

Jerusalem the Beautiful, Jerusalem the Ugly

I am absolutely thrilled that we have moved our embassy to Jerusalem. As I previously expressed, it is both the right and righteous thing to do, and President Trump deserves massive appreciation for his courageous act. Thank you, Mr. President!

It is also right that Christians around the world celebrate this historic event, an event that could even be of prophetic significance. As Pastor John Hagee prayed at the official ceremony, "Jerusalem is the city of God, Jerusalem is the heartbeat of Israel, Jerusalem is where Abraham placed his son on the altar. Jerusalem is where Messiah will come and establish a kingdom that will never end."

There is really no city on earth like Jerusalem, and it stuns me every time I'm there. The beauty. The majesty. The history. The different world religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—living side by side. There is no place on earth like it.

No city on earth can match its past and no city on earth can match its future. That's why, for centuries, religious Jews around the world have prayed daily for the restoration of Jerusalem. And that's why, for centuries, religious Jews have said, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

It is the city in which all the prophetic purposes of God will one day culminate. And from a pragmatic, not prophetic point of view, it is and has been the functioning capital of Israel. That's why I have said it is both right and righteous for our administration to recognize this by relocating our embassy.

But we must not get ahead of ourselves, especially as followers of Jesus. Jerusalem is still in need of redemption.

There are multiplied tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews

living in Jerusalem, and they are virulently opposed to Jewish faith in Jesus. (Ironically, many of these Jews are actually anti-Zionist!)

Every year, Jerusalem hosts a gay pride parade, part of a larger celebration of LGBT activism in Israel. (Last month, radical feminists showed up topless at a gay pride event in Tel Aviv.)

And as much as the Jewish state seeks to bring equality to all peoples living there, many Arabs living in parts of Jerusalem feel like second-class citizens. And so, Jerusalem is still not that prophesied city of peace.

As for the nation as a whole, it is more secular than religious, and it is plagued with the same sins that plague other nations, including sexual immorality, drug abuse and crime. Just visit Tel Aviv at night and tell me if it differs from other worldly cities around the globe. Or check out Israel's policies regarding abortion for female soldiers. Or listen to Israelis who themselves are critical of their people's treatment of many Palestinians.

Of course, Israel as a nation excels in many ways. It does have a unique ethical base. It does have some real biblical foundations. It is a world leader in agricultural development and technology and medicine. And where natural disasters are taking place all over the world, you're sure to see Israel helping and serving.

But Israel is yet to be redeemed, and Jerusalem is yet to welcome its Redeemer. That's why we must continue to pray for the day when the "Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression" (Isa. 59:20; see also Rom. 11:25-29).

So, on a day like today, when history is made in front of our eyes, I rejoice and celebrate. Let the nations rage and vent their anger. President Trump has done today what Presidents

Clinton, Bush and Obama failed to do. This is very big.

But let us never lose sight of the larger picture. The people of Israel need their Redeemer—Yeshua, the Messiah—and Jerusalem needs to be redeemed.

I leave you with the words of Isaiah, speaking of the ultimate future of Jerusalem. May they be fulfilled speedily!

“In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall go and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:2-4).