact, Moses' writings. They would be scattered to the four corners of the earth. They will not have civil polity. After the Babylonian captivity and the death of Zedekiah,

the last king of Judah, the people of Israel knew no longer a king in their midst. Not only that, he says, “Without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod.” That is, without God’s appointed sacrifice, for you see the sacrifices had to be made in Jerusalem by people who were priests according to the Old Testament record. They had to be a specific group of priests. No one could offer the sacrifices, ultimately the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement, except the one who came from the family of Aaron.

But our prophet says that they will abide many days without sacrifice or sacred pillar without ephod. In other words, not only no civil polity, no appointed sacrifice. There is no temple, for the land is not theirs. There is no high priest. As a matter of fact, they do not even know who could be high priest, for all the genealogies are gone except two, found in the New Testament; the genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew and the genealogy in the Gospel of Luke, who point out that the one priest, after the order of Melchizedek, the eternal priest is the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel has no priest. They have no sacrifice. They have no king, as Hosea has prophesied. And then also, startlingly, he says, “They shall abide without teraphim,” false gods. Isn’t it striking? Here is a nation who has rebelled against the Lord God down through the centuries. You would think when they have scattered to the four corners of the earth there would be multitudedness idols worshiped by the children of Israel. They don’t worship idols. They don’t worship idols. You won’t find idols among the Hebrew peoples, because the prophet said, “They will be without teraphim.” That’s another illustration of the fact that they are a separate, different people, God’s chosen people. Yes, still chosen. Not in the family of God yet, but still chosen. No idolatry. Then of course, Hosea goes on to say, “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.”

Now, there are some facts for present day Arabs to remember. We’re going to just list them, but pay careful attention to them, cause we don’t have time to debate them all. Abram is the father of the Hebrews by Isaac. Abram is the father of the Arabs by Ishmael.

In other words, the Arabs and the Hebrews are cousins. They are, cousins, ultimately. Secondly, Israel gained the land at the conquest of Canaan, by God's direction, not the Arabs. God gave them land, God gave them the power to overcome the enemies and God gave them that land specifically.

With David and Solomon they became a nation, a united nation, Jerusalem was established as capitol, you may remember. The temple was ultimately built, the worship was set up in accordance with the Old Testament prophesies.

Fourthly, history establishes nine centuries of complete Jewish sovereignty over the land. I won't read the statement in Israel's Declaration of Independence, May the 14th, 1948, but that is expressed within it. So, what can we say about Israel's claim to the land? My friend, they have better claims to the land of Israel than you and I have for the United States of America. They have the one impeccable claim, the one impeccable claim, because God gave them deed to the land. So in a sense, it's the only land with an impeccable deed.

Fifth, the first Arab conquest took place in about 634 A.D. Israel was never a settled country however. They were ruled by foreign conquerors for four centuries. The Arabs never established a government. There never was an Arabic culture, as we know culture. From 1517 to 1917 the land was under the control of the Turks, primarily. The Seljuks, the Crusaders for a while, the Mameluks, the Ottoman Turks at the end of World War I were taken, that was taken from them because they had supported the Germans in World War I.

In other words, to sum it up, that land has never been a national home land for any people the whole time, but God gave it to Israel and they have ruled over it and had a government and a culture there for at least nine centuries. Never did the Jews totally abandon the land. Even when they were outnumbered in the last century, for a while, they never abandoned the land. It was a land that was in desolation as the prophet spoke of it.

Mark Twain went there, and I'll just read you a couple of things. I'm going to go over five minutes, so relax. [Laughter] “There is not a solitary village” Mr. Twain said, “throughout its whole extent, not for thirty miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin tents, but not a single permanent habitation. One may ride ten miles hereabouts and not see ten human beings. To this region one of the prophecies is applied, ‘I will bring the land into desolation and your enemies, which shall dwell therein shall be astonished at it.’ No man can stand here by deserted Ain Mellahah and say the prophecy has not been fulfilled.” Twain referred to Capernaum as “that the melancholy ruin.” Those of you who've visited it now know that it's not that now. He spoke of Tiberius as “this stupid village of Tiberius, slumbering under six funereal palms, a desolation is here not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life in action. We reached finally” he said, “Mt. Tabor safely. We never saw a human being on the whole route.” These are the facts about that land. David Ben Gurion, who was the first prime minister of the land, was asked by an Arab in a meeting in his audience to justify the Jews taking the land they won from the recent war. He said simply, “We were there before you.”

So, what's the condition for repatriation? I'll give you something to read in your Bible, but Leviticus chapter 26 traces the whole picture. Says it when Israel is disobedient they'd be scattered to the four corners of the earth. Moses said, “When you acknowledge your sin and your trespass, then I will remember you and I will remember your land.” In other words, the only thing that stands between the nation Israel and the recovery of their land is national repentance of their sins. Apostle Paul says it in Romans 11 also. National repentance, that's what Peter preached in Acts chapter 3, the passage that we read. He preached to them, “Repent. And all the things that the prophets have said are going to be fulfilled to you” but they have not repented yet. Mr. Netanyahu, “That's the thing that hinders the fulfillment of the promises that God has promised Israel.”

In closing I'd like to turn, I'm not really closing. [Laughter] But in closing, all preachers say that don't they? In closing, I'll try to be better. In climax, in the prophecy of Zechariah, there is the climactic description of what is going to happen in the future. It's chapter 12, verse 10 and following, let me read it. The prophet Zechariah says, giving the words of God,

“I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on him whom they have pierced. (John in the New Testament, in the first chapter of Revelation, says the same thing, citing this passage) they will look upon him whom they have pierced (and Zechariah says) Yes, they will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”

Then he talks about how all the families are going to mourn too. This is one of the supreme miracles of human history, the national conversion of Israel to Jesus of Nazareth. They, in the most touching scene, in the Old Testament prophets, shall cry out with Nathaniel, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel.” Notice it comes by divine initiative. Not by virtue of their seeking the Lord, it's “they shall look upon him whom they've pierced and then they shall mourn for him.” God shall turn their eyes to him and national conversion and repentance shall take place. That divine initiative to the accompaniment of the hallelujahs of Abram and Moses, the prophets, the apostle, and perhaps the tears of our Lord himself, will accomplish moral change in the land. In the most moving and heart-rending scene in history, Jacob finds his Lord. It's like Joseph revealing himself to his brethren, so our Lord will reveal himself to Israel, and you may remember Joseph wept as he did so. And then they wept, after those years of

separation when they thought they had crucified him, I said crucified typically. They thought they had slain him. And instead he lives.

So, the true repentance, that is true repentance, is the repentance that is wrought by the Lord God in the faith look at the pierced Son of God. If you want to know what true repentance is, it's described here. It's the Son of God turning your heart, and my heart, to the cross of Jesus Christ and causing you to recognize; this is what my sin means in, from the standpoint of the Lord God in heaven. It is an offense against God. Those who are Christians do not repent like Esau. Esau repented not of eating the pottage, but of losing his birthright. That was what he was concerned about. True repentance is to see ourselves in the light of what God's word says about us as having sinned against our triune God in heaven. That kind of repentance is the kind of repentance the Bible speaks about.

Mr. Spurgeon, in one of his paragraphs says, "It's a beautiful remark of an old divine that eyes are made for two things at least, first, to look with and next to weep with. The eye that looks to the pierced one is the eye which weeps for him. Oh so, when thou comest to look where all eyes should look even to him who was pierced, thine eye begins to weep for that which all eyes should weep, even the sin which slew the savior, there is no saving repentance except within sight of the cross the repentance of sin which omits Christ is a repentance which will have to be repented of."

So, to sum it up then, does Palestine belong to Israel? Well ultimately it belongs to the Lord God, but he's given it to Israel. He's given it with inviolable, unconditional promises, and it shall be theirs. We can bank on it. It is money in the Scriptural bank. It belongs to Israel. But more significantly, the promise included Gentiles too, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." If you are in this audience and you are a Gentile, and most of you are, the promise is a promises rest to you as well, "In thee, Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In fact, Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles,

and they have been through the prophets and the apostles, but not through the mass of the nation.

The message that you and I must hear is a very simple one. Christ, the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, the savior of the world, has died for sinners. If you fall into that category, that saving sacrifice is for you. Come to him, believe in him. Trust in him. Don't leave this auditorium without the consciousness within that you belong to Christ. You know, it's very simple to become a Christian, but it's impossible without God's moving in the heart. When God brings you to recognize what you are, as a sinner, and you earnestly, honestly, sincerely in your heart, say to him, "Lord, I am such a sinner. But you say that Christ has died for sinners. I want him as my savior. I do believe in him. I take him." A marvelous miracle takes place then. You enter the family of God by the power of God. May that take place this morning if you do not know him. Let's bow together in prayer. I must apologize to you. I actually took ten minutes, but I'm very poor with reference to time. And I didn't look at my watch, although the clock was staring me all the time. Let's look to the Lord in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous promises of the word of God. Enable us Lord to keep the truth of the holy Scriptures in our minds and hearts as we see the progress of things here upon this earth of Thine, so filled with things that are contrary to the word of God. How patient Lord Thou art with us and with others. But we know Lord, Thy promises are being worked out in accordance with Thy will, for Thou hast said Thou dost work all thing...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]