

Considering Transitions at the Supreme Court and in Syria

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Host: David Wheaton:

Considering transitions at the Supreme Court and in Syria. That is the topic we'll discuss today on the Christian Worldview Radio program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a listener-supported radio program. Our website is TheChristianWorldview.org and the rest of our contact information will be given throughout today's program. As always, thank you for your notes of encouragement, financial support, and lifting us up in prayer.

Theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein, is quoted as saying, "The earth is the insane asylum of the universe." Well, I think a more biblical assertion would be, "The Earth is the sin asylum of the universe." For that is the common denominator between two seemingly unrelated issues that we will discuss today on the Christian Worldview. The first, is a recent case before the United States Supreme Court as to whether the state of Tennessee is within its constitutional rights to ban what is euphemistically referred to as, "gender-affirming care for children." That, "healthcare," includes administering powerful drugs and hormones to minors that alter sexual development and irreversible surgeries to remove reproductive body parts. Abraham Hamilton, General Counsel and Public Policy Analyst for American Family Association and the host of the Hamilton Corner Radio program, will join us to discuss that issue.

Now, while we in America debate the illogical and impossibility of changing one's sex, people in Syria right now, are concerned about the very basics of life, after an Islamist militant group just ousted long-time dictator, Bashar al-Assad. What does this mean for the broader Middle East and specifically, for neighboring Israel? Soeren Kern, Geopolitical analyst and managing editor of the Christian Worldview Journal will join us in the second half of the program, but first, let's hear from Abraham Hamilton of American Family Association, to discuss the transgender case before the US Supreme Court.

Abraham, thank you for coming on the program today. Give us an overview of this case that the Supreme Court is hearing on this Tennessee transgender law. And what exactly is this gender-affirming care that the state of Tennessee has banned for minors?

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

Thank you again for having me on the program. I want you and your listeners to know that we, AFA, filed an amicus brief in this case before the Supreme Court, because this issue is so important. What the state of Tennessee did, just to be very simple and direct about it, is that it banned its minor citizens, so I'm going to say it better, it banned the administration of what you described as, or referred to as gender-affirming care to its minor citizens. What that means, is that it prohibits gender mutilation surgeries, it prohibits the administration of chemical castration medications or cross-sex hormone therapies from being administered to minors. And it's something that's really not a radical position, nations around the world who have

experimented in these things before our nation really experimented in it, have now come to the conclusion recognizing, because of catastrophic occurrences and scientific data to support them, that they have prohibited these things from being administered to children as well.

And we're talking about children. Well, the law was a state law, a measure passed in the state of Tennessee, but our United States Department of Justice wanted to weigh in on the case. And so they manufactured a 14th amendment equal protection argument to give them standing to challenge Tennessee's law. And I want to be clear about this, the case before the Supreme Court will have direct implication on Tennessee's law, but in our brief, we had legislators from 20 plus states to sign on to our brief. Because there are about 23 states in addition to Tennessee, that has passed the exact same legislation to protect its minor citizens from what we describe in our brief as, physician assisted or medically assisted self-harm. And that is what we are opposing.

Simply put, we as a society recognize that children make a lot of bad decisions in a lot of different ways. And we don't want children making a decision that they can adjust things, mutilate their bodies or even permanently eliminate their reproductive capacity based on a phase that is adolescent. The data shows that most children who are, what is described as dysphoric in their adolescence, if you just leave them alone, no social transitioning, no medication, no cross-sex hormones, no double mastectomies or transgender surgeries, that the overwhelming majority of children, I'm talking about upwards of 80, approaching 90%, end up functioning very well, reconciling their identity with their biology as God has given it to them. And we think it's prudent for states to be able to prohibit minors from making these life-altering permanent decisions.

Host: David Wheaton:

Abraham, I'd like to play you a sound bite of a CNN interview with Chase Strangio, who is a woman dressed as a man in a suit, who has facial hair, who is an ACLU lawyer who is arguing before the Supreme Court against this Tennessee law.

Audio Sound Bite: CNN Interviewer:

How do you plan to argue before the US Supreme Court in a case that could have wide-ranging implications beyond the state of Tennessee?

Audio Sound Bite:Chase Strangio:

So before the court tomorrow, the question is really a simple one as I see it. It's really, this is a law that bans medical treatment only when it is prescribed inconsistent with an individual's sex. Our argument is that that treats people differently because of their sex and therefore the court has to treat it like all other forms of sex discrimination and that's why it's unconstitutional.

These are doctors who are wanting to treat their patients in the best way that they know how, based on the best available evidence to us. And these are young people who may have known since they were two years old, exactly who they are, who suffered for six, seven years before they had any relief. And what's happening here, it's not the kids who are consenting to this treatment, it's the parents who are consenting to the treatment. And as a parent I would say, when our children are suffering, we are suffering. And these are

parents who love their children, who are listening to the advice of their doctors, of the mainstream medical community and doing what's right for their kids and the state of Tennessee has displaced their judgment.

Host: David Wheaton:

How would you respond to the line of argumentation that they're presenting, that this Tennessee law is unconstitutional and the fact that children that young can actually make wise decisions?

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

And I don't mean this as a pejorative or an insult, I literally mean this in the technical sense. In addition to the delusion that she has succumbed to, as demonstrated by her attempt to present herself as if she is a man, she compounds that personal delusion by exporting it to children as young as two. Now, I'm a father, I have six children, I have a 2-year-old son. My 2-year-old son has no capacity to conclude that he was born in the wrong body. So just that statement in and of itself is not only absurd, it borders on insanity, honestly, and again, I don't mean this as a pejorative. And then the continuation, or should I say the extension of the delusion is now imposed upon her perception of our legal framework. Because she articulates that her belief is that Tennessee's law is unconstitutional because it denies medical care to children based on sex.

That is also an additional delusion, because trans-genderism is not synonymous with sex, God made us male and female. This fact is a biological, scientific fact that is not only true at the external superficial level, this is why I viscerally object to the notion of the concept of sex assigned at birth. Sex is not assigned at birth, and we know this just casually in society, because people always have all kind of reveal parties before children are ever born. Well, how do we know what's going on inside mommy's tummy before the child is ever born, so much so that we can celebrate it. It is because sex is determined at the DNA level. We can exhumed bodies and find skeletal remains and conclude that this is a man or that this is a woman because of the DNA information available at the cellular level.

So that being said, Tennessee's law prohibits the application of these drugs to children if they're being used for the sole purpose of aiding the child to identify themselves as something other than what their biology screams and reveals that they are. That's what it does. It doesn't ban the medication, it doesn't ban the treatment for these hormones and things that can be used in a constructive manner. One of the statements that was made by the Tennessee Solicitor General in the oral arguments, it said simply, these drugs are catastrophic for children when you attempt to apply them cosmetically. And this is what the crux of the argument is. She's asking for the elevated scrutiny based on the identification of trans-genderism as a protected class. And we're simply saying that it's wrong, it's false, and that children should be protected from this insanity, the same way we protect children from all kinds of insanity.

And to the point about her parents, do you think we should succumb to a parent's judgment if they decide, "You know what? I think it's in the best interest of my child to give them heroin?" No, neither should we allow a parent to decide that it's in the best interest of their child to potentially deprive them of reproductive capacity for the rest of their lives. That is what the argument comes down to.

Host: David Wheaton:

Yes, it's such a good point you're making. Abraham Hamilton with us, the General Counsel and Public Policy Analyst for American Family Association. Recommend you listen to his radio program, you can also get it via podcast, The Hamilton Corner on AFR Talk. You can also find that in the main podcast platforms.

You mentioned Justice Samuel Alito, and he had a correspondence with the US Solicitor General, Elizabeth, I think it's pronounced, Prelogar, and he was bringing up all these reasons, evidential-based reasons of different countries and so forth. Let me just play a little bit of that soundbite and then follow up with you.

Audio Sound Bite: Justice Samuel Alito:

In your petition, you made a sweeping statement which I will quote, "Overwhelming evidence establishes that the appropriate gender-affirming treatment with puberty blockers and hormones directly and substantially improves the physical psychological wellbeing of transgender adolescents with gender dysphoria." That was in November 2023. Now, even before then, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare wrote the following. They currently assess, "That the risks of puberty blockers and gender-affirming treatment are likely to outweigh the expected benefits of these treatments." Which is directly contrary to the sweeping statement in your petition. After the filing of your petition, of course, we saw the release of the CAS report in the United Kingdom, which found a complete lack of high-quality evidence showing that the benefits of the treatments in question here, outweigh the risks.

Host: David Wheaton:

Samuel Alito was bringing up evidence based on studies, I think in Sweden, I think somewhere in the United Kingdom, about how the risks don't outweigh any of the reward for using these gender treatments, hormones, therapies and so forth and so on. The other side says, "Oh, there's loads of evidence that this is what transgender kids actually need." So the argumentation, really on both sides, is based on either personal experience that had transgender people on both sides of the issue saying, "Oh, these treatments really hurt me," or others said, "Oh, these really helped me, these saved my life." Or you have these studies that we just heard, referenced by both sides, or you get an individual doctor's perspective for or against.

Now, you're dealing in the swimming pool of this kind of reasoning rather than what you've already established in this interview today, by saying the real truthful basis is that God us, made them male and female. If personal experience and studies, that we well-know are very malleable, you can make a study kind of say whatever you want it to say. Why shouldn't biblical arguments, like this is what scripture says, because that's really the bottom line here, why isn't that used in a situation like this?

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

It's a great question and it's not a hard one for me to answer. The main reason why others don't use it, is because simply put, they don't submit themselves to the authority of scripture. In our brief that we filed at the Supreme Court, we cited scripture repeatedly throughout the brief, which interestingly, I call them regressives, because they're not progressive, they're not advancing anything. Regressive seized on as being objectionable, they couldn't believe it. "Oh my goodness, why are they citing Bible verses?" The reason why we're citing Bible verses, is because God as man's creator and man's designer is man's definer and he is authoritative on this issue. And so what you're highlighting is our societal drift.

There was a time in American history where you could find supreme court briefs and justices themselves that would argue according to scripture, repeatedly. In fact, you can find places in American history where you had criminal cases, where judges had sentenced criminals to life imprisonment or even a death penalty, and then the judge would descend from the bench and share the gospel with the person. The term, penitentiary, is connected to the Christian biblical worldview term, repentance. That just shows how far we've drifted as a society, to where we have concluded that the word of God and God himself is irrelevant to our considerations of matters of law. Which I would argue, and this is something you're going to see from us continually going forward, we're going to continually put God's Holy word before the court when we argue things before the court.

Because when we have notions like Thomas Jefferson's reference in our declaration to unalienable rights, we are concluding that mankind is in doubt with the rights because we are made in the image of God. And as a result, God is the giver of those rights, mankind does not have the authority to alienate, even in the form of government. Government's function, at best, is to protect and to affirm those rights to the individual that God has afforded us. And so the unwillingness to address or inconclude, and include God's word on this deliberation simply reveals the callousness of man's fallen and deceptive heart. But it doesn't invalidate the truth of God's sovereignty and his authority over this issue.

This comes down to what God has articulated in the beginning, in contrary to the studies that were cited in the oral arguments. We've now seen, since the oral argument, even the UK has come out and banned these drugs, these medications and these surgeries and procedures for children, because of what you just said. That the risk to the children far outweigh any perception of benefit, any perception, and that goes along with other nations, Norway, Sweden, France, Denmark. These nations that have experimented with this insanity and they've seen the utter chaos it's caused within their society, and now, we have the opportunity to choose the wise and prudent course or to choose foolishness.

Host: David Wheaton:

Yes, I just think of taking the word of God off the table, you are taking away the most powerful weapon in the whole argumentation process. And now you're just comparing studies, who articulates the best study, is the most persuasive, is the one that could win. That's why these things can often go the wrong way. Abraham Hamilton is our guest today, here on the Christian Worldview. We're talking about, is banning children's transgender surgery and other things like that, treatments, unconstitutional as is being considered before the Supreme Court. By the way, this won't be decided, I think and probably until well into 2025. So the arguments have been heard and the Supreme Court will come out with a decision next year.

Just one more soundbite for you Abraham. This is by Dr. Janette Nesheiwat, who is the potential, has been nominated by President-elect, Donald Trump, to be the incoming Surgeon General. And here is Dr. Nesheiwat talking about trans-genderism, and it appears that she has really accepted the terms and the lingo, if you will, of the transgender movement.

Audio Sound Bite: Dr. Janette Nesheiwat:

When you have a child who's suffering from gender dysphoria, this is a disconnect, a mismatch between how they feel and what a doctor assigned them as a gender at birth. It's a very serious and sensitive issue that has to be taken very seriously, because specifically, there's a very high suicidal rate among transgender adolescents. They are almost eight times more likely to commit suicide than their cisgender peers. So when we see the AAFP only wanting to push drugs and hormones and other types of surgical interventions rather than taking a conservative approach, such as psychotherapy, they're making a mistake. It's unethical, it's immoral.

Host: David Wheaton:

Everything she said in that, is about using the words they use, "The euphemism of gender-affirming care, "they're going to commit suicide if they don't get this kind of, "Healthcare," and so forth. And this is Trump's nomination for the Surgeon General position for his administration. Now, as you were mentioning in your last answer, Abraham, the Biblical moral foundation has been just dismantled brick by brick, issue by issue over the years. Your cohabitation before marriage, that was a huge taboo at one point in our history. Now, that's just assumed people are going to live together before marriage. No-fault divorce or the issue of abortion or homosexuality, that's something that is accepted, tolerated and promoted. Now, the definition of marriage has been redone. And now the issue of trans-genderism is in the forefront, boys and girls sports, gender transition procedures as we've been discussing today. If this one drops, the next one will be adult-child sexual relationships and so forth. This is following the downward slide of Romans chapter one. Do you anticipate, Abraham, that there's going to be a full acceptance of the transgender issues in our society? Or is this a step too far in some way, do you think our society won't get here?

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

The scripture tells us very plainly, man invent ways to do evil and I would say, unless the Lord intervenes, man will continue his downward trajectory. It's noteworthy, the case you just laid out, from no-fault divorce and cohabitation, all the way down to same-sex marriage, people should be reminded that the Obergefell decision that hoisted same-sex marriage upon the United States of America, which was decided June 26th, 2015. It hasn't even been 10 years and now the Supreme Court is considering whether or not children can be sterilized, chemically castrated, or surgically mutilated in the name of wicked ideology. And then, as you rightly point out, this is President Trump's nominee for potential Surgeon General and she's affirming the notion of sex assigned at birth, which is an intellectually and a logical fallacy. There's no such thing as sex assigned at birth, I know what they're attempting to say, but it's an unfounded notion.

So my simple response is, unless the Lord, by his grace and mercy, saves us from ourselves, and I do believe that we did get a mercy extension with the most recent election, and I do believe there are lots of people who maybe were dulled on other issues, when they recognized, "Wait a minute, do we want a person in the Oval Office who wants to use taxpayer dollars to pay for sex change surgeries for prisoners?" That's a bridge too far. Some of these things are waking people up, but my question is for how long? That's my question. Because contrary to popular understanding, in practice, the law is a trainer of the conscience. There are lots of people who pursue a course of action because, well, it must not be wrong because it's legal.

That simply put, some people often forget that prior to the Roe v. Wade decision, 1973, abortion was overwhelmingly unpopular in America. You wouldn't find people that would be willing to have a conversation with you in public about it, let alone mount a political party platform and say, let's shout it from the stage. But what happens over time, that change in law impacted conduct and now we have 50 years of it, that we had to overturn with the Dobbs opinion. So my simple and direct response to that, unless the Lord intervenes by his grace and mercy, man will continue along this downward trajectory. We might have a short time period where we're like, "Whoa, do we really want to do this?" But unless there is a turning, it's not enough to identify this is too far, there has to be a turning and that ultimately comes down to the human heart. It ultimately comes down to the human heart and I believe we can have a turning, but whether or not we will, that remains to be seen.

Host: David Wheaton:

Yes, and that's why we need to take this time while we have it, to be really good, strong ambassadors for Christ. The pulpit of the churches need to be strong preaching the word of God. It has to be the truth of the word of God, just put on people's consciences to understand what's right and what's wrong.

Abraham, final question for you today. Some companies seem to be moving away from woke policies like DEI, diversity, equity and inclusion, open support for the LGBTQ movement. Is wokeness really dying or is it just not trending right now for other reasons?

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

I'm not as willing as others, to say, yeah, that there's a moratorium on wokeness, because I often tell people, we're commonly describing as wokeness is the latest iteration of the same war. When you get right down to it, it's a contention between God's word and man's word. I had a conversation with a Christian leader, he was upset about the sexual indoctrination taking place in schools and I simply said to them, "I understand what you're saying, but do you realize this is just the latest battlefield of the same war?"

For well over a hundred to 150 years, we've adopted a system of instruction and a systematic method of instruction that intentionally denies the knowledge of God and we've called that system of instruction education. We funded it to the trillions of dollars and we have an entire ecosystem that supports it. Well, the questions about sexuality are inevitable to occur if we as a society reject the knowledge of God. So if we really want to recognize what's going on, we can't just trim the fruit, we got to get to the root. And so what's happening with the corporations, they're recognizing, just like the election, like I said, that it's bad for business to maintain this.

Everybody saw what happened with Bud Light, Target is being sued right now and so a lot of these corporations, they don't want to estrange their customer base. But it's not that they're making these core principled ethical considerations and now deciding that, "Come with me, we're going to stand in these positions." They're recognizing, "Well, we probably can sell more of our product if we don't take these controversial stances in public life." I think that's what we're seeing happening with these corporations.

Host: David Wheaton:

So well said Abraham, and thank you for coming on the Christian Worldview radio program today. We're appreciative of all you're doing at the American Family Association with your radio program as well. All of God's best and grace to you and Merry Christmas to your family.

Guest: Abraham Hamilton:

Thank you so much, David. Merry Christmas.

Host: David Wheaton:

Well, we so appreciate Abraham and his sharp, insightful commentary on the issues of our day. We have links to Abraham and his radio program at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. So be sure to get connected with his work.

All right, let's transition, so to speak, from the Supreme Court case, across the world to the Middle East, in Syria, which has undergone a regime transition. Soeren Kern, geopolitical analyst and managing editor of the Christian Worldview Journal, joins us now from Europe.

Soeren, we just had you on the program recently, but new events in the Middle East have come up and we wanted to have you back on to explain some of the things taking place in Syria. Now, Syria is a large country in the Middle East, it's about two-thirds the size of Iraq and Damascus, which is one of the ancient cities of the world, mentioned frequently in Scripture, is its capital. Syria borders Turkey to the north, the Mediterranean Sea in Lebanon, on its west side, Iraq, the nation of Iraq, is to the east of Syria and then Israel is to the southwest and Jordan, the country of Jordan, directly to the south. So that hopefully helps geographically with where this significant country is.

Now, there's been a family dynasty empowered there for, I think, just over 50 years, the Assad family. I just looked up some general information on the background there with the Assad dynasty. Just from an online source that said Bashar al-Assad, who was born in 1965, he succeeded his father, Hafez al-Assad, as president of Syria in 2000 and served until just recently, when his government was overthrown after 13 years of civil war. The son, Bashar al-Assad, received his early education in Damascus and then studied medicine at the University of Damascus, graduating as an ophthalmologist in 1988. He then served in the army at a Damascus military hospital and then he moved to London to continue his studies.

And he wasn't intended to be the next president, I guess you could say, of Syria. His older brother was supposed to be, but his older brother died in a car accident, so he was brought back to Damascus and groomed to be the next leader. First off, Soeren, give us some context on what has taken place in Syria with Bashar al-Assad and the Assad dynasty now being overthrown and out of power and why this is important for people to understand.

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

I think that the fall of Bashar al-Assad really significantly alters the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, it completely shifts the balance of power in the region. Turkey is clearly the very big winner in this latest episode of Middle Eastern history and Iran and Russia are the very big losers. It's really too early to tell how Israel will fare from the changes in Syria. But the big unanswered question really is, right now, is will Syria sink into chaos? Will it splinter into smaller factions and become ungovernable like parts of Iraq, after the fall of Saddam Hussein? Will it have an Islamist government that provides stability? Is it going to impose Sharia law? Syria has many minority groups and political factions and militias, so it's really too early at this point, to make any definitive predictions about which direction Syria is going to go.

Host: David Wheaton:

In preparation for our conversation today, Soeren, I watched a PBS frontline special on the man who has led this offensive to overtake Syria and his name is Abu Muhammad al-Jolani. He is in charge or heads up an organization called the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, or as an acronym HTS. Again, from an online source, HTS is described as launching an offensive that rapidly advanced east and southward from where they're based in the western part of Syria. Within days, this rebel group, HTS, had taken control of Aleppo, once Syria's largest city and commercial center, and soon afterward took Hama. In just 10 days time, HTS and other rebel forces had isolated and entered Damascus, as reports surfaced that Assad had fled. Damascus was declared "liberated" just several days ago, on December 8th. What has the US policy in Syria been, let's say, over the last 20 years that may have had an impact on this outcome, with Syria now being taken over by Islamists?

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

I think a little bit of a historical context is important here. Because Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire and when that collapsed after the end of World War I, Syria sort of became a protectorate of France. Britain and France divided up the Middle East, you can see that the borders of Jordan and Syria and Iraq are lines in the sand. And essentially, the European powers divided up what was left to the Ottoman Empire to make sure that a large Islamic caliphate could no longer pose a threat to Europe. So after a long period of time, Syria finally became independent in 1945. But it has so many factions and so many different minority groups that it became very difficult to govern. And it was rocked by political instability, coup after coup after coup, really until 1970, when Bashar's Father, Hafez, took over. And they really ruled Syria with an iron fist, because that's the only way, in many of these Middle Eastern countries, that you can have order.

I think that's really a big question when you're talking about the Middle East is, what is really worse? A secular dictatorship which rules with brutality to keep order, like Saddam Hussein or the Assad dynasty? Or is an Islamist, Jihadist group preferable? It's really hard to say, it's basically they're both two sides of an evil coin. And so the Syrian Civil War really began as an opposition to the repression, the political repression of the Assad government. And it really took another turn, for the worst, in 2013 when the Assad government started gassing opposition groups and opposition controlled forces. So that's really where, as part of the Arab Spring and as part of the frustration with the Assad government, took over.

I think at the time, the United States was very concerned that Russia and Iran were going to gain footholds in Syria as part of this chaos. That's eventually what happened. You remember probably, that during the Obama administration, President Obama put a red line, that if Bashar al-Assad uses chemical weapons on his enemies

or on his opponents, that the United States would intervene. In the end, the United States walked back on that threat and did not intervene and hundreds of thousands of people died in the interim period.

So I think what's happened now, is that with the Quagmire that Russia finds itself in Ukraine, you have to understand that Russia had lost almost 700,000 troops, they're 300,000 dead and more than 550,000 wounded. The Russian economy is in a free fall, the Russian currency, the Ruble, is collapsing. And obviously, Russia is no longer or was no longer in a position to support Assad. The other pillar of Assad's support was Iran and Iran has suffered greatly since October 7th, when Israel systematically destroyed Iran's proxies, in Hamas and Hezbollah and Lebanon. And essentially pushed Iran out of Lebanon and now, effectively out of Syria. So these rebel groups that had basically been in northern Syria, just along the border with Turkey, took advantage of the weakened condition or weakened state of the Assad government and they moved very quickly and were able to take this 50 year dynasty and remove it within less than two weeks.

Host: David Wheaton:

Yes, that was remarkable how quickly the Assad government, which had been in power for nearly 50 years or so, was quickly removed and they just fled. And it's being reported that Assad is now in Russia.

Soeren, On Twitter, or X, there was a post made saying, during the last 48 hours, Israel attacked 1,400 targets in Syria. Now, this was after the takeover by this militant Islamist group, HTS, led by al-Jolani. After that took place, just within days, Israel went up and attacked 1,400 targets in Syria, destroying all chemical weapons facilities. Again, this is according to this person who's posting it, can't verify exactly the extent of it, but just get the spirit of this. All chemical weapons facilities, all missiles, all air force, all naval ships and submarines, all anti-aircraft systems.

The question is, Soeren, who is this HTS group and this man, al-Jolani and why is Israel so concerned about them that they just extensively bombed all of Syria's military capabilities? They weren't seemingly too concerned when Assad was in power, but now that the Islamists have taken over, they apparently were very concerned they'd be used in the wrong way.

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

Sure, for many years Israel has had an agreement with the Assad government to maintain stability along the border between Syria and Israel. That agreement is no longer in force, because one party to that agreement is now no longer in power. HTS really just means liberation group of greater Syria. It's an offshoot, like you said, of Al-Qaeda and of ISIS. Its leader, has really got to start by attacking American forces in Iraq. He presents himself, lately, as a moderate, but he's, in my opinion, a wolf in sheep's clothing. He's an Islamist and he will eventually seek to impose Sharia law. The problem really for Israel, is that HTS is only in control of a very small part of the country. They're in control of, of course, of the main cities, including Damascus and Aleppo. But Syria, as you mentioned, is a huge country and there are a lot of different groups that are vying for control over that area and many of them are Islamists.

I think Israel has moved very quickly to destroy all these, the Syrian Air Force, the Syrian Navy, weapons depots, missile sites, missile production sites, because they're trying to keep those out of the hands, not just of HTS, but all of these other Islamist groups. It's important that some of these Islamist groups are already openly proclaiming that they want to conquer Jerusalem and that they want to conquer Mecca, they want to overthrow the Saudi Arabian monarchy. So these people mean business, these Islamists, if they have the power to achieve their goals, that's open, I guess the future will tell. But I think it's pretty clear that Israel is not taking any chances.

This is a really positive, in general, outcome for Israel, at least right now, because as I mentioned, Israel and Hezbollah are no longer right on Israel's northern border. The real problem now, is that in order to restore deterrence, Iran is likely to rush towards building a nuclear weapon. And this is really the other side of the coin of this whole issue. Right now, Israel is a superpower, so to speak, in the Middle East, but if Iran does acquire a nuclear weapons capability, that will really change the balance of power again and sort of balance it out between Israel and Iran. And so I think the next few weeks, before President Trump enters the White House, are going to be very crucial to this whole thing. It's very unlikely that the Biden administration would support an Israeli attempt to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons program. So if Iran have not gone nuclear, I guess you could say, within the next 30 days, within the next month or so, then I suppose that a Trump administration would be more open to helping Israel destroy that.

I think in the meantime, the real big fear that I have, is that Iran will try to destabilize Jordan. It's been trying to do that for many years, it's been trying to replace a monarchy there with an Islamist government that is pro-Iran. And this also would be a disaster for Israel, because it would potentially give Iran access to all of Israel's eastern border. I wrote about this recently in my regular column for Israel My Glory, which is the flagship magazine of the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. And I think this is really a very big concern for the Israelis. So that explains, in large measure, why they're taking preemptive action and destroying as many munitions as weapons as possible before Islamist groups get their hands on them.

Host: David Wheaton:

If you think about it, it's really remarkable what has taken place in the Middle East since the Hamas attack on October 7th in Israel, 2023. That was a terrible loss of life for Israel, but since then, they've been really able to decimate Hamas in Gaza. They've really decimated Hezbollah, based in Lebanon to the north. They've done the same, to a large extent, with Iran, they're a great enemy. And now they've neutralized so much of their neighbor to the north, Syria and their military capabilities. So my question is, going forward is to consider Israel's objective in the Middle East. I mean, for sure they want to have safety from enemies and they've really largely made a lot of progress on accomplishing that, except you mentioned of course Iran and potentially getting over and influence into Jordan. But they've done a pretty good job of eliminating a lot of threats from, at least the nearby enemies.

Number two, of course, they want economic prosperity through natural resources, natural gas, other things like that. Their export of technology, the Abraham Accords trade with Saudi Arabia, maybe trade routes going through the area where Israel's located. And the third thing I can think is, a potential objective for Israel, is to actually increase their land area. They have very small fraction of what God had promised the nation back in

the Old Testament. So I look at safety, I look at economic prosperity, I look at an increasing land. Soeren, do you see those as Israel's objectives going forward or are there other ones beyond that, that are going to be motivating the nation of Israel?

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

I think the latter part, about the land promises that God made to Abraham, I don't think that Israel is seeking to acquire more territory than it already has. Those land promises will be fulfilled during the millennial kingdom, when Jesus is on the throne in Jerusalem. I think right now, that Israel's main concern is probably, apart from the Iran nuclear program, is going to be Turkey, because Turkey is really the big winner here. President Erdoğan, for many years, has talked about reestablishing the Ottoman Empire. It was founded in 1299 and it ruled, really, most of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and North Africa for over 600 years, until it was carved up by the European powers after World War I.

So what we have here, for the last 40 or 50 years, is really a competition between Iran and Turkey to reestablish an Islamic caliphate or an Islamic empire. So the Iranians obviously wanted to establish one that's controlled by the Shi'as, one of the sects of Islam, and then the Turks, obviously Erdoğan, wants to establish a caliphate based on Sunni Islam. It's clear that Turkey has won this particular battle, and so President Erdoğan many times, has talked about settling scores with Israel. He is convinced that Jerusalem has to be reconquered for Islam and I suspect that he's going to be working very hard, or at least Erdoğan's successor, to achieve this.

There's pros and cons to what has happened with the collapse of the Assad regime, for Israel. I think Israel right now, is seeking to establish security, both on his southern border with Gaza and on his northern border with Lebanon, and to prevent, obviously an Iranian nuclear breakout.

Host: David Wheaton:

Yes that makes perfect sense. Soeren Kern is our guest today, here on the Christian Worldview. You mentioned earlier, Soeren, that Syria has a lot of disparate groups that make up this country and there are Christians in Syria. Who are these Christians? What kind of Christians are they? I mean, Christian is obviously a very broad term. Who are they and what do you think their future is in Syria with this new Islamist government coming to power?

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

The Christians in Syria and in Iraq and different parts of the Middle East are ancient, ancient Christian communities, in many cases, Orthodoxed. They've obviously been there since the very beginning of Christianity. Before Syria's Civil War began in 2011, there were roughly 1.5 million Christians living in Syria. Today there are estimated 300,000, so that number has really diminished greatly. Many Syrian Christians fled Syria and are seeking refuge in Europe or North America, Canada and the United States. So far HTS, the group that is going to be forming the next government, has said Christians in Syria are safe. They're trying to present themselves as moderate Jihadists, if there is such a thing. But that really remains to be seen.

Within Sharia law, Islamic law, there's a concept called Taqiyyah, which is essentially dissimulation. It's basically gives people permission to lie to their opponents if it advances the interests of Islam, the spread of Islam. So I'm very skeptical about the future safety of Christians in Syria.

This morning I consulted a UK-based ministry, called Open Doors, and they characterize the future for Christians and other minorities in Syria, as precarious. I suspect I would agree with that, especially when we see what happened to the Christian communities in Iraq, in Mosul, on the northern parts of Iraq, after Saddam Hussein was overthrown. It's important to understand that the Assad dynasty was also a minority, they were called Alawites. This is considered a heretical sect within Sunni Islam, so Jihadists believe that the Christians and the Alawites are equally heretical. So the Christians depended on the Assad government for protection, just like the Christians in Iraq depended on Saddam Hussein for protection. And now, that protection is no longer there, so only time will tell, but I'm very pessimistic about the future there for Christians.

Host: David Wheaton:

Well, it was incredibly disturbing actually, to watch this frontline specialist from June 2021, if listeners want to watch it for themselves, it's a one-hour special on this Al-Jolani that is now in control of Syria. Just the situation in that part of the world and the devastation through endless wars and the way people live and the different groups, it's just hard for American minds to really comprehend what life is like in that region of the world. Soeren, Isaiah chapter 17, Isaiah makes a prophecy about the city of Damascus. He says, "Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city and will become a fallen ruin. The cities of Aroer are forsaken, they will be for flocks to lie down in, and there will be no one to frighten them. The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and sovereignty from Damascus and the remnant of Aram," and Aram is really another word for Syria, Syrians. "They will be like the glory of the Sons of Israel," declares the Lord of hosts."

In other words, it's a prophecy of a destruction of Damascus, and this happened in the past, but often in scripture, there is a immediate or a near fulfillment of prophecy, and then there's a far fulfillment of prophecy. Something not yet taken place, that will happen during, perhaps the tribulation, the millennium period.

In Syria, as we think about in scripture, had very significant prominence in the Bible. Abraham came from that region, Isaac and Jacob received their wives from that region. Paul was saved on the road to where? Damascus. Christians were first called Christians in Antioch, which is a city in Syria. Talk more, Soeren, just about the significance of Syria, Damascus. What do you know about the significance of Syria and Damascus with regard to biblical prophecy in the future?

GUEST: Soeren Kern:

I think it's very clear that the change of government in Syria has huge ramifications for Bible prophecy, especially in the context of the future, both in Gog and Magog war. I'm less convinced that Damascus has really any prophetic significance in this thing. I personally believe that when Isaiah gave this prophecy 2,700 years ago, 2,800 years ago, that he was referring to the Assyrian conquest of Damascus. Because when you talk about, in verse three, when you mentioned Ephraim, Ephraim really refers to the northern kingdom of Israel, which was also destroyed by the Assyrians a couple of years after Damascus was destroyed in 732.

They dispersed the Israelites throughout East Syria. So I think really, this particular verse in Isaiah, is referring to a calamity that comes on both Damascus and on Northern Israel. And that was really fulfilled during the Assyrian conquest.

Now, I know that a lot of prophecy pundits believe that it's still future fulfillment. The Bible doesn't really say, right, Isaiah doesn't really say who will destroy Damascus or how it will be destroyed, nor does it really say that Damascus will never be inhabited again. So we know that Damascus is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, and so obviously, after the Syrian destruction it was rebuilt. Many prophecy pundits posit that Israel will somehow destroy that city with nuclear weapons. I find that very hard to believe, because Damascus is only 300 kilometers or maybe 180 miles from Israel's border. So if Israel was really using nuclear weapons, all that radioactivity from those weapons, would certainly engulf large parts of Israel.

I think that if there would be a future fulfillment of the destruction of Damascus, I'm guessing it will be destroyed during the Gog and Magog invasion of Israel. Because that's where the northern troops will be coming through Syria into Northern Israel, when God supernaturally destroys the invading armies. So it's very possible that Damascus could be destroyed as collateral damage in that conflict, not at the hands of the Israelis, but at the hands of Almighty God himself. So in conclusion, it's really difficult to say for certain, but my personal sense is that, that prophecy has already been fulfilled.

Host: David Wheaton:

So appreciate Soeren's insight on world events, in light of biblical prophecy. God's word says, "To be alert, to be watching, to be ready for the Lord's return." We didn't have time to air the portion of the interview where Soeren previewed his columns for the January issue of the Christian Worldview Journal. One of them is going to be a foundational article on what is a Christian worldview and how that provides the framework for how we think and live and understand the world around us? You can sign up for the journal at our website, or by calling us or by writing to us. Our contact information will be given in just a moment.

Thank you for joining us today in the Christian Worldview, and for your support of this non-profit radio ministry. Next weekend will be a special program to prepare your mind and heart for Christmas. Hope you enjoy that. God said through his angel, "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people. For today, in the city of David, there has been born for you, a savior, who is Christ the Lord." There's no better news than that. So until next time, think biblically, live accordingly and stand firm.

The mission of the Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out, What must I do to be saved, go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call toll-free, 1-888-646-2233. The Christian Worldview is a listener supported non-profit radio ministry furnished by The Overcomer Foundation. To make a donation, become a Christian Worldview partner, order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter, or contact us, visit TheChristianWorldview.org, call 1-888-646-2233, or write to box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Thanks for listening to the Christian Worldview.

The Christian Worldview Journal

We are excited to announce our new monthly print publication called the Christian Worldview Journal. In Matthew 24, Jesus called for his disciples to be discerning, watchful, endure persecution and be prepared and faithful in the lead-up to his return. This is what the Christian Worldview Journal will aim to do each month, in three articles on current events and issues of the faith. Including by Christian geopolitical analyst Soeren Kern, who is the managing editor of the Journal. You'll also find featured resources, ministry news and more, in this twelve-page full-color publication. Everyone on our mailing list will receive the Christian Worldview Journal through the February 2025 issue. Starting in March, all Christian Worldview partners will receive it. To sign up for the journal, go to thechristianworldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

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