

## **Israel and the Christian**

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

Well, good morning. We are going to go ahead and get started this morning in Genesis 12. As I mentioned last week, with our James series ending and our Christmas series starting up NEXT week, we had a one week break here scheduled and we had a kind of “give thanks” message planned, but with what has been happening in the Middle East and specifically in Israel, I thought it would be a good time to address this as a church.

You know, as a Pastor my goal in preaching is to give you a well-balanced diet of God’s Word. And so, we do book studies like James and work through them verse by verse. We shift between Old and New Testament as well as do topical series, but we keep them textual, meaning we work through a given passage concerning whatever the topic is we are covering.

And then sometimes something happens in our country or world that’s just SO significant...it could be an event like 9/11 or like what’s going on in Israel right now, and wisdom calls for us to take time out of whatever it is we may be preaching and address from a biblical/spiritual perspective what is taking place in the world that it seems nearly everyone is talking about.

That’s the case here today. As Christians, there is always with us a heightened sense of awareness when something is taking place in Israel. This is of course what we know of as the Holy Land. It’s the place:

- Where so much biblical history took place...
- It’s where Jesus was born...
- Where he walked the earth and performed miracles...
- It’s where he was crucified, buried and rose from the dead...
- It’s where he promises to return...

And it’s not just the land that’s important...it’s the people of Israel. The Jewish people gave us most all of the Bible. It’s from the Jewish people that our Messiah, our Savior has come. It’s the Jewish people that were given “everlasting covenants” that as believers color or effect what we believe about them.

And so, when a group like Hamas comes along, which we’ll say more about in just a moment and they unleash terrorism and death upon the people of Israel – we know that’s wrong and evil from a moral standpoint, but because of WHAT we believe about Israel and the Jewish people from the scripture, we know there is something deeper at play here.

And so, let’s talk about what that is. I’m calling the message today: **Israel and the Christian**

I’m going to outline the message in four points. We’re going to look at Israel, what’s going on and why it matters from a biblical perspective, spiritual perspective, historical perspective, and political perspective.

There's A LOT to talk about in this and so I ask for your grace and patience up front because with the time we have allotted here, we can only cover so much. Let's begin with:

## 1. Biblical Perspective

Where did Israel begin? Who is Israel? It starts with a person named Abram or Abraham as we know him. As we read notice the word "bless" is mentioned five times in these three verses as well as the word, "I will" – this is from God himself.

**Gen. 12:1-3 – "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (so it's land) <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation (it's also a people), and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> 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."**

So, the promise is about a land and a people and we'll see this promise made to Abraham over and over again. Let's look at the land portion first.

**Gen. 12:4-7 – "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.<sup>5</sup> And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him."**

So, we have this land being given to Abraham and his descendants by God. The specifics of this land mass are spelled out even further in Gen. 15.

Now, this is an important passage of scripture. It's where we get what is termed the "Abrahamic Covenant". God makes a covenant with Abraham that is unilateral – meaning: It's one-sided. MOST covenants in that day were made between two groups...two parties and there was a ceremony that would in a sense would ratify the covenant.

The most serious of covenants was when the parties would take an animal and slay it...sacrifice it in a sense. They would cut that animal in half, and they would walk between the two halves of that animal and the word picture was, if we don't keep this agreement, let what happened to this animal, happen to us.

What's significant about the Abrahamic Covenant is God puts Abraham in a deep sleep and he doesn't walk through these animals that have been cut in half – God alone walks through them!

In other words, this is a covenant God is going to keep regardless if Abraham keeps it or not! It's WHY it's referred to in (Gen. 17:7) as an "everlasting covenant".

**Gen. 15:18-21 – “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,<sup>19</sup> the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,<sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,<sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”**

Now, I’m going to show you a map with this land area and what’s important to know is that this promise of land, is not just given one or two times, it’s reiterated to Abraham and his descendants over and over again (Gen. 26, Gen. 28, Ex. 23, Num. 34, Duet. 30 and Joshua 1)

So, here is a map of the general land area that God promised to Israel. As we look at this, it’s important to know two things: One, throughout their history, they’ve never had all of this land. Two, as you can see, you think there are fights today over the land, can you imagine what it would be like if they owned ALL that God has given them.

### **Illus. SHOW MAP OF PROMISED LAND and ZOOM PIC**

So, Israel is a land, but it’s also a people. As we already read, God promised this land to Abraham and his descendants...his offspring.

And THIS is where it really gets interesting because if you know about Abraham and Sarah, God makes a promise to them about having a son, but over 10 years pass and the son still hasn’t arrived.

Abraham is 86, Sarah is 76 – and both are pretty discouraged. It seems that God isn’t coming through on his promise. Waiting on God is NEVER easy, but they do the one cardinal sin that you never want to do...that I promise you, you will always regret if you choose this path, and that is they take matters into their own hands. They decide to play God, instead of wait on God.

And so, what do they do? They have an Egyptian maid that serves their family by the name of Hagar. And Sarah comes up with this idea for Abraham to sleep with Hagar, and the child that comes from that relationship - Abraham and Sarah would raise and start the nation of people that God had promised.

Now, just a couple of things here: It needs to be noted that Abraham did NOT push back on this plan. He was like, “Sleep with my servant? Well, if you insist...whatever makes you happy, Sarah.” He didn’t even ask, “Are you sure?” He was like, “Sounds good to me.”

In fact, it’s one sentence in our Bibles, but it says SO MUCH. **Genesis 16:2 – “And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.”**

He didn’t listen to the voice of God. He listened to the voice of Sarah. NEVER good listening to someone else’s voice above God’s especially when the flesh is involved!

Secondly, and most importantly, it is NOT an overstatement to say, the decision they made here...ALL that we have seen throughout history as it relates to Israel AND what we are seeing right now take place between Israel and Hamas (I'm talking the conflict with other nations) can be traced back to this ONE disastrous decision that Abraham and Sarah made.

Practical application here before going on: Don't get out in front of God! Don't make major life decisions without consulting the Lord. Don't let silence from God, even if it's a long time tempt you to take matters into your own hands – trust in the Lord and wait on him!

If he's given you a word, he WILL come through on his word, in his own time and in his own way!

Abraham and Sarah didn't do this, and as a result they have a son through the servant Hagar that is named Ishmael. Now, because of time, I am condensing A LOT of what took place, but here's what you need to know.

Conflict immediately arises between Sarah and Hagar. The sight of a pregnant Hagar sends Sarah over the edge, and she just makes life miserable for Hagar.

Hagar runs away into the desert, and we see God having great compassion on her. He sends an angel of the Lord to her...he sends THE angel of the Lord to her (many believe it's the preincarnate Christ) who tells her to return home and there is a prophetic word given to her about the son she will give birth to. Here's the prophecy:

**Gen. 16:10-12 – “The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.”<sup>11</sup> And the angel of the Lord said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction.<sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild donkey of a man (best description by a commentator I read of this wrote, he would have an “untamable character”), his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”**

Keep that name (Ishmael) and prophecy in mind. Fast forward fourteen years. Abraham is ninety-nine years old. Sarah just nine-ten years younger. Sarah still hasn't given birth and in her mind, all hope is lost.

However, don't miss this: When you follow our God, HOPE is NEVER lost!

God shows up to visit Abraham, and he reiterates the covenant he made with him way back when he called him from the land of Ur.

**Gen. 17:1-8 – “When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,<sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”<sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,<sup>4</sup> “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.<sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name**

**shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup> And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”**

This is where the covenant of circumcision is enacted. It would be an outward sign of this covenant that Abraham and his descendants would keep to show they are part of the covenant people of God.

It's also where Isaac's birth is foretold. Isaac will be known as the “child of promise”. Another passage of scripture from Genesis:

**Gen. 17:15-21 – “And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”<sup>17</sup> Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” (Abraham cared for his son – Ishmael at this time was 13 years old!) <sup>19</sup> God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. <sup>20</sup> As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. (Very important!) <sup>21</sup> But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”**

Everything that is foretold happens. Isaac is born. Key part of Isaac's life. At thirteen, as directed by God, he takes Isaac up to Mount Moriah and lays him down as a sacrifice. If you have been in church for any amount of time, you know what happens.

Isaac carries the wood up the mountain – a lot of symbolism here. Jesus would carry his cross up the mountain. Mount Moriah by the way is the exact same mountain where the Temple and all those sacrifices would be made down through the years, it's the same mount that we know of as Mount Calvary, where Jesus was crucified.

God of course stayed Abraham's hand as he was going to sacrifice Isaac – testing his heart – he provided a ram caught in a thicket...a substitute. It's a picture of Jesus – he is our substitute that was slain for our sins – A LOT of imagery here.

This event is important because once again, after this act of faith and obedience on Abraham's part – he put his son of promise on the alter – he FULLY trusted God.

And listen to what is said to him...the promise of land and people is given once again!

**Gen. 22:15-18** – “And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, <sup>18</sup> and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Fast-forward more. Isaac has two sons. One of them is named Jacob. This promise goes from Isaac to Jacob. Jacob’s name is changed to Israel. He has twelve sons, which we come to know as the twelve tribes of Israel, and it is to these men and their descendants this land is ultimately allotted to.

So, Israel is a land and it is a people. We have also seen in this that Ishmael is a people (he’ll have descendants) AND he is given land. Let me show you this and we’ll move on:

**Gen. 25:17-18** – “(These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) <sup>18</sup> They settled from Havilah (modern day Arabia) to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria (Northern Iraq). He settled over against all his kinsmen.”

### **Illus. SHOW MAP OF ISHMAEL**

One of the reasons that the descendants of Ishmael have been referred to as Arabs is because they settled in and make up what is known as the Arab Peninsula.

And while we are talking terms, you hear the word, “Palestine” or Palestinian people mentioned. It’s important to note that you will not find the word “Palestine” in the Bible. The term was popularized by the Romans when they were occupying the land and that’s why MANY old school bibles (like in their map section) will refer to the land as Palestine.

Palestine is a derivative of the word, “Philistine” or “philistia”. It marked the region where the Philistines lived which was along the Mediterranean Coast – what we now call the “Gaza Strip”.

There has been A LOT of fluctuation in this, but Palestine today is now considered to be pockets of land including Gaza and the West Bank regions. Here’s a map of the noted Palestinian areas today.

### **SHOW MODERN DAY MAP**

We’ll talk more about this hostility between Israel and Palestine and you’ll see why it’s so intense in the historical section of this message, we’ll get to in just a moment.

Now, let’s move on and talk about this from a:

## 2. Spiritual Perspective

Recognizing that some of these perspectives are going to overlap, I thought I would put the Muslim movement/religion within the spiritual perspective because of the nature of the subject. We're dealing with spiritual when we talk about this religion.

Now, I want to be very careful in what I say here: As a preacher of the gospel, I have an obligation to teach truth and combat lies. And I believe when it comes to the Islamic faith we are dealing with a religion that at its root is demonic, and it is a false teaching leading millions of people astray.

Why do I call it demonic? And in this, please hear me: I did not say that those who follow the teachings of Islam ARE demonic. I know MANY Muslims who are wonderful people - incredible and kind. They are family people, doing great work in the community. MOST want to live at peace and practice their religion without hindrance which in the United States is a privilege and a right.

So, again I reiterate and emphasize I did NOT say followers of Islam are demonic. However, I do believe the Muslim movement at its root is demonic. Why do I say this?

**Gal. 1:6-9 – “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—<sup>7</sup> not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”**

When Muhammed at the age of 40 went into a cave in his hometown of Mecca and received his first revelation from an angel, that was claimed to be Gabriel - I BELIEVE he saw what he saw and heard what he heard. I just believe that angel was NOT the Gabriel from the Bible that showed up to announce to Mary the birth of the Messiah, but instead I believe what the angel Muhammad saw was a demon in disguise.

**2 Cor. 11:14b – “...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”**

Now, you have to know that Muhammed didn't just start a new religion. What he received as revelations evolved over time.

The word “Islam” means “submission”. And at the heart of the Muslim faith is a “submission to Allah”. Allah is the Arabic name for God. The Arabs worshipped a lot of different gods at the time Muhammed received his revelation, Allah was considered the most-high God. It's NOT the name of God, it's a name for God.

And now Muhammed and his revelations called for devotion to Allah and to Allah alone. He is the most-high God. When you hear the phrase “Al-la-hu Akbar” – that phrase means, “Allah is greater...or Allah is the greatest.

Yahweh and Allah are NOT the same God. Yahweh, the “I am” made himself known in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God. Jesus is the great “I am”. Muslims reject this.

I put this in the “spiritual perspective” because I want you to see how in Islam, Satan has counterfeited the one true gospel!

Just look at it closely and we can see how it counterfeits the Jewish belief system that Christian view flows from:

- The Jews and we as Christians have a holy book. So too, does Islam.
- Jews have their Sabbath on Saturday. We as Christians on Sunday. Muslims take theirs on Friday.
- We claim Isaac as the promised child – the one whom the land is given. Muslims claim that Ishmael is the promised, favored child of Abraham and that he was the one taken to Mount Moriah to be sacrificed – that the land belongs to his descendants.

NOT only that, but as noted, Muslims believe Jesus is a prophet, certainly NOT God in the flesh. For them, Muhammed is not “a” prophet, he is “THE” prophet, and a direct descendent of Ishmael.

You can see why the sons of Abraham (the Jewish people) and the sons of Ishmael (the Arabs – and not all Arabs are Muslim and vice versa) have been fighting it out for all of history and will continue until Jesus comes!

There is a deeply spiritual element to what is taking place and you can bet Satan is the one stoking the fires of antisemitism wherever it arises, but especially when it comes from these Arab nations and peoples who are living out what was prophesied in (Gen. 16) – their hand is against everyone and everyone's hand against him.

We talk about spiritual warfare. Consider the people of Israel and how Satan has had it out for them from the very beginning of time...even before Abraham came along!

The VERY first gospel – **Gen. 3:15** – “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring** (see the gospel here – the offspring of a woman!); **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**”

**Illus. Christmas** – We are headed into the Christmas season...we are here! And what do we celebrate? It's the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15.

**Gal. 4:4** – “**But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...**”



You can trace it back to the Garden! Ever since that prophecy was given, Satan (this is why we are on the spiritual perspective) wanted to prevent that offspring from occurring! Just trace it!

Cain and Abel are born – Satan incites Cain to kill Abel and Eve says in **Gen. 4:25** – “**And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”**”

Look at the genealogy of Jesus. Read Luke’s gospel and we see that Jesus came from the line of David...from the line of Jacob...from the line of Abraham...from the line of Seth.

And if you look at the names given, think of how the Enemy has tried to stop the offspring of Eve! Not only does he infuse Cain with a hatred to kill Abel. Esau tries to kill Jacob (i.e. Israel).

When the Hebrews are in captivity because of the number of young men being born and overpopulating Egypt, Pharaoh decides to that if a male is born, that baby should be killed...thrown into the Nile (Ex. 3) – who is behind this mass killing? Satan!

He is doing everything he can to stop the Messiah who will crush his head at Calvary and rule over him with a rod of iron at his return!

Just think about the attacks on David...think about evil Haman who wanted to have the Jews extinguished...annihilated from the face of the earth and if not for the courage of Esther and the power and sovereignty of God, it would have happened!

Satan has always tried to destroy Israel, in order to eliminate the promise of the Messiah. BUT, he couldn’t stop the hand of God...he couldn’t prevent the purposes of God from moving forward. No one can!

**Job 42:2** – “**I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**”

Jesus WAS eventually born to the Jewish people, and Satan tried to stop him from ever growing up! It was Satan that incited Herod to slaughter all the male children under the age of two because of his fear of the Messiah being born.

Satan couldn’t stop it then, so he tried in the wilderness to get Jesus to abandon his mission. He couldn’t stop it then, so he filled Judas with betrayal and sold him on this idea to turn Jesus over to the authorities...we’ll crucify him! And he filled the crowd with anger as they cried for his crucifixion. Maybe that’ll do the trick!

- Satan has always hated Israel, because she is the mother of the Messiah.
- He has always hated Jesus because he couldn’t get to him.

- Satan hates the rule and reign of Christ which is exhibited in the Church today...this is why you see an all-out blitz on the Church and warfare against me and you.

You can look through history. Whether it was Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Caesars of Rome, Hitler in Germany, or Hamas, Hezbollah, and all of Iran today – what is the stated goal? Take out Israel. Why?

Because as Paul wrote in: **Rom. 9:4-5** – **“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”**

Satan can't stand them. And by the way...Satan is NOT all knowing like God, but he can read and he knows the scripture! He wants Israel done away with. He wants Jerusalem destroyed because he knows what God promises in here will take place.

And that is one day VERY soon, Jesus will return from the very place he ascended. He will return to the Mount of Olives and the Bible says every eye will see him on that day, and don't you know Satan is working overtime to stop that from happening.

Just like he tried to destroy him at his first coming, he is trying to ruin his Second Coming, but it's NOT going to happen! Jesus has won the ultimate victory in the resurrection and it is just a matter of time before he comes back to spike the ball and celebrate this victory with us for all of eternity.

You have, a biblical perspective. You have a spiritual perspective.

### **3. Historical Perspective**

We won't stay as long on these next two as we did the first two, but we need to highlight the miracle that the nation of Israel is. As noted, there is no other nation in history that has been systemically removed from their homeland, dispersed, essentially done away with as a people and yet nearly 2,000 years later return to their land.

But that's the Jewish people. While we're giving some terms today, let me give you the term “Zionism”. “Zion” is the Hebrew name for the “Holy Land”...or Holy Place.

Zionism was a movement that came along in the late 1800's and early 1900's that was essentially a belief that with antisemitism always being around, Jews needed to return to their homeland. They needed their own ethnic identity and opportunity to live and practice their religion where it was founded without the fear of being forced into extinction.

The idea was they needed to get back to Zion...to the Holy Place – to the holy land that was so symbolic of God's favor and calling.

Jewish thought leaders from all over began to meet and motivate people toward this vision. They revived the Hebrew language beyond just being spoken by the rabbis. They were developing or I should say reestablishing the customs and culture of old. They came up with a national anthem, a national flag.

NEVER did they believe that within fifty years their dream and what they were working on would come to fruition. On May the 14<sup>th</sup> 1948, the United Nations would pass a resolution and recognized them as a state.

There was great sympathy for them following the second world war, and Israel by God's grace was reborn in a day! The United States was the first to recognize Israel on that day. It was a miracle. And speaking of miracles.

The nations surrounding them (Ishmael's descendants) Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria immediately threatened war and attempted to "push the Jews into the sea".

You take the 1948 war of Independence, the 1956 Suez War against Egypt, the Six Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, wars against the Palestinian Liberation Organization and now against Hamas, whose stated goal is to wipe out the "Zionist entity"—it's a miracle that Israel is still in existence today.

Just think about it. In World War 2, what was it? 6 million Jews exterminated in the Holocaust. What God has done today?! There are now more than 7 million Jews currently living in Israel – a land mass about the size of New Jersey.

Historically, this is a land that has been fought for and will continue to be fought for until the day Jesus comes. It's a miracle Israel is still NOT just in existence, but thriving today.

#### **4. Political Perspective**

Let me show you this map – looked at a lot of maps today. **(SHOW MAP).**

You know what you're looking at? It's one of the only democracies in the Middle East. So, when we look at Israel today, one of the reasons its important is because it's one of the only countries that share some of the same beliefs as we do:

- a love for freedom and free enterprise...
- a chance to practice whatever religion you want to believe as long as you do it in peace...

There are certainly national security interests that we could cite as reasons in coming alongside Israel, however that does NOT mean we support them blindly.

Just like here in America, we don't agree with everything our politicians do or implement. We don't agree with everything Israel (as the nation exists today) does or implements, but they do

have a representative government that is elected by the people. And so, it is important that we stand beside them politically.

Now, where do we go from here? I want to give you three points of application and we'll call it a day. As it relates to Israel and the Christian, what are our roles and responsibilities knowing the biblical, spiritual, historical and political realities?

## **1. Pray**

We are commanded to pray for the peace AND welfare of the people of Israel. God loves Israel – not just the people, but the land.

**Zech. 8:2 – “Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.”**

**Psalms 132:13-14 – “For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: <sup>14</sup>“This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.”**

**Psalms 122:1-9 – “I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”**

**<sup>2</sup> Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! <sup>3</sup> Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together, <sup>4</sup> to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. <sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you! <sup>7</sup> Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”**

**<sup>8</sup> For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, “Peace be within you!” <sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.”**

The very first and best thing we can do for Israel and the people of Israel is to pray for peace...pray for their welfare. Pray for their salvation. Pray for their safety in this war.

Depending upon your “end times theology” and we haven't said much about that today, there are many who believe that there will be a great harvest of Jewish people that come to know Christ in the last days...and there are some that say that is happening right now!

I spoke with a man that runs a seminary in Israel who was in our services last week and said that Christianity is growing like crazy right now among the Jewish people. I believe him and I believe the scripture – that “Israel will be saved” at the time Jesus returns.

And look, don't just pray for Israel. Pray for innocent Palestinians that are caught in the crossfire. Pray for Palestinian believers that are living in Gaza and in those in the West Bank that suffering. They are our brothers and sisters and need our prayers.

Also, pray against Hamas. And this leads to action step two:

## **2. Speak**

One of the reasons I am preaching this message today is to hopefully give you some information that will help you speak to co-workers and family members as you see things happening in Israel.

We need to speak against the evil of Hamas. Their stated goal is to exterminate the Jewish people. These terrorists are evil to the core, you can't trust them...they are the ones that need to be eradicated!

There is such a thing as a just war! As Thomas Aquinas wrote and others have used this and built on top of it through the years, for a war to be just:

1. It has to be declared by competent authorities.
2. There has to be a good chance or likelihood of success.
3. There has to be a just cause or reason for war.

Israel has all of these in this war against Hamas...they need to make sure they conduct themselves in a just way during this war. I can't imagine ALL they are experiencing and dealing with as they fight this evil. Hamas doesn't fight fair!

We should not hesitate to speak and call evil, evil. When you kill over 1200 people and take hostage 240 plus people including women and children, there is no debate – we call out evil!

**Prov. 24:11-12, 24-25 – “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. <sup>12</sup> If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?... Whoever says to the wicked, “You are in the right,” will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations,<sup>25</sup> but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.”**

So, pray...speak...and then thirdly and finally:

### **3. Support**

I was talking with the President of Send Relief, our Disaster Relief arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, Bryant Wright. He was in Israel a few weeks ago and we have a partnership with a Baptist encampment that is not far from Tel Aviv. It's called Baptist Village.

They right now have transformed their grounds to take in Israelis who have had to relocate because of the war. They have tents people are living in, makeshift showers, and they are in need a new bomb shelter.

He was telling me that it is a law now that you have to have a certain number of bomb shelters to coincide with the number of people that are staying on a given property.

I talked to Bryant and this community is in need of one more bomb shelter at the cost of around \$30,000. I called our Business Office and we keep an account called “Disaster Relief” that many

of you give to from time to time, and it's money that is set aside for events that demand help and this prevents us from having to pass the plate every emergency that take place.

I asked them how much was in the account and they told me \$37,000. So, on behalf of your generosity, Champion Forest, we are going to provide a bomb shelter for these Israelis in need at this Baptist camp that we have a partnership with. Isn't that great?!

I am looking right now for a good organization that we can trust and see how we can get some humanitarian help to Palestinian believers in need. We're working on that and if you'd like to give, just designate your gift to disaster relief and we will fill that bucket back up and empty it when we find a good partner OR another emergency around here comes along. This is a call to support!

We talked about a lot today. I hope it's been helpful. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

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*Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.*