

Session 4

Why Israel Is Important to the Church

This session covers:

- Why Israel and the Jewish people are essential to the Church's end-time destiny
- Four reasons why Israel is important to the Church

This session corresponds to:

- Chapters 4-5 of *The Zion Mandate* book
- Session 4 of *Learning to Pray for Israel* CDs

Israel and the Church

1. There are four reasons why Israel is important to the Church. These are:

1. Israel is the apple of God's eye.
2. Christianity is Jewish.
3. Israel is God's land and His servant.
4. Israel's end-time revival will usher in the return of the Lord.

1. Israel Is the Apple of God's Eye.

1. We must understand God's heart for Israel.

- Reading through the Psalms and the Prophets, you quickly realize God's deep affections and passionate emotions for Israel.
- The Bible paints a vivid picture of God's exuberant zeal and fervent love for His covenant land and chosen people.
- In describing God's heart for the Jews, the Scriptures

use words such as precious, exceedingly jealous, delight, desire, chosen, and sought out.

- God is called Israel's Father, Keeper, and Shepherd.
- The Bible reveals that God's eye is on the city of Jerusalem; He is watching over His land with dedicated focus.
- Prophesying over Israel, Zechariah declared, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8).
- The apple of the eye is the pupil—one of the most sensitive parts of the body. It symbolizes something or someone that is deeply cherished and highly valued.
- This verse shows us that the land of Israel and the Jewish people are sensitive subjects to the Lord; He treasures them both deeply.
- Harming the Jews is like poking a finger in the eye of God; it is a direct infringement against the Almighty.
- The smallest act of injustice towards the Jewish people pains the heart of God. He feels the heartache and suffering of His chosen people.

2. The Scriptures describe in vivid detail the way God feels about Israel.

- The Lord burns with desire for Israel. The Psalmist stated, "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. 'This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it'" (Ps. 132:13-14). God told Israel, "You are precious in My sight...you are honored" (Isa. 43:4). Even though many Jewish people still reject Jesus as their Messiah, God's love for the Jews has never wavered.
- God is also exceedingly jealous for Israel. Zechariah prophesied, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion'" (Zech. 1:14).
- Every nation that mistreats the apple of God's eye stirs up His jealousy and anger. Any king, president, or dictator who pushes an ungodly agenda upon the Holy City will have a direct confrontation with the God of Israel, who burns with jealous fire.
- God's jealousy excites His wrath, and His wrath brings about the utter destruction of Israel's enemies. Jealousy inspires God to defend His beloved people, defeat their enemies, and fulfill every covenant promise.
- Jeremiah revealed God's overflowing love and tender compassion for the Jewish people when he prophesied, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!" (Jer. 31:3-4).
- God's love for the Jewish people has no bounds or limits. It is an unchanging, unconditional, overflowing, and steadfast love.
- God loves Israel like a husband loves his wife (Isa. 54:5-10). As a lovesick Husband, God says to His wife Israel, "With everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you" and "My lovingkindness will not be removed from you" (Isa. 54:8,10).
- The Lord is the keeper and the guardian of Israel (Ps. 121:4; Isa. 27:2-3). Though terrorists plot against Israel and nations seek to di-

vide her, God is watching over Israel as the Chief Watchman.

- Zechariah described God's heart toward Israel when he prophesied, "I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!" (Zech. 8:13-15).
- Hosea stated, "Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days" (Hos. 3:5).
- Undoubtedly, the Lord will exert His infinite power to bless Israel in the days to come. Nothing will be able to thwart this purpose. Not the media. Not charismatic leaders. Not the hordes of Islamic armies. Nothing will hinder God from blessing Israel. It is guaranteed and secured by the blood of Jesus—God will do good to Israel in the days ahead!
- In summary, the Lord's heart for Israel burns with desire, is exceedingly jealous, overflows with love and compassion, and is filled with mercy.

The most important reason why Israel is important to the Church is because Israel is important to God.

2. Christianity Is Jewish.

1. Jesus Christ—our Lord and Savior—is Jewish.

- Several movies feature a blue-eyed Jesus that looks more like an American right out of Hollywood than a Jew from the Middle East.
- Jesus Christ, known as Yeshua to the Hebrews of His day, was born a Jew, died a Jew, and will return as a Jew.
- He observed all the customs of the Law, studied the Torah, went to the temple, and celebrated the Jewish feasts.
- When Jesus died on the cross in Jerusalem, He was fulfilling the Jewish festival of Passover. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that was slain for the sins of the world!
- Three days later, when Jesus rose from the dead, He fulfilled the Feast of First-Fruits by becoming the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20).
- When Jesus came the first time to tabernacle among men (John 1:14), it was a partial fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. When Jesus returns the second time as the reigning King, He will completely fulfill this festival as "all the nations...go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths [the Feast of Tabernacles]" (Zech. 14:16, emphasis mine).
- Jesus Christ is still the King of the Jews (John 18:33-37). In fact, Jesus has even maintained His Jewish identity in heaven. When John was taken into the heavenly throne room, he described Jesus as "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Rev. 5:5).

- When Isaiah spoke of the Messiah, he called Him Israel. Notice what he said:

Listen to Me, O islands, and pay attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named Me. He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; and He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. He said to Me, "*You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory.*"...And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (Isa. 49:1-3,5).

- As the Messiah, Jesus prevailed in the same areas where ancient Israel failed. Like Israel, Jesus was called out of Egypt and tested in the wilderness for forty days (Matt. 2:13-15; Matt. 4:1-11). Yet instead of failing God's tests, Jesus prevailed—qualifying Him to possess the Promised Land in the Millennial Kingdom and to rule the earth as God.
- Jesus is the prototype of what the Jewish nation is to become. He is the One to whom all the promises were made and fulfilled.

2. The Scriptures are Jewish.

- All thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written by Jewish authors.
- With the exception of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, Jews also wrote the New Testament.

3. At its inception, the Church was almost entirely Jewish.

- The Church began in Jerusalem under the leadership of twelve Jewish apostles and remained entirely Jewish until the Gospel spread into Antioch (Acts 11:19-30).
- The early Church practiced Jewish customs, went to the synagogue, observed the Sabbath, and celebrated the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.
- The Word of God declares that "salvation is from the Jews" and that the gospel is for "the Jew first" (John 4:22; Rom. 1:16).
- Christianity is not a new religion created by Gentiles; it is the fulfillment of the Jewish Law and prophets. As author Edith Schaeffer put it, *Christianity is Jewish*.

4. The Bible teaches that Christianity will be Jewish in the Millennial Kingdom and in heaven.

- The prophets tell us that Christianity will be Jewish when Jesus reigns in Israel for a thousand years.
- The temple will be reestablished (Ezek. 40-48).
- The priestly system will be restored (Isa. 66:21).
- The feasts will be celebrated (Zech. 14:16).

- The Sabbath will be observed (Isa. 66:23).
- The Law will go forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4).
- Even in heaven, we see Israel's significance. We are told of the new city Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles (Rev. 21:2; 14:1; 21:12; 21:14).
- As Derek Prince said about heaven, "No one with anti-Semitic prejudice could ever feel comfortable there."²

3. Israel's Is God's Land and His Servant.

1. The Bible clearly reveals that the land of Israel belongs to God.

- Many times in the Bible, God calls Israel "My land" (2 Chron. 7:20; Isa. 14:25; Jer. 2:7; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 36:5; Ezek. 38:16; Joel 3:2).
- When Jesus returns and judges the nations, He will punish them because, in God's own words, they have "divided up My land" (Joel 3:2).
- In the last days, God said that He would bring an alliance of nations "against My land" in order to display His glory and might (Ezek. 38:16).
- When the nations gather to devise a peace plan which involves dividing Israel, it appears logical, reasonable, and benevolent in the eyes of the world. However, God's perspective is that the nations are appropriating "My land for themselves as a possession with whole-hearted joy and with scorn of soul" (Ezek. 36:5).
- Though God has given His land to the Jewish people, Israel ultimately belongs to God. That is why Israel is so important to the Church.

2. Israel is still God's chosen servant.

- Isaiah prophesied, "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend...You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you" (Isa. 41:8-9).
- Almost every generation since the early church believed they were living in the last days. This was impossible, however, since many end-time prophecies depend upon Israel being a nation. Of course, that all changed in 1948 when Israel became a sovereign state after centuries of desolation. Now, God is using His servant Israel in powerful ways to set the stage for the end-time drama in Jerusalem.
- How is God using Israel as His servant? For starters, Paul said that Israel's transgression has led to the salvation of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). In light of this, consider what Don Finto wrote in his book, *Your People Shall Be My People*: "Seventy percent of all those who have ever come to faith in Jesus have come since the first Zionist conference in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897."³
- Not only has Israel's transgression led to the salvation of the Gentiles, but Israel's national salvation will result in "life from the dead" as a new age of glory is ushered in (Rom. 11:15).
- Consider also the parallels between the emergence of Zionism and the beginnings of the Pentecostal Movement and the Welsh Revival. In the

early 1900s a Jewish movement called Zionism, which sought a national homeland in Palestine for all Jews, grew significantly in the early 1900s. Around the same time, the Pentecostal Movement began in both Topeka, Kansas (1901) and in Los Angeles, California (The Azusa Street Revival of 1906). These two revivals initiated massive church growth and a restoration of the Holy Spirit's power, presence, and gifts.

- In addition to the Pentecostal Movement, God also poured out His Spirit in Wales, England in 1904, initiating the Welsh Revival. This revival, which spread to the four corners of the world, added some one-hundred thousand new converts to the Church.
- Also consider the parallels between Israel's rebirth as a nation, the Latter Rain Revival of the 50s and 60s, and the Faith Movement. When Israel became a nation in 1948, the Latter Rain Revival of the 1950s and 60s began. This revival was characterized by powerful healings, the laying on of hands, spiritual gifts, fasting, prayer, prophecy, and the reemergence of the five-fold ministry. The Faith Movement can also be traced to this period of church history.
- Consider the parallels between Jerusalem being recaptured in 1967, the Charismatic Movement, the Jesus Movement, and the modern-day Worship Movement.
- In 1967, Israel defeated the Jordanians in the Six-Day War and captured Jerusalem, their prized possession. During this same period, the Charismatic Movement grew rapidly, attracting broad attention in the 60s. This movement, also characterized by the Holy Spirit's power, crossed denominational lines; it touched the Episcopal, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches first, followed by the Roman Catholic Church in 1967 and the Greek Orthodox Church in 1971. Today, the Charismatic Movement has influenced millions of believers around the world.
- The Jesus Movement, which brought thousands of people to Christ, also began around this time. One of the most significant contributions of the Jesus Movement was the anointed worship music that brought many new believers into the presence of God. This music helped initiate the Worship Movement that is still growing in our day.

4. Israel's End-Time Revival Will Usher in the Return of the Lord.

1. Jesus' Triumphal Entry is a prophetic picture of Jerusalem just prior to the return of the Lord.

- Days before He went to the cross, as throngs of people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, Jesus was virtually crowned the King of Israel.
- Mounted on a donkey, Jesus split through the masses of people as He rode toward the city gate. The crowds ahead of Him and behind were shouting out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 21:9).
- Known as the Triumphal Entry, the Jewish people collectively acknowledged that Jesus was their promised King and Messiah.

- The Triumphal Entry is a prophetic picture of Jerusalem just prior to the return of the Lord.
- Jesus used this event to foreshadow the Holy City at the end of the age. He told the Jews, "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:39, NIV).
- Using the very words the Jews shouted a day before, Jesus revealed to the end-time generation what must take place before He returns.
- Paraphrasing this verse, Jesus told the Jews gathered in Jerusalem, "Just as you acknowledged Me as your King and Messiah a day before, I will not return until you do the same thing."
- Thus, Israel's end-time revival will usher in the return of the Lord.

2. We are fast approaching the day when the Jewish people living in Jerusalem will welcome Jesus back.

- As more Jewish people return to Israel, we know that their salvation is near. This is one of the main reasons the devil is fighting so hard against Jewish immigration.
- The enemy has used wars, suicide bombers, poverty, prosperity, evil governments—anything to keep the Jewish people from immigrating back to Israel.
- The devil knows his time is finished when the Jews living in Jerusalem cry out in one accord, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."
- This prophecy was impossible until 1967—the landmark year when Israel recaptured Jerusalem in the Six Day War.
- Up until that time, Gentile powers had trampled upon Jerusalem. From the Romans to the Crusaders to the Ottoman Empire to the United Nations, Jerusalem was occupied by Gentile nations for centuries.
- But when God gave Israel a supernatural victory in the Six-Day War and the Jews recaptured their eternal capital city, it set the stage for the Jewish people in Jerusalem to cry out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

As we understand Israel's significance, we will no longer view Israel as irrelevant to the Church and the expansion of the kingdom of God. Instead, we will stand with Israel and partner with God in her restoration.

Notes

1. Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, quoted on <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/luther-jews.html>, referenced on December, 8, 2005.
2. Derek Prince, *Promised Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005), p. 19.
3. Don Finto, *Your People Shall Be My People* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), p. 43.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. The most important reason why Israel is important to the Church is because Jesus was born in Israel.
- _____ 2. Israel is important to the Church because the Jews wrote most of the Bible.
- _____ 3. Israel is important to the Church because Jesus is Jewish.
- _____ 4. Israel is important to the Church because Israel is God's servant.
- _____ 5. Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles at His first coming.
- _____ 6. Reading through the Old Testament, it is difficult to tell how God feels about Israel.
- _____ 7. Israel is the orange of God's eye.
- _____ 8. 1967 is an important year in God's prophetic calendar.

Fill in the Blank

9. In the last days, God said that He would bring an alliance of nations against _____ in order to display His glory and might.
10. All _____ books of the Old Testament were written by Jewish authors. With the exception of the _____ and the book of _____, Jews also wrote the New Testament.
11. _____ is not a new religion created by _____; it is the fulfillment of the Jewish _____ and _____.
12. When Jesus died on the cross in Jerusalem, He was fulfilling the Jewish festival of _____. Three days later, when Jesus rose from the dead, He fulfilled the _____ of _____.
13. God's _____ excites His wrath, and His wrath brings about the utter destruction of Israel's enemies. _____ inspires God to defend His beloved people, defeat their enemies, and fulfill every _____ promise.

14. God is called Israel's _____, _____, and _____.

15. When God gave Israel a supernatural victory in the _____ War and the Jews recaptured their eternal capital city, it set the stage for the Jewish people in _____ to cry out, "_____ is He who comes in the _____ of the _____."

Identify five reasons why Israel is important to the Church from the list on the right and place the correct letters in the spaces next to questions 16 through 20.

- _____ 16.
- _____ 17.
- _____ 18.
- _____ 19.
- _____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Understanding Israel's geography and history helps us understand the Bible much better.
- b. Israel's modern-day restoration is the greatest miracle in two-thousand years.
- c. Israel is the apple of God's eye.
- d. Visiting biblical sites such as Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Galilee helps us draw closer to God.
- e. Israel has given us the Bible, the Messiah, and the Church.
- f. Israel is God's servant.
- g. Israel is God's land.
- h. Israel's end-revival will lead to the second coming of Christ.