

# **The Christian response to war, with an emphasis on Israel and Gaza.**

**Heathfield Young People's Meeting**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

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This was a requested subject.

On October 7th, 2023, Hamas terrorists broke into Israel, slaughtering 1,400 people and taking 240 hostages in a rampage that shocked the world. Israel has vowed to wipe out Hamas and Palestinian officials have said over 10,000 people have already been killed.

The ongoing conflict brings several questions.

- 1/ Should a Christian kill another human being, including in war?
- 2/ What is the Christian attitude toward the Jews?
- 3/ How should a Christian respond to the current war in Gaza?

## **1/ Should a Christian kill another human being, including in war?**

In the Bible there are 4 ways the taking of life is considered.

**1/ Premeditated murder** –which must be proved by more than one witness. The punishment is being put to death.

*This is what the sixth Commandment forbids: Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.*

**2/ Accidental killing** – which if proved the sentence was a period of imprisonment. For Israel it was in one of the 6 cities of refuge. Numbers 35:9-32

**3/ Judicial killing** – ie. Putting to death the murderer. Under the Civil laws given by God to Israel as a nation, the Jews were to stone to death for about 35 offences, including murderers, adulterers, sabbath breakers, rebellious children, idolatry, and blasphemy. Under the New Testament, the only crime that capital punishment should be used for is premeditated murder.

As seen in the case of the Woman taken in adultery.

*John 8:5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? The Lord did not condemn her to death, but said, "go and sin no more."*

The sentence for murder was given after the flood and before the law was given at Sinai, so we believe it still stands today. (Although there are Christians who disagree with this.)

*Genesis 9:5-6*

*(5) And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*

*(6) Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

## 4/ Killing in a time of War

In 1 Kings 2:5 David makes a distinction between killing in a time of peace, and a time of War.

*Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, **and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.***

In a fallen world filled with evil people, sometimes war is necessary to prevent even greater evil. For example, Hitler being stopped in the second world war.

War is a terrible thing, and some wars are more “just” than others, **but war is always the result of sin.**

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

And our Lord said, “ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars” (Matthew 24:6)

Christians should not desire war, but neither are Christians to oppose the government God has placed in authority over them. This is based on Romans 13.

*Romans 13:3-4*

*(3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

*(4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

We are to look upon our police, law enforcers and armed forces as those given us for our protection in a fallen world.

We should be praying for godly wisdom for our leaders, praying for the safety of our military, praying for quick resolution to conflicts, and praying for a minimum of casualties among civilians on both sides.

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## 2/ What is the Christian attitude toward the Jews?

It is important to realise that the Lord’s people are not agreed on what they believe concerning the nation of Israel today. There are many variations.

Some love the Jews as God's special people. Others feel that the Jews have no special place in God's Church or in God's plan. This is a common reformed position today and is termed replacement theology. That is that the promises given to the Jews now belong to the church.

Some feel that the promises concerning David's throne are yet to be fulfilled and they shall have a king again.

Some feel that the Jews as a nation will believe that Jesus is the Christ and there will be a worldwide blessing.

*Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

### **From these positions I believe the scripture teaches the following.**

Both Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. There is one fold and one shepherd.

Every individual is saved in the same way. By election, through Christ dying for us, through being called by grace, believing in Jesus, and trusting in him alone for salvation.

There is only one way of Salvation.

In no way should the Jews be encouraged to go back to a nation outside of Christ. We should pray for them and evangelise them.

*Zechariah 14:8-9*

*(8) And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, (The Jews) and half of them toward the hinder sea (The Gentiles) in summer and in winter shall it be.*

*(9) And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.*

*John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

*Ephesians 2:11-17*

*(11) Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

*(12) That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

*(13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

*(14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*(15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

*(16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

*(17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

However, the Jews called down the Blood of Jesus on them, and because they rejected Christ, they were destroyed as a nation in AD 70. The purpose was that through their fall the Gospel would be sent to the Gentiles. When the time is right, or when most of the Gentiles are saved, then the Jews as a nation will receive Christ.

#### **Our Lord told of the destruction of Jerusalem, but also of an “Until”.**

*Luke 21:20-24*

*(20) And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*

*(21) Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.*

*(22) For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

*(23) But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.*

*(24) And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.***

Paul asks the Question in Romans 11:1

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

## **4 Reasons why God has not cast off his people.**

These points are summarised from an address by Rev William Macleod on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023 that you can listen to here: -

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1028232030443110>

### **1/ There is still a remnant among the Jews that are converted and will be.**

There are 8 million Jews in Israel **Only 30,000 Jews are Christians.** There are about 16 million Jews worldwide.

### **2/ God had a purpose in casting away the Jews for a time.**

*Romans 11:11*

*(11) I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather **through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.***

Romans 11:17-18

(17) And if **some of the branches be broken off**, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert **grafted in** among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

(18) Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

### 3/ There is a promised day for the Jews

They are not lost forever as a nation.

Romans 11:11-12

(11) I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

(12) Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; **how much more their fulness?**

Romans 11:15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, **what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?**

Romans 11:25-26

(25) For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

(26) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

### 4/ Remember the covenant, the promise to the fathers, a covenant of grace.

Romans 11:27-29

(27) For **this is my covenant unto them**, when I shall take away their sins.

(28) As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

(29) For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

**In trying to predict the future we need to learn from Jonathan, son of King Saul. He was partly right. David would be king, but he, Jonathan was not going to be next unto him.**

1 Samuel 23:16-17

(16) And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

(17) And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

**The important thing is that we are born again of the Spirit and truly converted, living a life of faith and prayer.**

Whenever we are faced with the death of the body, it should make us think seriously about our own souls. Not taken up with the things taking place. Our first concern should be, are we saved? Many are taken up with end time prophecies and with what is happening in the world but neglect their own souls.

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### **3/ How should a Christian respond to the current war in Gaza?**

**Hamas** is an acronym of its official name, **The Islamic Resistance Movement** (In Arabic) HAMAS emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising, as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch. The group is committed to armed resistance against Israel and the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state in Israel's place.

#### **A historical sketch of Palestine.**

The land itself was under the control of various empires, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and eventually the Islamic Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire.

Britain took control of the area known as Palestine following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled that part of the Middle East, in World War One.

The land was inhabited by a Jewish minority and Arab majority, as well as other, smaller ethnic groups.

Tensions between the two peoples grew when the international community gave the UK the task of establishing a "national home" in Palestine for Jewish people. This stemmed from the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a pledge made by then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Britain's Jewish community.

The declaration was enshrined in the British mandate over Palestine and endorsed by the newly created League of Nations - forerunner of the United Nations - in 1922.

The British rule over Palestine lasted roughly thirty years, from 1917 until 1948.

To Jews Palestine was their ancestral home, but Palestinian Arabs also claimed the land and opposed the move.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, the number of Jews arriving there grew, with many fleeing from persecution in Europe, especially the Nazi Holocaust in World War Two.

Violence between Jews and Arabs, and against British rule, also increased.

In 1947, the UN voted for Palestine to be split into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem becoming an international city. That plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab side and never implemented.

In 1948, unable to solve the problem, Britain withdrew, and Jewish leaders declared the creation of the State of Israel. It was intended to be a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution, as well as a national homeland for Jews. Fighting between Jewish and Arab militias had been intensifying for months, and the day after Israel declared statehood, five Arab countries attacked.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were forced out of their homes in what they call Al Nakba, or the "Catastrophe"

By the time the fighting ended in a ceasefire the following year:

- Israel controlled most of the territory.
- Jordan occupied land, which became known as the West Bank
- Egypt occupied Gaza.
- Jerusalem was divided between Israeli forces in the West, and Jordanian forces in the East.

Because there was never a peace agreement there were more wars and fighting in the following decades.

Israel has 9.8 million people. It is now a superpower in the area with nuclear capability. The population comprises 73.6% Jews, 21% Arabs and 5.3% other. (*according to Wikipedia*)

### **How should we view the situation?**

- Israel in their own land has happened and I believe God will use it to make the grafting in of the Jews clear.
- Remember from the Palestinian side, the complete destruction of Israel is their aim.
- View it as solemn that HAMAS is not protecting its own people but using them as shields.
- In a humanitarian way for both sides, praying for the people in distress.
- Pray for Peace and restraining of wickedness.
- Pray for leaders to make right decisions.