

Why Should Christians Care About Israel?

Israel is a tiny country about the size of the American state of New Jersey, and therefore, it seems quite puzzling that we hear about Israel in the news to such a disproportionate extent.

Whether it's the peace process, the settlements, or the latest war or terrorist attack, Israel is in the headlines more than almost any other nation. How do we explain the attention that the world media gives to this little speck of land in a sea of hostile Islamic nations?

Some of Israel's enemies would say that the excessive focus on Israel stems from the Jewish state's supposed oppression of the Palestinians, while some of its supporters would claim that the cause is knee-jerk anti-Semitism, or irrational hatred of Jews. While we can examine the issue from many different angles, we would be remiss if we ignored the ancient roots of Israel, as well as the roots of Christianity, a religion that arose based on the teachings of a Jew who was born in Bethlehem, in the biblical heartland of Israel.

Israel is a hot spot because Israel is the cradle of Western civilization, otherwise known as Judeo-Christian civilization. Its roots are in the Bible, the international bestseller, and within its covers we find the values that have made that civilization the world leader, at least until recently. The concepts of "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Thou shalt not murder" are just a couple of the values that Jews and Christians alike hold as the ideal.

In addition, God makes it clear where He stands on marital fidelity, honesty and humility. All of those biblical commandments speak of societal standards and relationships,

but there are also national guidelines that bind us no less, specifically referring to the nation and land of Israel.

“Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea [the Mediterranean] shall be your territory” (Deut. 11:24).

These geographic guidelines, which recur in similar wording throughout the Bible, are referred to often as an “eternal inheritance.” For those of us who do not consider the Bible to be a primitive book for superstitious cavemen, the ramifications of these words for the current conflicts between Israel and its neighbors are quite extensive, and cannot be ignored by anyone who considers God’s instructions to be eternal.

Are these guidelines only for Israel, only for the Jewish people? Or could there perhaps be a lesson in there for Christians, as well? The founding father of Israel, Abraham, was given clear instructions of the nature of Israel’s relationships with the nations and the nations’ relationships with Israel. “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

The blessings for the nations go through Israel, so the national and international instructions concerning Israel are relevant to all the nations of the world, which of course includes all Christians. The events in the land of Israel today and in the Middle East, as well, demand that Israel be “a light unto the nations,” but they also demand the active involvement of Christians.

The prophet Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem, spoke about what would be happening today, as much of Israel rebuilds its biblical heartland amid internal dissension, as well as over the fierce

objections of the world. Should Christians be involved in that process? The answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

"I shall yet rebuild you and you shall be rebuilt, O maiden of Israel; you will yet adorn yourself with drums and go forth in the dance of merry-makers. You will yet plant vineyards in the mountains of Samaria, the planters will plant and redeem. For there will come a day when watchmen will call out on Mt. Ephraim, 'Arise let us ascend to Zion, to the Lord our God'" (Jer. 31:3-6).

In the original Hebrew of the Bible, the word for watchmen is "notzrim," which in modern Hebrew means "Christians." However, one interprets the modern usage of an ancient word; the message here seems clear as day.

Christians are expected to be playing an active role in supporting the rebuilding of Israel in these difficult times. It is indeed a privilege to be a watchman on behalf of God's land and Israel's prophetic return to its biblical heartland "in the mountains of Samaria."

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