

Israel & the Church – responding to current events

Intro: Stefan Duerksen Lead Pastor

Celebrations: refer to video!

- **50 people getting baptized next week!**
- **85 people at the Set Free – most of which had never been before!**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Celebrations & Church-Wide Prayer: Peace and Salvation for all of Israel

- Pray for Jesus to reveal himself to Israelis & Palestinians. Whether secular or religious. Through dreams, visions or Christian witness.
- Pray for the release of hostages and for their families. Protection, freedom, strength.
- Pray for God’s purposes to be completed in the Middle East.
- Pray for protection for civilians in Israel & Gaza. Pray they would receive humanitarian relief. Pray for their salvation.
- Pray against the growing antisemitism in the world
- Pray against antisemitism in the Church
- Pray for Jesus to return and establish his kingdom on the earth! **MARANATHA**

If Israel is God’s people, does that mean they get a pass? Are they just automatically all saved? The skeptic who sees them today says, “they aren’t the true Israel” “they are just secular” “they rejected God and he rejected them” this being rooted in replacement theology.

WHY THIS MATTERS? Good ideas have consequences, bad ideas have victims. – Chuck Colson

Verily, a hopeless, wicked, venomous and devilish thing is the existence of these Jews, who for fourteen hundred years have been, and still are, our pest, torment and misfortune. They are just devils and nothing more. Know, Christian, that next to the devil thou hast not an enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew ... Their synagogues or churches should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered or spread over with dirt so that no one may be able to see a cinder or stone of it. And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity ... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. For they perpetrate the same things that they do in their synagogues. For this reason, they ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies ... In brief, dear princes and lords, those of you who have Jews under your rule – if my counsel does not please you, find better advice, so that you and we all can be rid of the unbearable, devilish burden of the Jews ... Do not grant them protection, safe-conduct, or communion with us. – Martin Luther

- At the Nuremberg war criminal trials they pointed to Luther’s writings for justification

A. Israel, the Church & the People of God

The charge: Israel failed to keep God's law. They rejected Messiah. They crucified him. So, God gave the church the New Covenant and replaced Israel with the Church. The Church is now the People of God.

Like any good deception. There are elements of truth. So we will look at those together.

1. **The NC was given to ISRAEL. NOT THE CHURCH.** We see God giving it to them in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. it was given to the people of Israel.
 - a. **Ezekiel 36:24-28** I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.
2. **Paul refuted the idea of replacement theology** in Romans and articulated the relationship between Israel & the Church and who were the People of God

Romans 10:1-13 1-4 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes... 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- NO distinction. See? Jews are no longer different than gentiles. All the same. But if we interpret this that way... we have to be consistent.
- **Galatians 3:26-29** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.
- We know there is distinctions between male and female. Jew and Greek. Slaves and free people! so which distinction is Paul referring to? We are all SAVED the same way – through faith in Christ. It has ALWAYS been FAITH that saves. This wasn't NEW. OT people were also saved by FAITH.
- He is NOT saying the Jews no longer matter, or, that they've been replaced. He is saying there is no distinction in how we are saved AND once saved – NO DISTINCTION in being THE PEOPLE OF GOD – we are GRAFTED IN! INCREDIBLE!

Romans 11:1-5 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

- Paul clearly answers that charge. Has God rejected his people? NO!!!
- Has God given Israel a pass? A “get out of jail free card”? NO!!
- They are saved, just as we are, by GRACE through FAITH in JESUS.

Romans 11:17-23 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

- We, GENTILES, are grafted in! hallelujah! PRAISE GOD!! What a God we serve!
- But God is NOT done with Israel! NO WAY! He is going to FULFILL ALL HIS PROMISES TO THEM! And they will ALL BE SAVED!

Romans 11:25-29 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

- Israel may be secular now (regards to the Gospel)... but regards to election (God's choosing of them) ? The gifts & calling of God are IRREVOCABLE.
- Jesus is coming back and ALL OF ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED – they will look on the One they have pierced and MOURN and will put their faith and trust in Him!
- They will then proclaim the Name of Jesus to the Nations throughout the Millennial Kingdom!

3. **What about us? ALL who put their faith in Jesus become PEOPLE OF GOD – Jew & Gentile**

- **We are ADOPTED IN!** e.g. Duerksen kids – adopted in – just as much our kids as blood kids!
- We didn't REPLACE Israel – NO! we just joined the family! And ultimately, Israel – even though they are the people of promise – become & remain the people of God through faith. This has ALWAYS been the case – from OT – NT.

B. **Responding to the current crisis – whose side are we on?**

- **Mark 10:18** And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone
 - **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 1. We stand with Israel – this is TRUE.** We believe God has made eternal and unconditional promises to his people, Israel, that he will fulfill. **The Jewish people gave us: 1) Scriptures, 2) Salvation, 3) Messiah, 4) Apostles, 5) the Church, 6) Monotheism! And MORE!**
- **HISTORY:** We also recognize that no other people has been so hated and mistreated throughout HISTORY. Even now! I have been heart broken by the antisemitism that is happening worldwide and in CANADA!
 - **For example:** Jewish school being shot at. Jewish School being threatened with bombs. Marches where people have called for the extermination of the Jews! This is reminiscent of the Holocaust!
 - **But does this mean we think Israel is a righteous nation now?** Does it mean that we agree with everything they do? NO, of course not! WHICH IS ANOTHER REASON TO PRAY FOR ISRAEL!
 - Israel, by and large, is secular. Less than 1% of the population in Israel believes in Jesus. Just like us, they will only be saved if they put their faith & trust in Jesus for salvation.

What’s my point?

- Many people are calling for the extermination of the JEWS – HEART BREAKING.
- Our response must not be to pendulum over to the other side and cry for the extermination of Muslims, or Palestinians.
- **I believe firmly that Israel has the right to defend themselves and to live in the Land God promised them and gave to them!**
- **BUT, my heart breaks for the loss of life and suffering on ALL sides. Including Gazans. The loss of life there is tragic. The loss of life ANYWHERE should break our hearts.**
- We should be careful that we get God’s heart for the situation in how we respond.

Joshua 5:13-15 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

- **INTERESTING.** Joshua... is a JEW. He is the leader of God’s people on the earth! God for sure is on HIS SIDE.
- **To the question, “whose side are you on? Ours? Or, theirs?”** he simply says, “NO. I am the commander of the Army of the Lord.”
- **ORDER MATTERS.** We are invited to be on GODS SIDE. That’s a better way to think about it.

How does this apply to what is happening in the Middle East? Whose side are we on? We should be on God’s side! Joining Him.

2. We also stand for the Nations . We want ALL people to be saved!

- How we represent our views to people, in conversations, on social media, etc. matters. We want to be reflecting God's heart in the matter.
- Therefore, We pray for people on both sides. We desire Jesus to save people on ALL sides.
 - a. We pray for Justice – YES. But we pray for protection for innocents. We pray for truth to come out. We pray for peace. We pray for an end to war. We pray for Jesus to reveal himself and save as many from the Nations as possible and then we ask for his hasty return to END ALL WARS.

3. We must remain on God's side & reflect HIS heart in our response

C. God's heart for Israel & the nations (for people)

Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- We remember, God's heart is for Israel AND the NATIONS. Always has been. Right from the beginning.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

- God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked... his desire? Is that wicked people (ALL OF US) should turn (REPENT) from our sin and put our faith and trust in God for salvation!

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

- He desires some to perish????? He desires the really bad people to perish? He desires NONE to perish.

Matthew 5:43-45 "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- This is our response. LOVE OUR ENEMIES. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE.

D. Response: Pray, love, stand for truth & make disciples

PRAY → nothing reveals our true hearts better than our prayers, what they focus on, or lack thereof. THIS IS THE STARTING POINT. You'll mess up the other 3 if you don't lay it on a foundation of PRAYER.

- We pray for peace in Israel – YES! Pray for the Salvation of Israel!
- and we pray for peace in Gaza, for the Palestinians. We pray for their salvation too!

- We pray against antisemitism! YES! it's RACISM. We should be against ALL forms of racism. Including demonizing all Muslims. THE CULTURE DOES THIS. We are NOT of the culture but are of the KINGDOM OF GOD.
- The Culture labels entire people groups under "oppressors" and "oppressed" this ends up propagating the racist systems they are trying to dismantle. We must not be like the culture.

What about the Hamas terrorists? Do we pray for them? How?

- I do pray for JUSTICE – absolutely. Those poor families who have lost loved ones in Israel to such senseless barbarism. I think of those poor people in Gaza who have been used as human shields. Awful.
- But I also pray that their eyes would be opened to the Truth in Jesus Christ.
 - a. E.g. Isis fighter testimony – felt forgiveness – gave his life to Jesus
 - b. This doesn't justify evil. NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT.
 - c. **But they are deceived thinking they are working for God!**

Consider the Apostle Paul.

- **Acts 8:1-3** And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...
 - a. Was Paul committing acts of terror on innocent people? yes? no? YES.
- **Acts 9:1-5** But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, ...Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him ..he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
 - a. Paul "breathing threats and murder against disciples of the Lord"
 - b. Pulling families apart. Acts of terror? YES.
 - c. "who are you, Lord?" Paul thought he was doing the Lord's work and he was actually working AGAINST the Lord.
- **1 Corinthians 15:8-10** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.
 - i. LEAST of the apostles BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD – I AM WHAT I AM
 - ii. Paul recognized that he was a sinner. Murderer. That what he did should be unforgiveable – yet – by God's grace he was saved! And he was determined to live in such a way that Grace would not be in vain!

Part of our problem in our polarizing responses, is that we forget that we need just as much saving as everyone else. When we realize just how sinful we are, we appreciate the gift of grace given to us! This motivates us to LOVE GOD & LOVE PEOPLE (1 Jn 40

And we too, should DETERMINE to live in such a way that God's GRACE would NOT be in vain!

Let's PRAY

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2023

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission** (Mt 28:18-20, Mt 22:37-40): Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus
2. **Next Gen** (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging
3. **Persecuted Church** (Lk 21:13): Faith, fortitude & wisdom “to not waste the opportunity to share the Gospel”
4. **Heart of Prayer** (Ps 27:4): Every generation to find Jesus & learn to bring their needs to Him in prayer
5. **Church Renewal**: Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple makers