

BLESSING ISRAEL WITH JESUS, PART 3

The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. (Isaiah 19:23-24, NIV)

ONE OF THE BEAUTIES OF GOLF AS A GAME is that, in medal play, it is contested with one player alongside another. And so, at the same time that one player is trying to hit his very best shots in order to win a tournament, he can appreciate the excellence of the other.

In his book, *InsideOut Coaching*, Joe Ehrmann explains that the Latin roots of the word *compete* are these: *com*, meaning “together,” and *petere*, meaning “to strive.” Competitors are not meant to strive against each other, but rather to challenge and inspire one another to give their strongest effort. Golf sets up for this quite uniquely. When done well, Ehrmann concludes, the “cooperative sense of competition is a value-driven process that leads to respect for others, personal and team and integrity, and justice and fairness.”

Sometimes, however, the world gets in the way. In sports, we exalt winners over losers, even when both have competed marvelously. But more terribly, in our quests for power, we take competition to its bitterest ends, when people despise people and nations raise against nations. Here there is little chance for recognizing another’s strengths, for reconciliation without forced surrender.

Such is the case in the Middle East today, we are told. In the Holy Land and the nations that surround it, terrorists and politicians build on people’s fears.

What can be done to bring sworn enemies together? The answer lies in Jesus.

At Israel College of the Bible (please don’t miss today’s accompanying video!) and in burgeoning congregations of believers, men and women who have been taught to hate and fear one another are finding common ground in the Savior from Nazareth. This is certainly the work of a God who teaches us to love; it may also be the beginning of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, wherein he saw the citizens of Egypt and Assyria (Arabs) united in God’s blessing with Jewish neighbors who have found this same man, Jesus, to be their Messiah.

Though it seems as little hope is available to the people of these distressed lands, the one hope that reigns is the one hope for us all. Pray that Jesus rises in the Middle East, for Jew and Arab alike!

Opening questions Would you be inclined to travel to Israel in these times? Why or why not? • Where have you seen God’s love bring together two people who seemed bitter enemies?

READING Galatians 3:26-29, Deut.10:18-19, Matt. 5:43-48; Isaiah 19:19-25

Unity in Christ

According to Galatians 3, what brings people of different backgrounds together? What nationalities and races do you think Paul would have mentioned today?

Love for the outsider and the enemy

What similarities do you find in the Old Testament directions of Deuteronomy 10 and Jesus’ New Testament command of Matthew 5? How do you think this kind of “stranger love” might be worked out in practical ways?

An amazing prophecy

What do you make of the prophecy of Isaiah 19? Do you see signs of this prophecy being fulfilled? Do you think it is even possible? How?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/CIt8zAFLTYE>