

Sen. Joe Lieberman Stands With John Hagee at Pro-Israel Summit

More than 4,000 people attended the Christians United for Israel summit held this week in Washington, D.C.



[] Independent Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut defied critics to attend the Christians United for Israel (CUFI) Third Annual Washington-Israel Summit Tuesday, saying his bond with pastor John Hagee is stronger than before recent controversies.

In May Hagee was embroiled in a media firestorm when liberal Democrats accused him of being anti-Semitic after comments he made 10 years ago about the Holocaust were publicized. The controversy resulted in Sen. John McCain rejecting the endorsement Hagee had given him. Lieberman, a Jew, also was under great pressure not to attend the annual CUFI summit.

Lieberman received a standing ovation when he quoted Genesis 45:3 to the more than 4,000 attendees at the Washington Convention Center in the nation's capital, saying "I am your brother Joseph."

"It's easy to not like someone you don't know based on a sound bite," Lieberman told the crowd. "Rather than look for ways to put each other down, we need to look for ways to bring us together. We Americans live in a world of real enemies ... let's not make enemies with each other. We must stand together against our common foes."

Lieberman told the predominantly Christian Zionist crowd, "Know that there is a value to your presence here in Washington."

He then told them their faith needed to be followed by action, just as the Israelites had to take the step of crossing the Red Sea during their Exodus from Egypt rather than only crying out to God to deliver them.

The attendance at the July 21-23 event exceeded last year's

numbers, although CUFI Executive Director David Brog said final numbers are not available yet. Brog said that in 2006 there were approximately 3,000 attendees and participation has climbed each ensuing year. The delegates—from all 50 states and several foreign countries—attended a celebration of the 60th anniversary of Israel's statehood. They also learned how to lobby their representatives and senators regarding pro-Israel legislation aimed primarily at bringing sanctions against Iran.

Brog, a Jew, said the Washington summit was a “strong demonstration that our problems are overcome and turn adversity to advantage.”

Hagee told the group that CUFI has been approached by Christians in Canada, Mexico and Hong Kong to rally pro-Israel groups of Christians. He told the crowd that CUFI “will go to the ends of the earth” to get out the message about supporting Israel.

Hagee received repeated standing ovations as he talked about the biblical mandate to support Israel. But he also indirectly responded to media criticism that has tried to portray him as someone who supports Israel to usher in an end-time Armageddon.

At one point in his speech, Hagee said: “Notice what I didn't say. ... I didn't say hurry up the end times. That's because God is sovereign. We don't know when these things will happen, and we can do nothing to hurry them.”

Hagee also seemed to be speaking to his critics when he said, “Instead of trying to expose our dark motives, you're actually exposing your own dark motives.”

Hagee introduced several prominent Roman Catholics who attended the event at his invitation, including Bill Donovan of the influential Catholic League. Donovan had been the most vocal critic of some statements attributed to Hagee that were characterized as anti-Catholic.

Hagee has issued statements outlining the working relationship that he's had with Catholics in San Antonio for years, his support of Catholic charities and his view of Catholic theology. (Click [here](#) to read Hagee's response to critics.) He also met face to face with Catholics, received their endorsement and said that the result is that CUFI is

"broadening its tent" to include Roman Catholics who support Israel.

"What the enemy meant for evil, God has turned into good," Hagee said.

As recently as a month ago it looked as if attendance at the summit would be lower this year due to a variety of circumstances, including higher gas prices. However, there was a surge in registrations just before the event began.

Rabbi Aaron Rubinger of Ohev Shalom synagogue in Orlando, Fla., attended the event as a guest, and as he viewed the large crowd he said it looked as big as the annual meeting of AIPAC (American Israel Political Action Committee).

Numerous Jewish representatives were there, including Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, Hagee's longtime friend, and Daniel Gillerman, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations who gave a rousing speech during the banquet.

The Tuesday banquet, called the National Night to Honor Israel, was the highlight of the three-day event. Hagee told the crowd that there had been 80 Nights to Honor Israel held in cities across the United States in the last 12 months.

CUFI divides the country into regions and states, with regional and state directors who organized the attendees to visit their representatives and senators on Capitol Hill. Many came with pre-arranged appointments, but the group went from office to office leaving materials and talking with staff when lawmakers were not available.

Hagee also introduced a new campus thrust for CUFI headed by Andrew Summey called CUFI On Campus. Approximately 200 college students attended the event as guests of CUFI.

Father Rodger Hunter-Hall, a prominent Catholic scholar, gave a gracious benediction and blessing to the group, the first time a Roman Catholic had been invited to address CUFI in its short history.

Lieberman said he enjoyed speaking to the group because he could quote the Bible, which he did numerous times.

In addition to talking about the problems in the Middle East and the importance of supporting Israel he emphasized what Jews and Christians have in common. "We both believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God," Lieberman said. "We believe in a God of creation, a God of redemption and a God of

salvation. We don't just believe in God. We love God, and we know God loves us."

CUFI plans to hold its fourth annual convention in Washington, D.C., July 20-23, 2009.