

10 Reasons Why Every Believer and Church Should Stand with Israel

There is no doubt that Israel enjoys growing support from the evangelical movement today.

At times, this support is little understood, especially because for centuries, the church struggled to understand the “Jewish question” and even displayed and instigated militant anti-Semitism against God’s chosen people. They taught that God was finished with the Jews. This has changed dramatically, yet the question remains: Why do we support Israel today?

I invite you to take your Bible and consider with me 10 reasons why all believers in Jesus should support, bless and stand with God’s chosen people, the Jews.

No. 1 – God loves Israel. The prophet Jeremiah states very clearly: “‘The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness . . .’ The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!’” (Jer. 31:2–4a, NKJV). After a season of judgment (“the sword”), God is motivated by His “everlasting love” to restore Israel. Note that it is an everlasting love . . . unceasing, never-ending! It was this love that birthed God’s plan with Israel (Deut. 7:7) and this love will also bring it to a glorious end (Rom. 11:25–28).

Someone once asked me: “How can God love a sinful nation like Israel?” The answer is simple: With the same unconditional love the Lord has toward the church. Indeed, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). So here is a simple rule for all believers: We should love what Jesus

loves. How is your love for Israel? Just ask God to give you His love for the Jewish people!

No. 2 – He is a covenant-keeping God. God affirmed His promise to give Israel the land of Canaan with a sworn covenant. In Genesis, we read how God appeared to Abraham to promise him a land and descendants as innumerable as the stars of heaven. Abraham replied: “How can I be sure you really will do this?” God answered by coming down as a burning torch that passed through sacrificial animals to seal the land promise with Abraham by covenant oath (Gen. 15:17–18).

One of God’s main character traits is that He is a covenant-keeping God. Some Christians insist God has changed His mind about Israel, given up on them and has established a new covenant with the church – the “new Israel.” But that would be devastating news for every believer today. With every sin, lukewarm attitude or lack of commitment, do we need to fear that God will change His mind about us too? No, for even “if we are faithless, He remains faithful – for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13, ESV). Thus, the great hope for both Israel and the church is that God always keeps His covenant promises – forever!

No. 3 – God hallows His name. The prophet Ezekiel powerfully described in chapter 36 how God will restore the land and people of Israel in the last days. When he sees them returning from the nations and being filled with God’s Spirit, he gives a clear reason why God is doing this: “...I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went” (Ezek. 36:21, NKJV). Then he declares to Israel: “[Not] for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake [I will restore you]...And I will sanctify My great name, so that the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (Ezek. 36:22-24).

It is rather astonishing that the world media is still so preoccupied with Israel, even 73 years after its establishment. As the Swiss theologian Karl Barth stated in 1967: "Now you can read it in the newspapers; God is fulfilling His promises." Or as Ezekiel said, God is sanctifying His name before the whole world. By looking to Israel, the world can see that God is still alive and He is a promise-keeping God! Therefore, whenever you pray the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be Thy name," also pray for Israel and God's faithfulness to the Jewish people.

No. 4 – Israel is a key for revival and future blessing for the church. According to the apostle Paul, Israel's full restoration will release an unprecedented blessing to the church. In Romans 11, Paul makes two most amazing statements:

"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!" (v. 12)

"For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!" (v. 15)

Paul presents it as almost a mathematical formula. First, looking at Israel's fall (or failure) and casting away, he still sees blessing released of "riches for the gentiles" and "reconciliation of the world." Then he looks to Israel's future fullness and acceptance and foresees an even greater release for the world of "life from the dead."

In Acts 3:19–21, Peter also sees that a spiritually restored Israel will release "times of refreshing" from the presence of the Lord (v. 19) and the "times of the restoration of all things" (v. 21), which eventually brings the return of Christ. That means Israel's restoration is key for everyone who thirsts for the outpouring that God still has in store for the church. Or, to put it another way, if you thirst for revival, pray for Israel!

No. 5 – We owe it to the Jews. In his letter to the Romans, Paul recounts the Macedonian churches' lavish love offering for the "poor saints" in Jerusalem. It was such a substantial gift that Paul personally delivered it to Jerusalem. But why did they give so much? Paul explains: "For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things" (Rom. 15:26–27).

The believers of Macedonia understood an important principle. Salvation came from the Jews (John 4:22) and they were obligated to return a gift of thanks. Jesus was Jewish, the authors of the Bible were all Israelites and everything that defines our faith today – even the sacrifice of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit – took place in Israel through Jews. Thus, Jesus Himself declared: "Salvation is of the Jews!" (John 4:22). Have you ever shown your gratefulness to God's people for administering to us the means of His eternal grace? If not, I encourage you to follow the Macedonian example and express your appreciation to Israel.

No. 6 – Our roots are in Israel. Romans 11 contains a botanical miracle. Paul identifies a natural – or noble – cultivated olive tree and a wild olive tree (wild olive trees are scrubs that bear inedible fruit). He then describes God doing something no farmer would ever do – he cuts off limbs from the noble tree and grafts wild olive branches in their place. Normally, this process is done exactly the other way around: noble branches are grafted onto wild trees. But Paul relates this strange botany experiment to Israel and the Gentile nations. The wild Gentile nations are grafted into the noble Jewish olive tree by faith in Jesus and are nourished by the rich sap rising from their prophets, patriarchs and kings.

Paul, therefore, tells the Gentile church in Rome to "remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you"

(Rom. 11:18). Our spiritual roots are not in Rome, Geneva or Azusa Street. They lay in Jerusalem – with Hebrew prophets, Jewish apostles, a Jewish Savior and a Bible written by Jews (see also Ephesians 2:11–13). So let us honor our spiritual roots, knowing Paul also declares that one day the original natural, noble branches will be grafted back into their own tree.

No. 7 – Now is the right time to do it. Psalm 102 is one of the most powerful prophetic passages in the Bible. Whenever I read the first 11 verses of this “Psalm of the afflicted,” I see in my mind’s eye the crematories of Auschwitz and the emaciated bodies of Buchenwald. It is a cry of hopelessness where the psalmist sees his people withering like grass. But suddenly, the tone of this psalm dramatically changes and becomes one of restoration, culminating in the Lord “building up Zion” and “appearing in glory” (Ps. 102:16).

The key verse is verse 13, where God suddenly takes action: “You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come” (Ps. 102:13). The Hebrew word for “set time” is *mo’ed*, which also is used for Israel’s annual holidays. They are the set or appointed times of the Lord. We should see them as eternal entries in God’s appointment diary. And here, the psalmist sees that God has fixed a day for the restoration of Israel to arrive.

You do not need to be a prophecy expert to see this set day has arrived. Already for 100 years, the Lord has been busy restoring Zion. God has arisen to actively show mercy to Zion. Therefore, it is also time for us to arise and join what God is doing!

No. 8 – God has changed His way of dealing with Israel. Now, this statement might sound almost heretical. In the end, we all believe God never changes – right? He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Yet centuries before the birth of Christ, the Lord announced that one day, He would change

the way He deals with Israel: “‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the Lord of hosts. . . . ‘Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah” (Zech. 8:11–15).

These verses describe a total reversal of how God relates to Israel. It is a radical shift in gears – from reverse to fast forward. In previous centuries, it might have been difficult to see His ongoing faithfulness to Israel. Many theologians saw this dispersed and downtrodden people as an eternal state of judgment on the Jews. But God never gave up on them. And today, we are without excuse when even our newspapers report that Zion is being restored! And if God has changed His approach to Israel, then He will also help you to arise and bless His people.

No. 9 – The Jews are in the family of Jesus. This may be the simplest yet most powerful reason: Jesus is a Jew! Paul puts it like this: “. . . of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God” (Rom. 9:5).

Years ago, when I spoke about this in a church in Bavaria, a brother came to me after the service saying, “Yes, it is true, Jesus was born to a Jewish mother. But you forgot one thing. When Jesus rose from the dead, He received a glorified body. He stopped being Jewish and now He is the universal brother of all mankind.” I was truly impressed. Jesus, the universal brother of mankind, sounded amazing. But in Revelation, I read that Jesus – in His glorified body – is still the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). The very last words of Jesus in the Bible, often standing out in red letters, are: “I, Jesus . . . am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16). So even on the very last page of the New Testament, Jesus reminds us that His great, great, great . . . grandfather is a Jewish king from Jerusalem. When

we serve the Jewish people, we serve the earthy family of Jesus. And I truly believe He takes notice when we do so.

No. 10 – The Bible commands us to comfort Israel. Finally, and most importantly, we need to bless Israel because it is God's command. Isaiah delivers this divine imperative, saying: "'Comfort, yes comfort My people' says your God" (Isa. 40:1). This is not a call to the Jewish people; otherwise, they would be comforting themselves. Rather, it is a call to a Gentile people to stand alongside Israel and bless and comfort her. It is a command for a time when Israel's warfare has ended (40:2), a set time when God is restoring Zion. And Isaiah 40 is also clearly not a suggestion or discussion point where He invites our opinion. Instead, God Himself, the Creator of heaven and earth who calls out the stars by name (Isa. 40:26), tells us to arise and stand with His people in comfort and love.

It is precisely for these reasons why the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was established in 1980 to stand with and comfort Israel and, with God's help, we will continue to do so in the decades ahead. Let us all do this together! {eoa}

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