

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Past, Present and Future

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The conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians in Israel is one which attracts differing and deeply-held opinions. However it is pointless, for a Christian, to view the situation from the same secular-humanist perspective as most commentators. What follows is a small attempt to clarify the question from a biblical (God's) standpoint.

The Past:

Israel was chosen by God and promised possession¹ of the land if the nation remained true to God. However they did not.

"Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols.

I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions."

(Ezek 36:17-19)

But God has promised:

"Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant¹ with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord."

(Lev 26:44-45)

Because:

"I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone." (Ezek 36:21)

And thus God said to them:

"I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--"

(Isaiah 43:5&6)

The Present:

God has - increasingly over the last 50 years - gathered the Jews back to Israel. He has said that he will use "hunters" and "fishermen" (persecution and inducements) in the process.² This has been especially evident in the holocaust and the re-creation of the modern state of Israel through a 2/3rds majority vote by the United Nations in 1947.

However, the Jews have been gathered in unbelief and so God has said of His plans for -

The Future:

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

(Ezek 36:25)

And all for the sake of God's holy Name:

"Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes."

(Ezek 36:23b)

God continues:

"In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations [diaspora] and divided up [partitioned] my land."

(Joel 3:1-2)

He also warns:

"On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem."

(Zech 12:9)

And He will ultimately open the Jewish eyes to the Messiah:

"I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

(Zech 12:10)

Meanwhile:

GOD has given some guidance to the Gentile church regards what should be the Christian's attitude to his ancient people:

"If some of the branches [the Jews] have been broken off, and you [Gentile Christians], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!"

(Rom 11:17-24)

Then reinforces:

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: [know that] Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved"³

(Rom 11:25,26)

1. Possession of the land was conditional; ownership was and is an eternal and unconditional covenant made to Abraham and subsequently confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. (Gen 17:8; Psalm 105:8-11)

2. But now I will send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. (Jeremiah 16:16)

3. Nowhere in the New Testament is the word "Israel" used to mean "the church". (cf: The Destiny of Israel and the Church. D.Prince)