

SHOULD WE PRAY FOR ISRAEL?

Today, there is no small amount of talk, discussion, and controversy about the Nation of Israel and rightly so. Some think that they should be removed from their land, others say they should be wiped from the earth, and others say they have every right to live in and defend the land that the Bible says God gave them. Many say that the Bible says that we should pray for Israel, while others say kill them. Who's right? Should we pray for Israel or not? This will be our discussion.

After God created man, they continually turned from Him to darkness to the point where God gave them over to their own desires, lust, and depraved minds. Scripture demonstrates that this began with the earthly Adam and his wife in Genesis. This has been the case ever since, as well as God's work to turn mankind back to Himself: Rom 1:26–28, Rom 2:14; Jer 18; Act 17:24–31. This happened before Abraham, before Moses, before Israel was created and before the Law was given to them. So, now we have the nations of mankind, Gentiles/Heathen/Barbarians, who worship their own gods and go their own ways, even though man was free to seek and worship God if he chooses, but are held in captivity through sin and death in what Paul called a "dominion of darkness."

In God's plan to bring man back to Himself, He created a nation of people for Himself out of one man who believed Him: Abraham. Through Abraham, his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, and his twelve sons (tribes), the nation of Israel was created. Later, God tells Moses that He would be "their God" and they would be "His people" and they would be His inheritance or portion. He gave them "the Law" that would be their righteousness, Deu 6:24–25, and they were the people through whom God would bring the Anointed One who would die for the sins of the world. God also makes promises and covenants with them that He did not make with the Gentile nations. Here are the Covenants:

1. With Abraham He gives a Covenant of land, Gen 17:3–8, then 9–27 where

circumcision was the sign of the Covenant. This Covenant was confirmed through Isaac, Jacob, and Moses for the nation of Israel. Later they were brought to that "promised land" where Joshua led them into it and they only took and possessed part of it. Read Joshua.

2. The Law of Moses (10 Commandments) was given at Mt. Sinai, which the people of Israel agreed to obey and the Covenant was ratified by blood, Exo 19, 20, 24. Note here that this Law was conditional upon their obedience (blessing) or their disobedience (curses) to it, Deu 28–30, which will become extremely important as time passes and concerns their condition today. The Law included the Levites as priests, a sacrificial system for atonement of sin, temple worship, Sabbaths, rules for living, tithing, circumcision, yearly feasts, foods they could and could not eat, and various other things. Read Lev and Deu to see the various laws.
3. With David, God said that "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever," 2Sam 7:11–16; 1Ki 8:25. Confirmed through Solomon, 1Ki 9:3–4.
4. A promised future Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah that is not like the old one and He would give them His Spirit, Jer 31:31–37; Eze 36:26–27, quoted again in Heb 8:7–13. It would be in effect at a later time.

We should recognize here that the only Covenant God made with the other peoples of the earth was the one He made with Noah where He would never destroy the earth by water again, Gen 9:8–17. Also see Eph 2:11–12 and Rom 9:3–5 to see that Gentiles were not part of the Covenants with Israel and never under the Law of Moses.

Now that we have established who and what the Nation of Israel is, let's take a look at what has happened to them throughout history through the timeline of the Scriptures:

- Before they enter the promised land, God foretold Israel about their corruption, scattering, judgment, and finally their regathering and blessing. All this was given through Moses to the people. This means they knowingly and willingly disobeyed God's laws which brought judgment upon the nation because of the choices they made. Read Deu 30–32 very carefully and the song of Moses in ch 32. God told them their history in advance.
- After God gave them the Law, Joshua led them into the promised land. Read Joshua
- Also, God told them to take all of the land within the borders He established for them, but they failed to do so.

They never possessed all of the land God gave them, and failed to destroy the peoples in them.

- God gave them judges to govern them, read Judges. When they disobeyed God's Covenant, He punished them.
- They wanted to be like the Gentile nations and have a king, so God told Samuel to anoint Saul as their king. Read 1Sam 8 and 9. Also read Deu 17:14–20 to see that God knew that they would want a king. God included some limitations and qualifications for a king.

- Next came David and his son Solomon, who built the first temple in Jerusalem. Read 1Ki 8 to see that after the temple was completed, furnished, and the arc of the covenant set in place, v11 "...the glory of the Lord filled his temple." Reread Deu 17:14–20 and compare with Solomon's wealth and wives, 1Ki 10:14–29 note v23, and 11:1–6 note v3. In v6 "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord," because "he did not follow the Lord completely."
- After Solomon came his son Rehoboam, who caused Israel to be split into two nations, Israel – the northern part of the country consisting of 10 tribes, and Judah the southern part of the country consisting of 2 tribes which included Jerusalem. Each had their own king and even had conflicts with each other at times. Jesus came through the line of Judah. God, however, did not command them to divide the nation. Read 1&2Ki and 1&2Ch.

At this point God is still dealing with the two nations through prophets. He sent messages through the prophets of either blessings or curses depending on their actions and responses. Both nations had kings who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord," although there were a few who "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord," a priesthood that had become corrupt and did not care for the flock (people), and the intermarrying with Gentiles produced idol worship that had become grossly normal, leading them from God. God said that He was "a husband to them" in Jer 3:14, 31:32, and in Eze 16:32 He said, "You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband." He referred to them as prostitutes, whores, unfaithful, adulterous and a stiff necked, rebellious people. Remember, these are the people that He called to be "His people" and in Zec 2:8 the LORD refers to them as the "apple of his (God's) eye," but because they had moved so far away from the worship of God to idol worship and disobedience to His laws, decrees and commands, God responded to them as their actions demanded. Read Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to see them as God does and what He does to them – exiled as slaves.

- In 1Ki 9:6–7 the Lord appeared to Solomon and said "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you... serve other gods...then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple..."
- The glory of the Lord departs the temple. God rejected the temple. Read Eze 10 note v18, compare to Rev 21:3.
- Now we come to some verses that are very commonly left out of presentations of whether we should pray for Israel or not. Read Jer 7:16, 11:11,14; Eze 8:17–18, where God will not listen to them and told the prophet not to pray for these people (Israel) because "I will not listen." Added to this is Amo 5:21–27 where God would not accept their offerings and would not listen to their songs and was going to send them into exile. Amos was a pre-exile prophet.
- God gave Israel (10 northern tribes) a certificate of divorce and sends them away into Assyrian captivity, Jer 3:6–10; Isa 50:1; 2Ki 17. But, in the future, He will bring them back, Isa 54:5–8; Eze 34 and many other places.

- Judah is worse than Israel, Jer 3:8–11; Eze 23. In Jer 7:27–29 God says, “for the LORD has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath.”
- Judah and Benjamin were left in the land but about 120 years later, Assyria was conquered by Babylon, and they came in and took the two southern tribes along with Jerusalem, completing the total exile and devastation of the land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple. God had spoken. In the early chapters of Jeremiah all of this is explained and in ch 6 Jerusalem came under siege and was eventually taken in Eze 33:21 and Jer 39.
- During the time of exile there was a prophet named Daniel who went in the first wave of the Babylonian captivity as a young man. God used him to reveal four Gentile world empires/kingdoms and one that “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people,” Dan 2:36–45. Also revealed to him by reading Jeremiah the prophet was that the Babylonian captivity would last for 70 years, Dan 9:1–2, and last, but certainly not least, the 70 weeks of years (490 yrs.) of prophetic time for Israel, Dan 9:24–27. This time was given “for your people,” (Israel), where 69 weeks (483 yrs.) have been completed and 1 week (7 yrs.) remains unfulfilled. Also, God includes the exact time of the Anointed One’s death.
- In all of their disobedience and tribulations, God sends them messages through the prophets of a kingdom that they would possess and be able to “lie down and no one would attack them.” Multiple places in the OT.

The 70 years in the Babylonian captivity were over and people began migrating back to Israel. Nehemiah and Ezra went back and rebuilt the walls of the city, the temple, and reestablished the law, read Nehemiah and Ezra. Many were now back in the land but were still under Persian rule. After the Persians came the Greeks and then the Romans. Malachi is the last recorded prophet until John the Baptist (approx. 400 yrs. later), the forerunner of the Anointed One (Jesus). Little wonder why God did not speak to them through prophets after Malachi until time for the forerunner (John the Baptist) and the Prophet (Jesus who was the Christ) to appear whom God would send to them and “You must listen to Him,” Deu 18:15–19.

The forerunner and the Prophet/Anointed One (Jesus) came, calling Israel to repentance through the message (gospel) of “repent, for the kingdom of/from heaven is near/at hand” and the message was received by many of the people. They were preparing and teaching the people to enter the kingdom, explaining what it is going to be like in the kingdom, and Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to be the King of Israel, Lk 19:28–44, only to be rejected by Israel’s leadership, put on trial, and handed over to the Romans to be executed, after the 69th week of their prophetic time. They refused the Anointed One that God sent to them, who “would heal them” if they would have seen, understood, and turned (repented), Mat 13:14–15. The kingdom was upon them and ready to be entered, but not set up on earth yet; instead, their house was left to them desolate, and they will not see Him until His

return, Mat 23:37–39. They rejected the message of the Messiah and in 70AD the Romans came in and destroyed the second temple and the city, killed many of the people, and multitudes were taken and scattered. Zec 13:7–9 says “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I (God) will turn my hand against the little ones.” Zechariah was a post exile prophet, one of the last before John, the forerunner.

They have been under God’s wrath ever since He sent them into the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Yes, it is true that for a very short period of time, during the rebuilding of the city and temple “but in times of trouble,” Dan 9:25, by Nehemiah and Ezra, they did reestablish the Law and temporarily returned to the worship of God, and to the Law, but slowly slid back into idolatry and corruption. An interesting note is that God did not return to and inhabit the second temple they built, which was not the same as the first that God had instructed Solomon to build, but Jesus did call it His Father’s house and they were still under the Covenant/Law of Moses, still made animal sacrifices, still under Gentile rule and Jews were scattered throughout the known world, the gospels being accounts of the Messiah/Christ coming to Israel.

Now that we see some of Israel’s history, let’s see what the writers of the Epistles have to say about them.

- After the cross, under the new Covenant, God “commands all people everywhere to repent,” Act 17:30, where before, He only called the nation of Israel to repentance. Now another message (also called the gospel) is sent out to Israel first, then the entire Gentile world. This gospel is “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” 1Cor 15:3–4 and all God requires of us is to turn (repent) to Him by believing the gospel (good news) of what Jesus did on the cross.
- But, since the Jewish people largely do not believe that Jesus was/is the Messiah, they disobey this gospel also. After the temple was destroyed and they have no priests, they cannot make sacrifices for their sins and do not believe the gospel, thus they have no way for their sins to be atoned for or forgiven. The end result: any Jew, just like anyone else, who does not put their faith in what Jesus did on the cross, dies in their sins. Jn 3:18,36; Heb 10:26.
- Col 2:13–15 God cancelled the written code, took it away, nailing it to the cross. The Law of Moses has been fulfilled
- Heb 7:11–28 v12 – with a change of priesthood comes a change of the Law; v18–19 the former regulation set aside; v22 Jesus has become the guarantee of a better Covenant. The Jer 31 Covenant has begun, but Israel and Judah, nationally, are not under it yet and won’t be until the kingdom is set up on the earth by Christ after His return.
- Heb 8, 9, and 10 read all. At 8:13, He made the first one obsolete. At 9:11–28,

Jesus' shed blood on the cross replaced the sacrificial system. Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses, which was their righteousness if they kept it, under that Covenant. In Mat 3:15, 5:17 Jesus came to fulfill the righteousness of the Law and did so.

- Rom 11:13–14 "... in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them."
- Rom 11:25 they are hardened in part, v28 "as far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account"
- 2Cor 3:12–16 their hearts are veiled and the veil remains when the old Covenant is read. Only "in Christ" is it taken away.

After 70AD Israel did not exist as a nation that occupied their land, and have faced many atrocities as a people, and yet, they still survive. On May 14, 1948 they were allowed to return and reestablish their independence as a nation. Yes, many are in the land of Israel, but still do not possess all of what God gave them and have to continuously fight for what they do have, there is no righteous ruler on the throne in Jerusalem, and their Law has been fulfilled and set aside. They are trodden down by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and they are under the judgment of God because they disobeyed His laws, decrees, and commandments, turned to idol worship, and rejected the Messiah that God sent to them. So, this is how God is now dealing with the nation of Israel after the cross: as a national people under the curses of the Covenant, not as a people under blessing. He is now dealing with them as individual people the same way as He deals with the rest of the world. Yes, they are God's chosen nation and will remain to be so, but nationally they are disobedient and being disciplined by God, and are now in need of His mercy. Read Rom 11:25–32.

Let's recap Israel's current condition with a list of things to consider:

1. They turned away from God to idol worship.
2. They rejected God by disobeying His laws, decrees and commands which was God's Covenant with them. God divorced them and sent them away, told his prophets at times not to pray for them, and scattered them throughout the nations. They are still in rejection to this day and still in the state of divorce, but He will take them back and restore them when the "times of the Gentiles" is fulfilled. Read Hosea which was an illustration of this, and in ch 14 they are restored.
3. They rejected the Messiah that God sent to them and called for His death, then handed Him over to wicked men to be murdered.
4. They rejected the offer of the kingdom being set up by rejecting the King (Jesus).
5. Jesus' shed blood on the cross ratified the "new Covenant." Jesus fulfilled the Law of the old Covenant and set it aside, therefore they are no longer under it, but many Jews in the land still attempt to follow it.
6. The temple was destroyed so they have no way to make sacrifices.
7. Jesus' shed blood on the cross replaced animal sacrifice, but the Jews reject it.
8. The priesthood changed. Jesus became the High Priest and their priesthood went

away with the old Covenant.

9. Since they have no law, no priests, no temple, no sacrifices, they have no way for their sins to be atoned for, and since they don't believe in Jesus as Savior, they do not believe the gospel, they will die in their sins. Even if an animal sacrifice was made today, God would reject it because Jesus' shed blood is the only sacrifice God accepts for the forgiveness of sin now and they don't believe that.
10. They are still trodden by the Gentiles and will be until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled at the return of Christ. Example: An Islamic mosque sits on the site of the temple in Jerusalem and they are in constant conflict with neighboring countries that want to destroy them.
11. They have been blinded, hardened in part, and hearts veiled where only "in Christ" is all of this removed.
12. The 70th week is part of their prophetic time, still future and unfulfilled. Scripture indicates that they will be protected from at least part of it, probably the second half, but the tribulation and great tribulation are coming and nationally they must go through it, but those who hear the gospel and believe it with faith can be rescued from it just like any other person of the world.
13. As a nation of people, they are in total disobedience and rejection of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and almost everything He has done to, and for, them was under the Covenant of Law. Therefore, as a national people they are under the judgment of the curses of that law. That will not change until Christ returns, gathers and judges them for entrance or denial of entrance into the kingdom of/from heaven that He then sets up on the earth. Then they will be restored to prosperity and blessing in the kingdom.
14. Read Lk 19:40-44 where, as Jesus enters Jerusalem on the donkey, He tells them that they did not recognize their "visitation" or "time of God's coming to you" and "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes." This is why Jesus wept: they were rejecting God, and Jesus the Messiah He sent to them. As a result, they are now blinded, hardened in part, and hearts veiled to what they could have had, and the kingdom was now hidden from them. The rejection is now complete and God must judge them by the curses under the Covenant of the Law, which was their righteousness. The cross follows the rejection.

Between the resurrection of Jesus, and before the "catching out" (referred to as the rapture), God turns His focus to the Gentiles and gathers a "new creation" of people by grace that He calls the Body of Christ through the message of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Christ. This message, or gospel, is sent out to the entire world as God wants all men to be saved, including every Israelite. Although nationally they are under the curses of the Covenant, God has not ignored them, He offers them the same salvation as He does to all men. There are many Jews in Israel and around the world that have heard and believed the gospel and have been saved from the penalty of their sins, but the majority do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and the vast majority reject this gospel also, leaving them unforgiven of their sins. Again, they show themselves disobedient to the message that God has sent to

them and the world.

There seems to be a great fear today that somehow mankind will be able to totally destroy the Nation Israel, maybe through war, or possibly nuclear attack where they would be annihilated. Has anyone of those who say this ever considered that there are Jews scattered all over the earth and that the only way to eliminate all of them is to kill virtually every person on the planet? And by the way, there only needs to be two Jews to enter the kingdom – 1 man and 1 woman. It seems as though the people who say these types of things give no consideration to the Scriptures or critical thinking processes whatsoever. Even the Jews themselves fear Iran, for example, for their nuclear potential. Scripture said there would be “wars and rumors of wars” and that there would be “times of the Gentiles,” and they would be trodden by them until that time is fulfilled, read Lk 21:5–28. Do we think that God is just joking with them, and us, or is He telling them what is going to happen because of their disobedience? Have they never read Jer 31:36 where God says “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight...will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me?” This immediately following where He tells them that He will make a new Covenant with them that has not happened as of today. Yes, they are going to see hard times and constant friction with the nations around them and those of the whole world, but even in the Epistles, God’s Word says that He is not done with them yet, Rom 11:25–27. He will restore them at the proper time; it’s just not time yet and man cannot change God’s timing. He alone knows when the time is right to accomplish His purposes. God has a plan and He is more than capable and will see it through to the end, as He determines.

God will not/cannot allow Israel to be wiped out as a national people because the Scriptures teach repeatedly that God will restore them again and God cannot lie. It will happen after the 70 weeks have ended and upon Jesus’ return. He will then search for the sheep, and rescue them from where they have been scattered. He will gather them out of the nations, and pasture them in their own land. He will shepherd over and tend them Himself. He will bind up the injured and weak, and destroy the sleek and strong (judgement). He will bless them and make a Covenant of peace with them (Jer 31:31–34) and “They will live in safety and no one will make them afraid.” Read all of Eze 34 esp v11–31. Then go to Eze ch 40–48 to see how the kingdom is set up, a new temple is built and consecrated, priests are reestablished, shepherds are set over the people, and the land is divided according to the 12 tribes and one portion for the King. God will restore Israel to a position of being “His people” and He will be “their God,” but only in His time, not ours. There are many places in the prophets that

speak of their restoration after their entrance into the kingdom of heaven that is set up on the earth. You and I must accept the fact that we cannot change God's dates and times that He has determined.

After reading this presentation, one may conclude that we are saying that we should not pray for Israel. But that would be inaccurate; we are not saying that. What we are pointing out is the current condition they are in and their actions that caused them to be here. They have rejected God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and put themselves in a position where God had to judge them according to the Law they were under as He told them He would do. Now here they are, under the curses of the Covenant, and they are trying to follow a Law in vain that has been fulfilled and set aside. God has announced the 70 weeks of their prophetic time with one week remaining to be fulfilled, which they must go through. There is no way around it, this time of tribulation and great tribulation will come before their restoration because the God of heaven has foretold Israel's prophetic time and announced it to the world through His Word. Prayer will not change it, hope will not change it, whining and crying will not change it, wishing will not change it, sacrifice will not change it, nor any other means of supplication to God will change what He has determined for His people, His righteous judgement on the unrepentant nation of Israel and all the unrepentant peoples of the earth in the 70th week.

After the 70 weeks are completed, He will gather them for judgment and set up the kingdom they have been promised. Then, and only then, is God going to restore them to blessing and the glory of being "God's people" and He will be "their God" in the kingdom as God wanted them to be when He led them into the promised land originally, and they will never sin against Him as a national people again. But for now, this is how God is dealing with the nation Israel, and as the Body of Christ we must make this observation and realize what they are up against today.

I once attended a church where, during the sermon, the pastor raised his hands into the air and claimed in a loud voice that God commands us to pray for Israel and referenced Ps 122:6. If you will look up that verse you will find that is not what it says. It says "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." This was David, knowing the Law and the song of Moses and what was to eventually come, praying that Jerusalem will have peace within its walls. The pastor gave no further evidence of any other Scripture to support this claim. He did not go on to say that God told the prophets to not pray for these people as He divorced them and sent them into exile. And he did not mention the fact that there is not a single verse in the Epistles to the Body of Christ that tells us to pray for the Nation of Israel. The closest you can get is in Rom 11:13-14 where

Paul says "I may somehow arouse my own people (Israel) to envy and save some of them." But even here he is talking about saving individuals through the gospel and not the nation as a whole, because he understands what has happened to them.

With all of these considerations in mind, let's ask the question again with a slight modification: Exactly what is it that we should be praying for Israel? Should we pray they continue on the road of rejection and for a peace that they will not have, or should we pray they hear the gospel and believe so they can be rescued from their sins and so be saved as God wants all men to be saved, including Israelites?

If you choose to pray for Israel as a nation, do it with understanding of their current condition and the wrath of the 70th week that must still come upon them, as well as the whole world. Don't be misled by people who, in their own misunderstandings, distort the Scriptures and take them out of context, and try to convince you to do something that is not Biblically sound in its construction. If you understand Israel's present condition, and that God is now gathering the Body of Christ by way of the gospel, the 70th week is still to come, and that their restoration will come in its time, you now have sound Biblical footing on which to place your decision of whether or not to pray, and how to pray for them.

We realize that today, there is a great deal of social and political pressure about this subject in both directions and that many believers are not aware of some, or possibly many, of the things pointed out in this discussion because they are not taught from the pulpit or from classrooms. So, please read the Scriptures that we noted to see what the Bible actually says and do not rely solely on a man or the world's opinion. As a member of the Body of Christ, our world view should be from the Scriptures and your understanding is your responsibility. "We live by faith (what God says), not by sight," 2Cor 5:7.

The choice is yours

Grace be with you