

More Than 5,000 Christian Pilgrims Stand With Israel 'Because the Bible Says So'

At a time of rising anti-Semitism, thousands of Christians are in Jerusalem to celebrate the biblical Feast of Tabernacles and stand with Israel.

They came from the ends of the earth for the six-day celebration, sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), answering an ancient invitation.

"It's the invitation of Zechariah the prophet. In chapter 14, verse 16 of the book of Zechariah, he envisions a time when all the nations will come up, celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, worship the Lord here and we're like forerunners. It's a dress rehearsal," ICEJ Vice President David Parsons told CBN News.

More than 5,000 Christians from nearly 100 nations came for the opening night to proudly stand with Israel and celebrate the biblical feast.

"In the end of the day it's God's faithfulness that has established for almost 40 years now this international gathering of the body of Christ in a unique way that you can't find anywhere else," Parsons said.

The organization started in 1980 after 13 countries moved their embassies from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv protesting Israel's declaration of the united city as its eternal capital.

Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War made that possible by uniting Jerusalem so this is a special year for the feast.

"What's really exciting, it's the jubilee year for Jerusalem. We're marking 50 years since the city of Jerusalem was

reunited back under Jewish sovereignty," Parsons said.

More than half of those celebrating are first-timers.

"We're part of a 26-strong Cook Island delegation, and we're here to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and we're about to be registered as a nation with ICEJ for the first time ever, so it's wonderful to be here just with the nations in the presence of God and worshipping together," Paul Lynch said.

"It's in the Bible, it's quite clear. Those who bless Israel will be blessed. They're God's chosen country and our government is making a pledge to support Israel," he said.

"Early on this year God asked me to come to represent the nation of Samoa," said Cruise Westerland. "So I brought a team of 20 people. So we're here happily from the ends of the earth, just two hours flight from Fiji."

We asked some pilgrims why they stand so strong with Israel.

"Because the Bible says so," said Westerland.

"It's the biggest proof that God is alive," a young man named Bjorgfinnur from the Faroe Islands said. "You have the Jews coming back. You have the land flourishing."

"I think Israel is such an important country in the view of the Bible. So I think every single Christian on the planet should support Israel," said Veronica, a young woman from Finland said.

"Israel has given to many nations. It's been a blessing to a lot of nations all over the world and it's time to pay back," Dr. Rotimi Olokodana from Nigeria said.

Alina from Washington State said, "Jews are the God's chosen nation, and, I mean, you don't want to go against God. That's all I can say." {eoa}

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