

Omri King of Israel

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Our scripture lesson is taken from 1 Kings chapter 16 beginning at verse 21 on page 554. 1 Kings 16 and verse 21.

Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri. But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king. In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. But Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and sinned more than all those before him. He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols. As for the other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king. (1 Kings 16:21–28)

The word of the Lord. ["Thanks be to God."]

May we pray.

Lord, please help me to squeeze out of these verses very practical application to us. On this day, in mid-April, when an explosive situation is happening in the Middle East that could engulf us, Lord, in a year of fire. We pray, Lord, that that fire would affect each of us as a cleansing force,

that we may be purer than we've ever been before and love you more dearly for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I want to think with you for a moment about Omri. I had made a mistake last Lord's Day. I'd indicated I would be looking at Asa, but we already looked at Asa months ago, so I want to look at Omri. I'm picking back up this series of Bible characters.

This series began after I had finished preaching through the 11th chapter of Hebrews in my former congregation and had taken longer to preach through it than I'd ever taken before. And that was, I think, the third time I preached through it. And so then it hit me, and I entitled the series in the beginning, "People Who Didn't Make the Cut."

The book of Hebrews is, of course, the story of all these people who did heroic things by faith. They weren't heroes.

The Bible doesn't know of any hero but one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person else in the Bible is a flawed character. And you think of some of the people that are named in the book of Hebrews chapter 11. And so again, they aren't heroes. They're just ordinary people like you and me who gave assent to the promises of God, and then launched out in obedience to that faith, and God used them powerfully.

So my series that I began long ago, began with Adam. Adam didn't make the cut, neither did Eve, nor did Cain. Anyhow, I had a few sermons on Cain, but that series I began, and I decided to pick it up here. And eventually, sometime hopefully in the summer, I will pick up again the study on "Last Things." I don't want to tire people out with a series.

So, Omri. Omri, who in the world is Omri?

Notice that there was civil war, and what happens is that we have these dynasties in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, that are very short-lived.

Remember, the Northern Kingdom is founded by Jeroboam I, and Jeroboam and his successor, Nadab, ruled from 931 to 909, 22 years.

And then Nadab is put to death by Baasha. And Baasha rules from 909 until his son Elah is killed in 885, 24 years.

So you have these two dynasties, a father and then a very incompetent son who is murdered.

And unlike the southern kingdom, Judah, which remained loyal to the house of David except for seven years when Omri's family had control of the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom has these dynasties.

And so suddenly here comes Omri. And Omri is a commander of the army.

Notice that when Zimri has killed the king, that is, he's killed King Elah, in the first part of that you see on page 554, Zimri king of Israel, he only reigned seven days. And so that's hardly a dynasty. And so he ends up that he experiences something very significant.

Verse 21:

Then the people of Israel were split into two factions, half supported Tibni. (1 Kings 16:21)

Now notice what follows. What follows the word Tibni? He's somebody's son. What does that mean? Well, I think we can see something else. The other half supported Omri. He didn't have a father. Is that what we should conclude? No. It is that he rises from obscurity, and I think there's compelling evidence that Omri is connected to the Phoenicians, that he's connected to Tyre and Sidon, and you see that throughout the events of his reign.

You see how his son marries Jezebel (יֵזֶבֶל, *'iyzebel*), and how she's a follower of Baal (בַּעַל, *bā'al*), the storm god of the Canaanites. And so there's evidence, I believe in the text, and commentaries differ on this, there's evidence that Omri was not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he was a foreigner, and he was allied with Tyre and Sidon, those Phoenician cities.

That's one thing I think is interesting to point out. We're not told who his ancestor was. That's not relevant. What is very evident in the text and throughout his descendants. Omri reigns beginning in 885, and Ahab in 874, and then we have Ahaziah, and finally we have Jehoram. And so during those years something is interesting.

Look at verse 23:

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. (1 Kings 16:23)

Now look down at his son Ahab, verse 29.

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah... (1 Kings 16:29)

What have we got here? How can he have reigned 12 years?

Here's how he reigned 12 years. There was a civil war that goes on, with one faction favoring Omri and the other faction favoring Tibni. And evidently that civil war lasted for four years, because when you begin to add the numbers together, he began to reign, but he had a rival going on with the civil war between himself and Tibni. I think you can deduce things from a text. I want to demonstrate as I preach how to approach a text of scripture, and that is to analyze because the bible pregnant with truth.

And the Bible is also this gold mine of wealth, of information. But as someone had said, the Bible is a difficult book. It's not a lazy man's book, but the Bible is clear to those who approach it through faith and study it carefully, looking for things.

So there you see, right there in that text:

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. (1 Kings 16:23)

And what happens is that he actually became king earlier, but he was not the sole king because there's civil war going on. Now then, I want you to notice something else.

This man was a great king. As kings go, he was a wonderful king. If we were to assess him by the standards of Americanism, he was a very good king because he succeeded in doing wonderful things.

(Joke) He decided to move the capital from New York to a swamp. That's what happened. We built in the swamp in Washington, D.C. Mosquitoes love it as much as they love Louisiana.

And so, anyhow, he moves the capital. He buys a hill. Notice he buys it. Unlike his son, who was baited by Jezebel to kill somebody in order to get land, he buys this land. And the man sells it to him without any difficulty at all. And that hill is still there in Israel today.

Do you know that in modern Israel, the descendants of the Israelites, including all of the people that were imported from other countries in the Assyrian Empire and came to Israel in the northern kingdom, never left?

That Samaria is home of the Samaritans who still have the form of worship that they inherited from their ancestors. In fact, one of the great books that we have in biblical research is called the Samaritan Pentateuch. It's similar to, but not identical to, the Hebrew Pentateuch, the Torah, part of the Tanakh (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings), the Hebrew Old Testament, the first five books of the Pentateuch.

So we have the Samaritan Pentateuch. These people never left. They were never deported. They never stopped worshiping God, but their worship of God was ignorant. So anyhow, why did this land of Samaria, why did this hill last?

Well, this man was a very shrewd man. He was a brilliant general. And he studied land. It was on a hill and on three sides. It was well protected by a hill. And it was also very close to the trade routes. So he could monitor the trade. And that's how you get rich. You put a tariff on things flowing through your land. So he's a very smart man. He's a very successful builder, and he is a consummately gifted politician because he makes alliances with other people.

Notice what happens. His son arranges for Jehoshaphat's son, to marry into the family of Omri. And it's interesting that if you go beyond the Bible itself, you discover that Israel is referred to as the land of Omri. When Misha, who was the king over Moab, writes about being in bondage, he refers to it as the land of Omri.

Now as for Omri, King of Israel, he oppressed Moab for many

where we are today, which is exploding right now, I want you to look with me over to the book of Daniel for a moment.

The book of Daniel, Daniel chapter 4 and verse 17. Because it tells us something, and that is we should not be surprised that the people that the world celebrates are despised by God. And we'll look there on page 1377. And we're going to look there at verse 17.

“This decision is announced by the messengers.” The Aramaic word—you know that part of the book of Daniel is not written in Hebrew; it's written in Aramaic. And so, this is a decision of the watchers (עִירֵי, common masculine plural absolute of עִיר, עִיר).

Have you ever thought about our world? And it's watched over by supernatural beings? And at this time, in the book of Daniel, you have rival watchers.

You've got the watchers that are over Babylon, you've got the watchers that are over Iran, Persia, and they're in rival with each other.

So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come” (Daniel 10:20)

Now they're under Satan, but they're in rivalry against each other. And so notice that we're told here, this decision is announced by the watchers.

The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.
(Daniel 4:17)

Now what is the context of this? The context of this is that Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream, and unlike his dream in chapter 2, where he couldn't remember the dream, and he wanted all the wise men of Babylon to come and tell him what he had dreamed, then he would remember when they told him, and interpret the dream, and Daniel comes forward (Daniel 2:24-45).

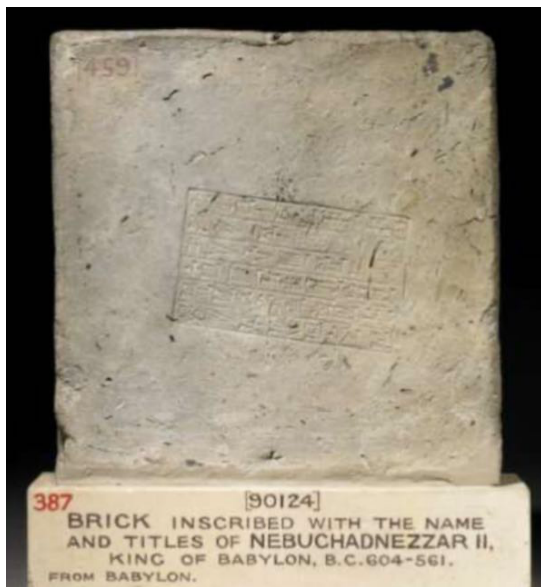
This is different. Nebuchadnezzar has had this dream, he remembers the dream, but nobody can interpret it. And I'm going to give you a clue why they can't interpret it.

They were afraid to interpret it. It's very obvious what's in view here.

What's in view here is that Nebuchadnezzar is going to be chopped down just like a tree, and he's going to go crazy. He's going to be as nutty as a Betsy bug, whatever that is, and he is going to live out there in the courtyard eating grass as if he's an ox, and his body is going to be baptized with the dew of heaven.

That's the Greek Septuagint's translation of the word (καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δρόσου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐβάφη (aorist passive indicative, 3rd singular from βάπτω). His body is going to be baptized with the dew of heaven. Now, he didn't drown. The dew doesn't drown you, but the dew will soak you. He got a good soaking till seven seasons passed.

Now, this is the deal. Here he is, he's ignored this warning from heaven, and there he is in the middle of strutting around looking at everything he had made. Do you know that archaeologists have found that Babylon had designer bricks? Think of designer bricks. They were embossed with a reference to Nebuchadnezzar himself.



And he's strutting around on his palace, and he is saying, "Ain't I something? Man, look at me." He calls attention to himself so much so that he even designs the bricks to remind people of—this man is great. But what's very clear is this, and that is in verse 17. The decision is announced by the watchers.

There are supernatural beings over Texarkana. And there are supernatural beings over the state of Texas, and the state of Arkansas, and the state of Louisiana, and the state of Oklahoma. They're called the Watchers. And God administers his kingdom through agents, archangels and on down.

And Satan's kingdom, collected from these fallen angels, also is administered that way.

So when we pray, we need to be sensitive that we need to deal with supernatural things.

Why do people in Texas think differently than they do in Arkansas? And they do. And I can tell you in the profoundest way, having lived in Louisiana since 1975, people in Louisiana think differently than everybody else. They really do.

And you cross the roads from Louisiana into Texas, you go from to far better roads. Texas has an optimism about it. Where does that come from? It's a spiritual entity that enables Texas to rise above Louisiana. And it is. It's better. But I like Louisiana. I like living in the middle of a swamp.

Now notice he says here, this decision is announced by the watchers, the holy ones declare the verdict. Now these aren't independent actors, even the evil ones. as well as the good ones." Notice as we read further, "...so that the living may know that the Most High..."

Who is the Most High? That's Almighty God, and this is how he's referred to in this Aramaic (which is very similar to Hebrew. It's like the difference in Spanish and Portuguese), in this Aramaic section of Daniel, that they may know that the Most High, who is the Most High?

The Most High is the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has no rivals. No one can check his hand. No one can stay his hand and say, what are you doing? In fact, Old Nebuchadnezzar at the end of this

vision comes to himself and he says this at the end of chapter 4, if you turn the page, and he says, In verse 36, Daniel 4:36, page 1379:

At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. (Daniel 4:36)

Now look at verse 37. So when we think about angels and demons, when we think about principalities and powers, we must never think of them as somehow or another independent of God.

Listen to what Nebuchadnezzar himself confesses:

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4:37)

I don't know all the reasons that God knocked King Nebuchadnezzar off his throne and did it in such a humiliating way.

Think of how humiliating it would be. His hair grew like feathers. His fingernails and toenails were like bird's claws. And he's wet. And he feeds on grass. All this insanity. But then God brings him back. Did God save Nebuchadnezzar? I believe that Almighty God did save Nebuchadnezzar. You don't make a confession like Daniel 4.37 without being humbled by God. But did God have other purposes besides saving this one arrogant king? I believe he did. And part of that was that he would use him as an example so that other people would come to the Lord.

So we go back there to verse 14 (in Aramaic; in English it is verse 17). He says:

The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men. (Daniel 4:17)

The Aramaic word there is Shafal. Shafal (shāphēl, שָׁפַל).

That's an interesting word. What does it mean? It means lazy, good for nothing, worthless bum: "wretched, humble, lazy" (Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner (1958), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), p. 2001)

Really? Shafal? Shefal? Shafal means a lazy, good-for-nothing, worthless bum. What? No wonder nobody wanted to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him.

And notice it's only Nebuchadnezzar who says it. The rest of them omit it. A lazy, good-for-nothing bum. Think of Joe Biden. Think of Donald Trump. Think of the Ayatollahs. Think of Benjamin Netanyahu. Think of George Washington.

If you look at it and you look at history, you discover one basic truth.

Not all, but most people who've ever wielded power in this world were worthless bums.

Think of Julius Caesar. Why don't we celebrate the Caesars? He was a perverted maniac. Think about it. He was a perverted maniac. Why did people kill him? Because he had betrayed the Republic, and he had seized power as an autocrat, and he had violated Brutus's mother. Someone said that he was a wife to every man and a husband to every woman in Rome (Gaius Scribonius Curio). That's probably exaggerated. But Julius Caesar was a wicked, wicked, wicked man.

And look at his successors. Octavian, who wins in the end, takes the name Augustus. And look at that line. All those Caesars, they're wicked, ungodly men.

Dear ones in Christ, please know this. Political leaders, the leaders we look to for our culture, whether it's Hollywood or whether it's the music industry, the great people of history are by and large worthless bums!

Why should it surprise us that we have a rematch in 2024 of 2020? Why should it surprise us? Because God puts worthless bums in power and how do they succeed? They succeed because worthless bums know how to

manipulate you and me. They really do. And we're so easily conned. We're so easily conned. So if I stepped on some political hero of yours? I hope I have.

Put no confidence in princes, nor for help on man depend, he shall die, to dust returning, and his purposes shall end. (Scottish Psalter, Psalm 146)

And so Nebuchadnezzar, like Omri, is a great man, like Alexander the Great, another great man, and a perverted, twisted, megalomaniacal maniac, All these people, these great people we celebrate in history, with some exceptions, some exceptions, are wicked, lazy, good-for-nothing people who discover how easy it is to con other people and use their money, not my own.

Now I want you to turn with me to another passage, and that's Acts chapter 17. Why does God do this? Why is what is happening in Russia and with Ukraine and China and Iran and Israel and Hezbollah and Hamas? Why is all that going on? And here's the answer. God gives us an answer in Acts chapter 17, and that's on page 1724. Why does God allow worthless bums? And I'm going to say this, Mr. Netanyahu is the Donald Trump of Israel. He's a con man, and right now he's desperate to hold on to his position so he won't go to jail. Hmm, wow. Why does God allow that to happen? Why does God ordain these things? Why does God ordain these things?

Page 1724. Paul is addressing the pagan Greek philosophers at the Areopagus, that is Mars Hill, which was the great marketplace. And in that marketplace, people would stand up and debate each other, free speech. And Paul addresses them, and he says this in verse 26, Acts 17:26.

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. (Acts 17:26)

What's that asserting? That's asserting exactly what Nebuchadnezzar was told by the watchers.

The Most High has ordained that the modern state of Israel would overthrow the British government and seize power in 1948 and would blow up the King

David Hotel, annihilating the entire British civil service with their spouses and children. He ordained that.

And by the way, I've said this before, We know the United States was the first nation to recognize Israel. And who was the second? Iran! Iran!

You have got to be kidding me! No, Iran was the second nation legally to recognize Israel, although Joe Stalin recognized it unofficially when it happened. Iran? You mean Iran recognized Israel in 1948? Yes, they did. They did. Wow! That's a story in itself.

The point I want to make is this. God arranged for Israel to return to the promised land. And God ordained the Six-Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973).

He ordained all of these things. He ordained our Civil War. He ordained that the North would defeat the South. He did.

He ordained Genghis Khan. He ordained the Golden Horde that drove Russia out of its homeland in Ukraine (1240-1480). He ordained all these things.

He ordained that the British Empire would fall before a ragtag army of volunteers in the United States. How can you believe it? It wasn't clever strategy. It was a divine hand.

You know that George Washington had bullets that were shot through his coat, and they didn't hit him?

By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability and expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, altho' death was levelling my companions on every side. (George Washington, "Letter to John A. Washington," Friday, July 18, 1755, Retrieved April 15, 2014, from <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0169>)

Do you know that similar things are attributed to other leaders in history? It's a divine hand. That's what we see in history. A divine hand. God defeated the most powerful empire in the world in the hands of volunteers from Virginia and New England and South and North Carolina. Defeated them. Cornwallis is cornered and he surrenders.

Lord Cornwallis the commander-in-chief of the armies of Great Britain is trapped, and he surrenders to George Washington (Siege of Yorktown, 1781). Wow! Who ordained that? Almighty God ordained it.

Who ordained that a great flu epidemic would come during World War I, and that flu epidemic would cause the German and Austrian coalition to lose so many people that they lost the war? Who ordained that Germany and Austria would be defeated and along with them, because they had allied with the Ottoman Empire, the Turks? Who ordained that? God did.

And who ordained that in Germany you would have this wonderful democratic free republic the Weimar Republic who ordained that they would come and who ordained that they bought a printing press from Joe Biden (I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. From Richard Nixon, Richard Nixon's the one that got us off the gold standard)? Who ordained that they began to print money like a drunken sailor throwing his money away? Who ordained that the Weimar Republic would just print money until the Deutschmark was worthless?

And what did that create? Adolf Hitler. Who ordained that Adolf Hitler would come to power? Almighty God.

Who ordained that the Tsarevich, the son of the Tsar, would have hemophilia passed down on the maternal side from his great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, who ordained that he would have hemophilia?

And as a result of that, Nicholas's wife, Alexandra, began, came under the snare of a (radio) preacher (No, they didn't have radio then) named Father Grigori Rasputin. Rasputin was evidently able to make the Tsarevich, Alexei, stop bleeding. Nobody else could stop his bleeding.

And all of that led to what? To the defeat of Russia and the collapse of Russia and Russia being seized initially by a relatively moderate group of roughly Democrat-Republican type people, the Mensheviks, only to be

overthrown by the Bolsheviks, who seized the battleship (Aurora, 1917) and forced the Mensheviks and the Duma to step down and ruled Russia until Chernobyl occurred.

And what happened with Chernobyl is that when it began to be obvious what had happened, that collapsed the old Soviet Union. Who ordained that?

Almighty God ordained it. In other words, you've got to see the hand of God in history. God's hand is in history for weal or woe. Hitlers, Stalins, George Washingtons, Joe Bidens, Donald Trumps, Ayatollahs, Hitlers, and so on.

Why does God do things like that? Why, why, why? Look at the next verse. The next verse tells us why. Verse 27:

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.
(Acts 17:27)

What's God's purpose in history? Why does he raise up an Omri who's allied with Tyre and Sidon and the Baal worshipers? Why does he ordain that? Why does he ordain a man who would marry Jezebel and rule tyrannically in Israel and bring about Baal worship? Why does he ordain that? I'm going to tell you why.

We don't tend to seek God when everything's coming up roses. When do we seek God? When the country's bankrupt. When do we seek God? When our infrastructure collapses. When do we seek God? We seek God when we're in trouble. When we're in trouble.

Oh, for the grace of God, for me and for you, to seek him in the good times as much as we seek him in the bad times.

Because I'm going to tell you, I'm going to tell you, bad times are ahead for this country. Make no mistake about it.

And if we become embroiled with Iran, we will be embroiled with China and with Russia. And we're used to thinking of a sovereign and omnipotent United States because we're the ones that got all of those Jewish scientists and Germans, and we developed a nuclear weapon.

And we're the only nation that's ever used a nuclear weapon on another nation. We used it twice when we bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And we have this stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Who has a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons? Russia.

Because they, as we, did a thing called MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction. Do you remember, some of you are old enough, do you remember hiding under your desks during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

That's really going to protect you. Our high school, Myrtle Beach High School, was 14 miles away from Myrtle Beach Air Force Base. We were a prime target. Was that going to help us?

What's God doing in history? What God's doing in history is that he wants you and your children, and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren come to know him, because in the final analysis, knowing him is all that really matters in life.

God will take away every penny you've got, all of your security. God will take away your health. He'll take away members of your family for one fundamental reason, and that is to bring you to a point of desperation where you do what in the words of verse 27:

So that you would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:27)

If you're watching on the internet, God has a purpose in your life, and I can tell you it includes bad things. It includes terrible things. It includes unbelievably horrific things. And since I know that this goes to other countries, including Russia and Ukraine, I appeal to you.

Do you know the Lord? Because God has arranged the events of history. where kingdoms rise and fall, where terrible things happen, where things are happening right now between Israel and her neighbors.

These things are happening so that you would seek God. Because you need to understand, the Jewish people need the Lord Jesus Christ no less than the Arab people. Nobody can be saved except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Pray for the salvation of the Jewish people. So many Jewish people have come to know the Lord in the 20th century. It's an amazing phenomenon. And so many Arab people have come to know the Lord in the 20th century. So many Muslim people. God is moving among the Muslims. He's sending dreams to Muslim people. And they begin to dream about Jesus, and they begin to reach out for him.

God is moving in history now, and perhaps we're in the climax of history. Who knows? It may be a thousand years from now, because a thousand years is one day with the Lord, and one day is a thousand years (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8).

But in the climax of history, in the crisis of history, God wants Jews and Arabs and Greeks and Romans and Americans and people from Hispanic backgrounds and Africans. God wants people to come to him. It's all that really matters in life. It's all that really matters if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul (Mark 8:36-38).

Oh, the tragedy of it. Seek the Lord now while he may be found.

May we pray.

Lord, we pray that you would take these words as we consider a great man by the world's standards, Omri, a strategist, a politician, a builder, a successful military man, and we weigh him in the scales and discover that he, just as Belshazzar, weighed in the scales and found wanting (Daniel 5:27).

May we, Lord, not be found wanting, but may we be found having everything we need through a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.