

CONSISTENT BIBLICAL FUTURISM
Part XI
by Thomas Ice

In my previous installment I began a critical review of Bill Salus' book entitled *Israelestine*.¹ My contention is that Salus, who would consider himself a futurist, has put forth a historicist interpretative approach of Psalm 83, along with other exegetical errors. Salus contends that Psalm 83 teaches an Israeli war with her surrounding neighbors before the rapture takes place that will set the stage for post-rapture events like the Gog & Magog war and the tribulation. I believe that such a view is simply a product of Salus' fertile imagination and has no basis in the biblical text (1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:3–5).

A NATIONAL LAMENT PSALM

Psalm 83 has the characteristics of a national lament Psalm as described in my previous essay. Psalm 83 is surrounded by other national lament Psalms that include: 79, 80, 82, and 85. These types of Psalms generally have a complaint the Psalmist is bringing to the Lord, usually relating to sin by the people of Israel or from enemies without. In Psalm 79, Asaph, like in Psalm 83, complains about the evil deeds the nations have committed against Israel. The complaint is enumerated in verses 1–7. The second half of the Psalm (verses 8–13) is given over to an appeal for the Lord to avenge Israel's enemies, as in Psalm 83. If Psalm 83 can be made into a separate war, then why not Psalm 79? This Psalm has the same qualities that Psalm 83 contains, yet, as far as I know, no one has stepped forward and declared it to be a separate war. Many see this Psalm as related to national Israel's conversion during the tribulation. This Psalm fits into the clear end-time framework taught in the Old Testament, and so should Psalm 83, which will be fulfilled in conjunction with the Campaign of Armageddon when God judges these nations (see Isa. 13–23; Jer. 46–51; Ezek. 25–32; Amos 1:3–2:16).

A look at Psalm 80 demonstrates a similar structure as well. Asaph calls on the Lord to restore the wayward nation of Israel to Him. He says, "Revive us, and we will call upon Thy name" (v. 18b). This Psalm is related to the call of Israel in the tribulation that will lead to the conversion of the nation of Israel.

Psalm 82 is also a national lament divided into two major sections. The lament or complaint in verses 1–4 and the resolution in verses 5–8. Likewise, Psalm 85 is a national lament, calling for restoration of the nation of Israel based upon God's grace. "Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).

PSALM 83

As noted previously, "The psalm is composed of prayer, lament, and imprecations on the enemies."² All of these elements, prayer, lament, and imprecations, are the wishes of the psalmist Asaph and are not technically a prophecy like we have in the prophets where the prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord," which means that they are speaking verbatim the words of God spoken to them by the Lord. I do not disagree that the requests of the psalmist will be fulfilled, but it is hard to know when or how from the actual Psalm. (I will demonstrate later from actual prophecies about this matter how and when these events will take place.)

There are many similarities between Psalm 79 and 83. (I recommend that the reader stop reading this article and read both Psalm 79 and 83 before they read further in this

article in order to have both Psalms freshly implanted in their mind.) In Psalm 79 Asaph complains “that Jerusalem had been devastated, the saints slaughtered, and their enemies encouraged to scoff, the psalmist pleaded with the Lord not to remember their sins but to deliver them for His name sake.”³ The breakdown of the Psalm is 1) lament against the nations (79:1-4), 2) prayer for deliverance (79:5-12), 3) promise of praise (79:13). Both Psalms are similar in speaking of the wrong done to Israel by the nations and their desire for judgment so that Israel can praise the Lord’s name. Why not make Psalm 79 a separate war? Neither Psalm has any indication when the Lord will spring into action on behalf of his people Israel.

FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC

Psalm 83 is a general lament by Asaph to God about specific nations or people groups who are plotting against Israel. Asaph names the following guilty parties as follows: Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria (83:6-8). These specific enemies are said to do the following against Israel or Judah: to “make an uproar,” “those who hate,” “have exalted themselves” (83:2); “make shrewd plans,” “conspire together,” (83:3); “let us wipe them out,” “that the name of Israel be remembered no more;” (83:4) “conspired together with one mind,” and “they do make a covenant” (83:5). Psalm 79 simply calls these enemies of Israel by the term “nations” (79:1, 6, 10).

Salus is right to find and follow the other Old Testament passages, especially those found in the prophets, for the purpose of adding further context to Psalm 83. However, none of the cross-references support the conclusions of Salus. Instead, they cast the destruction of the nations mentioned in Psalm 83 into a different framework than the one Salus projects. The point is that no matter how many times one reads Psalm 83, in English or Hebrew, the text does not say anything about when this proposed judgment could take place. Psalm 83 does not say for sure that such a judgment will actually take place, nor does it mention a battle or campaign against Israel’s enemies, instead, the Psalm records Asaph’s lament and request of the Lord, but no answer is recorded in the Psalm.

Salus tries to argue that Ezekiel 37:10, which says, “So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army,” refers to Israel’s Psalm 83 military.⁴ One scholar says of this Hebrew noun *chayil* the following: “Despite the frequent occurrence of *chayil* in the sense of ‘army,’ its basic meaning must be given as ‘strength, power.’”⁵ Eising goes on to break down the 240 uses of *chayil* into various uses that require “strength” or “power.” He then says, “This spirit of God also dominates the vision of Ezekiel (Ezk. 37). God puts ‘spirit’ or ‘breath’ into the dead bones by means of the prophetic word (vv. 6, 9), thus creating Israel afresh as an ‘exceedingly great host’ (v. 10.” So the idea in Ezekiel 37:10 is that of a host of people, the revived nation of Israel in the last days, which consists of men, women, boys and girls. This is not a military use that can be applied, as Salus does, to the modern Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Even if this passage did have a military nuance, there is nothing in the passage that supports Salus’ “deduction” that it means the current state of Israel will have a great military. In essence he just grabs this phrase, ignores the context, and then packs it full of his false thoughts that he uses throughout the rest of his book as an accurate biblical statement, which it is not. Salus’ entire case for a Psalm 83 war is constructed on similar kinds of slight-of-hand approaches.

Another key factor of Psalm 83 that is blatantly overlooked by Salus is the fact that Asaph's appeal at the end of his lament is a request for God to defeat the enemies of Israel, while Salus teaches that the modern Israeli army, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), defeat their enemies.

O my God, make them like the whirling dust; like chaff before the wind. Like fire that burns the forest, and like a flame that sets the mountains on fire, so pursue them with Thy tempest, and terrify them with Thy storm. Fill their faces with dishonor, that they may seek Thy name, O LORD. Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever; and let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the LORD, art the Most High over all the earth. (Psa. 83:13–18)

Most of the judgment requests in the Psalm by Asaph can only be accomplished by the Lord Himself without human agency. Asaph asks for the complete destruction of his enemies. This would mean that the IDF would have to completely destroy all of these nations and wipe them off the face of the earth. As a Godly Jew, Asaph is looking to the Lord for deliverance from his enemies, not to any human agency. Only God Himself is capable of this kind of total destruction and only the Lord is said in Scripture to be the One who accomplishes such a feat.

Daniel 2:24–35 speaks of the end of the rule of Gentile nations that will occur in conjunction with the end times. Nebuchadnezzar sees the prophetic vision of the stone cut without hands, that is a symbol for the Messianic Kingdom of God, that will crush the feet of iron and clay. Verse 35 says, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Thus, Asaph's request in verse 13 that their enemies be made like "chaff before the wind" is a petition for these nations to cease to exist, something only God can effect. In my next installment of this series, I will look at the prophetic passages that do place God's judgment of the nations mentioned in Psalm 83 into an end-times context. This matter is not a puzzle to be solved, as Salus contends.⁶ Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

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

² Willem A. VanGemern, in Frank E. Gaebelien, editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), p. 537.

³ Allen P. Ross, "Psalms" in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), p. 852.

⁴ Salus, *Israelstine*, pp. 61–62.

⁵ G. Johannes Botterweck, & Helmer Ringgren, editors, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 349.

⁶ Salus, *Israelstine*, p. 2.