

CONSISTENT BIBLICAL FUTURISM
Part X
by Thomas Ice

Further evidence of a futurist retreat toward historicism within some otherwise futurist circles, can be seen by those who insist that Psalm 83 is a war that will take place before the rapture, during the current church age and not in association with the tribulation. Historicists believe that Old Testament prophetic passages can be fulfilled during the current church age. Consistent futurists believe that future Old Testament prophecy will start to be fulfilled after the rapture of the Church, except the prophecy of the rapture itself. Bill Salus champions this view in his book entitled *Israelestine*.¹

THE NEW TEACHING

Bill Salus has set forth the speculation that Psalm 83 prophesies a separate end-times war that will take place at the end of the current church age, before the rapture. Salus teaches that before the tribulation, before the Battle of Gog and Magog, which will take place before the tribulation, and even before the rapture, toward the end of the current church age, Israel will be invaded by all the nations surrounding her. Israel's military will unleash "deadly force against its aggressors to achieve a decisive victory." Salus says, "Because of this Israeli conquest over the inner circle of the core surrounding Arab populations of Palestinians, Syrians, Saudi Arabians, Egyptians, Lebanese, and Jordanians, Israel's borders are enlarged, prosperity increases, and national stature is enhanced."² Salus then says of Israel:

Israel as a nation experiences a condition of regional superiority, which enables it to dwell securely in an otherwise insecure neighborhood. The Jews still dispersed throughout the world at that time will flow back into their safe haven of Israel. With this influx of Jewish population, the Jews will exploit the resources of the conquered Arab territories and the people will be set to experience the "restoration of their fortunes." At that time Israel will become one of the wealthiest nations in the world, perhaps the wealthiest of them all.

When Israel finds itself in this prosperous condition, the aforementioned prophetic events are set forth for their final fulfillment. This book explores the lines connecting the end-times in order to locate the missing puzzle piece of Bible prophecy. The appropriate time placement of this information enables Christians to intelligently answer the questions being asked of them in these days, and in so doing bring glory to the sovereignty of God and the authority of His word.³

You may be wondering, as I do, what biblical passages the above scenario comes from? The sad fact is that this scenario is merely manufactured from the speculative mind of Bill Salus. His supposed reason for saying that Israel will fulfill Psalm 83 before the battle of Gog is because currently Israel is not at peace in the Middle East. No doubt that is true. However, on that basis he posits that there must be a war before Gog and Magog in which Israel defeats all of her surrounding enemies and is therefore in a peaceful and prosperous condition. Thus, there is no direct statement in the Bible or Psalm 83 that actually provides a basis for his thinking on this matter. Such thought is merely a speculative belief. Salus also teaches that the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel

37 is a reference to the Holocaust, which must come before the Gog event. That the dry bones of Ezekiel 37 refer to the Holocaust is also lacking in actual textual support.

Salus further says that his view on Psalm 83 is some kind of a missing piece in a prophetic puzzle. I did not know there was a missing piece in the revelation of God's prophetic plan. Salus' point is that his view of Psalm 83 is just such a solution to his problem that there must be a war that brings peace to Israel before the surprise attack upon Israel as noted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. There are a whole basket full of problems with Salus' approach to Scripture and his conclusions.

SOME PROBLEMS

First of all, if you take a canonical look at when Psalm 83 was written in relation to the prophets, one sees that Psalm 83, a psalm of Asaph, was written around 950 B.C. The first writing prophet in the Old Testament was Joel who wrote around 835 B.C. It is in the prophets that the major revelation is given concerning Israel's future events. It is from the prophets that we learn about the tribulation period, the millennium, the antichrist, the battle of Gog and Magog, the future conversion of Israel, and so many other prophetic details concerning Israel and the nations. A question I have is would God reveal a major prophecy event, like Salus says the so-called Psalm 83 war would be, first in the Psalms and no where else clearly? If we move from the clear passages that we know concerning future prophetic events, is there another example of an entire prophetic event being revealed in a Psalm without being revealed in the Prophets? If the Lord revealed a prophecy first in the Psalms, then like Psalm 2, which has statements in it that likely refers to tribulation events, it would have been clarified through a clearer and systematic statement of that event in the Prophets.

The Psalms can be classified according to various types of Psalms as follows:

The most generally agreed upon categories of the psalms are: (1) the lament or petition psalms, either individual (Ps. 3) or communal (Ps. 44); (2) thanksgiving or praise psalms, either individual (Ps. 30) or communal (Ps. 65); (3) psalms of trust in God (Ps. 4); (4) hymns that include psalms on the enthronement of Yahweh (see Gen. 2:4, note; Ps. 47, note), psalms concerning Jerusalem (Ps. 48), and royal psalms (some of which are messianic; Pss. 2, 110); and (5) didactic and wisdom psalms (Pss. 1, 37, 119).⁴

John MacArthur, like every commentary I consulted, classifies Psalm 83 as "a national lament which includes prayer and imprecations."⁵ The significance of the form of this Psalm is noted by Tate:

Ps 83 is generally accepted as a national lament, manifesting several characteristics of this form. It implores Yahweh to come to the aid of his people who are being surrounded by a host of enemies. The speaker perceives the problem as being rooted in the evil of the heathen nations around Israel and not due to sinfulness within Israel. In this regard it is like other national laments with the absence of a call to repentance (e.g., Pss 44, 74, 80, 137). The psalm focuses on a petition urging Yahweh not to remain passive toward present threats; reminding him of his interventions in the past in destroying earlier enemies of Israel (vv 10–13).⁶

This national lament Psalm is likely a general outcry by Asaph, who was the choir director of King David, on behalf of the nation of Israel. He speaks of people groups that immediately surround Israel, except for Assyria, which in the ninth century B.C. was located north of Babylon with Nineveh as its capital. Further structural composition of the Psalm is outlined as follows:

The psalm is composed of prayer, lament, and imprecations on the enemies.

The structural development is concentric:

- A. Prayer for God's Action (v. 1)
- B. Plottings of the Enemies (vv. 2–4)
- C. Greatness of the Opposition (vv. 5–8)
- C'. Great Acts of God in Israel's History (vv. 9–12)
- B'. Shaming of the Enemies (vv. 13–16)
- A'. Prayer for God's Action (vv. 17–18)⁷

Since Asaph wrote the Psalm around 950 B.C. the only Assyria that existed at that time was the one north of Babylon. This appears to be a problem for Salas' contention that it refers to the modern state of Syria with Damascus as its capitol.⁸ Modern Syria cannot be ancient Assyria. It is true that modern Syria developed out of ancient Assyria, but they are not the same. In Psalm 83, the text says "Assyria," not Syria. Yet, Assyria has been gone from history since Nineveh, it's capital was destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Nor was Syria in existence when Asaph wrote Psalm 83.

The same would go for Philistia, which Salas takes as one of the strands that make up the modern Palestinians. The first problem with this view is that "Early Palestine was dominated by white Caucasians from the eastern Mediterranean area."⁹ By the time of the intertestamental period, the Philistines disappear from history. Why is this important? This is important since it is legitimate to trace a modern people group from their ancient ancestors mentioned in the Bible if that people group remains the same over the years. The fact that the Philistines have totally vanished from history, while the Palestinians, who take the name from the ancient Philistines are ethnically unrelated to them. Since there is not ethnic relationship, this disqualifies one from identifying them as the same people group today. Modern Palestinians are generally made up of Arabs from all of the surrounding counties that have immigrated to Israel over the years. Salas argues that modern Palestinians descend from the Edomites,¹⁰ which may be the case, but what modern people group are represented by the Philistines? Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ Bill Salus, *Israelstine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East* (Crane, MO: Highway, 2008).

² Salus, *Israelstine*, p. 6.

³ Salus, *Israelstine*, p. 6.

⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), p. 830.

⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ps 83:1–18.

⁶ Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 51-100, Vol. 20* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 2002), p. 345.

⁷ Willem A. VanGemern, in Frank E. Gaebelain, editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), p. 537.

⁸ For Salus' view on Syria see *Israelstine*, pp. 265–66.

⁹ Edward E. Hindson, *The Philistines and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 15.

¹⁰ Salus, *Israelstine*, pp. 687–108