

What The Bible tells Us About Israel and Palestine

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Date: 29 October 2023

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[0 : 00] Alright, so you may have noticed some flags flying around in recent weeks, other than the Springbok flag and the South African flag. As you drive around, you may have noticed various cars or buildings flying the Palestinian flag or the Israeli flag.

And if you read the news, you will have noticed recently, just this weekend, there have been major protests around the world in major cities in support of one of those nations, Israel or Palestine, in consideration of the war that's happening in that region today.

Now, you may not know much about what's going on there, or you may know a lot. Maybe you've been following the events this month, and maybe you have strong opinions about what's going on there, who's right, who's wrong.

But whatever you may know or think about that conflict, it's worth stopping and thinking, why people halfway around the world care so much about what's happening in a territory that's no larger than the Kruger National Park?

Why? Why are there protests all around the world? Why do people hold such strong opinions on the Israel-Palestine question? And why has conflict in this area always drawn attention from the rest of the world?

[1 : 31] Well, that is a complex question, but I'm going to boil it down. The reason why people are so interested in this region and what happens there is actually because it's in the Bible.

That's really what it comes down to. That that region in the world that is pretty much in the center of our world maps, the ones we normally use, is the central stage, or it has been throughout history, of God's dealings with humanity.

And all major monotheistic religions have recognized that Judaism, Christianity, Islam, they all recognized this is a special, this is a sacred place.

And because there are so many followers of those religions around the world, it's a special place to people everywhere. There are sacred sites of all three of those religions in that small area.

But because Israel is in God's word to us, because Israel plays such a big role in the Bible, and this is God's revelation to us of everything we need to know for life and salvation and godliness, if the Bible talks about Israel, then it's vital for us to know what it says about modern day Israel and what it means for us.

[2 : 52] And so that's what we're going to look at this morning with God's help. Now, it's important just to summarize the history of that land in the last sort of century, just so you understand the context of what's going on there.

But we don't have any time for a full history. If you research it yourself, it's actually quite difficult, because typically YouTube videos or books written on it will side with one or the other.

It's very difficult to find an unbiased history of that region. And besides, it's so complex that we don't have time to unravel it all. This morning, there's many things to consider, many different angles.

But in summary, if you don't know much about the Israel-Palestine conflict, the last 70 years in that region has basically been a series of conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The Israelis who have been wanting to secure a homeland for the Jewish people ever since the early 1900s, or even before then. There's been a movement called Zionism, you may have heard of it, of Jewish people from around the world, especially with the rise of persecution that peaked in the Holocaust in World War II, wanting to have a secure homeland for themselves.

[4 : 06] And so they started moving back to Israel, where their ancestors were from. But in order to do that, they had to displace and fight a lot of the local Palestinians, who are now, after a series of conflicts, living, and they have been for decades, living under oppressive Israeli rule.

And the Palestinians have been fighting against that oppression, in things called the Intifadas. A number of rebellions against Israeli rule, and the Israelis who hit back at them, and there's just this cycle of violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

But not only do the Palestinians fight against the oppression, unfortunately, many of them, like the Hamas militia group, desire not just freedom from the Israelis, but total destruction of Israel and the Jewish people.

And so this has been happening, you know, for the last 70 years. But it all came to a head on the 7th of this month, when Hamas launched from the Gaza Strip an unspeakably brutal terrorist attack. I don't want to get into the details. Just terrible things that happened. Killing innocent civilians, women, babies, old people. Killing over 1,300 Israelis and taking over 200 hostage, and there's still prisoners, hostages today in Gaza, which Israel responded to by bombing in ruthless retaliation over the last number of weeks.

[5 : 40] Just bombing Gaza over and over again, killing thousands of Palestinians in the process, many innocent civilians who were caught in the crossfire. And not only has that escalated, but it's drawn in major powers sitting on the sidelines, like the United States, who have a carrier battle group in the Mediterranean off the coast of Israel right now, and who are supporting Israel.

And then you've got countries like Iran and Lebanon and Syria and even Russia, nuclear powers, supporting Palestine.

And so when we get that snapshot of the history and where we are today, this month, you can understand why people around the world are worried about what's going on there.

Many people saying, is this the spark that's going to ignite World War III? We pray that that's not the case. War is just terribly destructive. There are no winners in war, and we pray against that.

But you can understand why people are worried. You can understand why people are talking about this, why it's in our news. But you can also understand why Christians are drawn in. Christians who hold up God's Word as the truth that God has revealed to us, because what's happening in the Middle East right now sounds a lot like the prophecies we have in the Old Testament of the Bible that talk about Israel.

[7 : 05] And they talk about many of these prophecies. Just read Psalm 83 in your own time, for example. Talk about all these nations surrounding Israel, Israel ganging up against them and trying to destroy them, but failing.

In fact, that's happened quite a few times. The Six-Day War in 1967. I think it was six or seven Arab nations surrounded Israel and tried to destroy it, but Israel won.

And so when these things happen, we automatically think of the prophecies in the Bible. And because of that, so many Christians assume that we should support Israel when this happens.

Because after all, they're Israel, right? They're God's country. They're the Israel that we read about in the Bible. And you may have heard, and there are many, many, many Christian teachers.

You go on YouTube and you look up, you know, Christians preaching about Israel-Palestine conflict. Most of them, especially from the United States, which often is the thing that pops up first on our feeds, teachers from the U.S., who are vehemently supporting Israel.

[8 : 19] They're saying, as Christians, we must stand with Israel. And you'll see it in our own city as well. Many Christians standing with Israel because they're Christians. This is God's nation. We've got to support them.

But I must tell you this morning, I have a huge problem with that. I have a big problem with that.

Because not only does that attitude of automatically supporting Israel tend to justify anything Israel does, because, you know, the moment you start to see any situation in the world as the good guys and the bad guys, and decide who the good guys are, then you're going to overlook the bad things that the good guys do, because there are no good guys at the end of the day.

And so not only does it cause us to justify in our minds anything that Israel does, but also it shows a deep misunderstanding of what the Bible actually says about Israel.

And I say with the deepest respect I can muster, those churches who are saying, we must stand with Israel just because Israel is in the Bible, they need help in understanding their Bibles better.

And I mean that. They need help. They need their pastors to go to college and learn about biblical theology and learn how to interpret prophecy correctly. Because if you think we must support Israel because of what the Bible says, it shows that you've missed what the Bible says.

[9 : 46] There's a deep misunderstanding of what the Bible actually says about Israel. So that's what we're going to look at this morning. We're going to look at what the Bible actually says. Now

what I want to do, the way we're going to do that, is we're going to take one of the most often cited Old Testament prophecies that Christians use to argue why we should support Israel.

And that's in Zechariah. We read a little bit of it earlier. It's a prophecy about the end times in Zechariah. And it stretches from chapter 12 to 14. By the way, if you don't have a Bible with you, if you scan the code in front of you, the QR code on our Church Connect app, there's an online Bible and it's turned for you conveniently to Zechariah 12.

So I do want you to follow along some of these passages. So turn in your Bibles to Zechariah 12 to 14. And let's look at some of the things that this prophet says about what's going to happen around Jerusalem at the end times.

Let's try to unravel what he's saying. So Zechariah 12 from verse 2. Look, I will make Jerusalem a cup that causes staggering for the peoples who surround the city.

The siege against Jerusalem will also involve Judah. On that day, I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who try to lift it will injure themselves severely when all the nations of the earth gather against her.

[11:20] Okay, so you've got this picture that seems to be the case in the news today of the nations gathering around and desiring to destroy Israel and Jerusalem.

And then we read on from verse 8. Look what happens. On that day, the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. So on that day, the one who is weakest among them will be like David on that day.

And the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them. And on that day, I will set out to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

So we read that, and the Jewish people read that today. And you've got this picture of brave IDF troops, Israeli defense force troops fighting these hordes of Arab invaders.

And God is on their side. And so if God is on the side of Israel in these end days that the prophet Zechariah talks about, surely we should be on the side of Israel.

[12:22] And we read on, even though there's a time of great suffering, they will win in the end. Look at chapter 14. Zechariah 14, the beginning.

Look, a day belonging to the Lord is coming. When the plunder taken from you will be divided in your presence, I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for battle. The city will be captured, the houses looted, the women raped.

Half the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be removed from the city. Then the Lord will go out to fight against those nations as He fights on a day of battle.

On that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. The Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, forming a huge valley, so that half the mountains will move to the north and half to the south.

A great apocalyptic event that are going to happen around Jerusalem. And as you read the rest of the Old Testament prophets, they also speak about these events and what's going to happen after, where the nations attacking Israel will be defeated, and Jerusalem will be a holy city, and it will finally be at peace, and the temple will be rebuilt in the middle of it.

[13:38] And that's what the Jews today are anticipating, and it's what many Christians anticipate and support the nation of Israel in achieving. That's why many millions of U.S. dollars are flowing from the United States to Israel to support this great vision of the prophets.

The problem, though, is that we are reading those passages out of context. In fact, that's one of the biggest problems about how people read the Bible today.

They read small passages. We're so used to just reading feeds on Facebook and, you know, paragraphs, that reading a whole page is really hard work for us these days.

Reading a whole book to understand the context in which these passages are is something hardly any of us ever do, and let alone understanding these prophecies about Israel and Jerusalem in the context of God's big plan, God's big picture, God's big story in the Bible.

Because when we do that, when we read these prophecies and others like it, in their context, and in the context of where the story is going, what we realize, is all of these prophecies are actually focused and find their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth 2,000 years ago.

[15:04] And that's what the Jews ignore, and it's what many Christians conveniently forget when they talk about Israel today. But that is exactly what the New Testament teaches us over and over again.

In Matthew 5, 17, Jesus said, I have come to fulfill the prophets. His own words. I've come to fulfill the prophets. In Luke 24, Jesus, after His death and resurrection, finds His disciples who don't know what's just happened.

And He explains to them how they completely missed how He has just fulfilled their own Old Testament Scriptures. Let me read to you from Luke 24, from verse 25.

He said to them, How foolish and slow you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into His glory?

Then, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

[16:12] See, Jesus had to have a big Bible study with His own Jewish disciples saying, Listen, all these prophecies you think are talking about the future of Israel and Jerusalem, they've all been fulfilled now, in Me.

That's what He's trying to explain to them there. And it's why Paul says, in 2 Corinthians, 1, verse 20, For every one of God's promises is yes in Him.

What he's saying is all of God's promises in the Old Testament, and this was, not only was Paul a studied Jewish teacher, but he was an apostle inspired and given God's truth to write down for us today so we can understand these things.

He's saying, all that God promised in the Old Testament has now been achieved. They're all yes in Jesus Christ. And that's how we need to understand Old Testament prophecy. I want to help you by giving you a little diagram.

So behind me, you'll see there's a diagram. This is how people normally read Old Testament prophecy. So, at the top is your Old Testament, and then the different prophecies, what it speaks about are those blue arrows.

[17:25] And what we tend to do is that we know some of the prophecies speak directly about Jesus, right? But then we also read prophecies like Zechariah and Ezekiel 38 and Psalm 83.

And we think, but their prophecy is actually talking about today. So some of the prophecies talk about Jesus, and then some other prophecies talk about our world today, modern Israel, Jerusalem, and things like that.

But that is a wrong way to understand biblical prophecy. According to what we've just read in the New Testament, we should rather read it like this. Okay? This little egg timer diagram.

You've got to get this into your brain when you read Old Testament prophecy. Where all, Jesus says, all the Old Testament prophets actually talk about Him, and we can only understand what they mean for the world today when we first ask, how has this already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? And it's only when we ask that question of these prophecies about Israel and Jerusalem, how has this already been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, it's only then that we'll be able to understand what they're actually talking about.

[18:31] Okay, so, let's do that with Zechariah, the passages we read about the siege of Jerusalem. How is Zechariah 12-14, go back there in your Bibles, how is that prophecy, and the same applies to all the other prophecies like it, but how is this prophecy about these events fulfilled in Jesus?

Well, we don't have to guess. Okay? The Bible's not guesswork. We don't have to find some amazing prophets who come up with some really creative ways that Zechariah is being fulfilled or has been fulfilled.

The Gospel writers tell us, quite clearly. They're at pains to tell us how these prophecies have been fulfilled. Let me show you. So, in Zechariah 12, so before this great battle and this final victory, look at what happens in verse 10.

Zechariah 12, verse 10, And then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem and they will look at me whom they pierced.

And then go down to the next chapter, verse 1, On that day, a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the residents of Jerusalem to wash away sin and impurity.

[19:52] Okay, now listen to what John, the inspired apostle, writes when he's recording the death of Jesus. He writes these words in John 19, 34 to 37.

By the way, there's going to be a lot of Bible references thrown at you today. So, if you're taking notes, just have your pens ready. But if you're not, just listen and see what the listeners listen to what the New Testament writers say about these prophecies.

John 19, 34 to 37. But one of the soldiers pierced his side, Jesus is on the cross, right? With a spear and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this has testified so that you may also believe. His testimony is true and he knows he is telling the truth for these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. Also, another scripture says, and now he quotes directly from Zechariah, they will look at the one they have pierced. So, according to John, this prophecy in Zechariah that we think is about modern Israel and Palestine is not about something that is still to happen in Jerusalem.

[21 : 15] According to John, it's something that has already happened there when Jesus died for sins. You see that? Let's look at another part of Zechariah's prophecy. What will happen during this war and this testing time in the city of Jerusalem.

Look at what he says, Zechariah 13, 7-9. Sword, awake against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate.

This is the declaration of the Lord of armies. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. I will turn my hand against the little ones in the whole land. This is the Lord's declaration.

Two thirds will be cut off and die, but a third will be left in it. I will put this third through the fire. I will refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name and I will answer them.

I will say, they are my people and they will say, the Lord is our God. Again, people read this and they think this is the testing time of the Israelis when they are attacked by the Arabs. But listen to what Jesus says this is actually talking about.

[22 : 24] Matthew 26, 31. This is the night before Jesus died. Then Jesus said to them, he is talking to his disciples, he knows what is about to happen.

The Romans are about to come and arrest him and this is going to be a great trial for his disciples. He says, Tonight all of you will fall away because of me. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

He is quoting directly from Zechariah 13. Jesus sees Zechariah being fulfilled in him being arrested and his disciples being tested and facing persecution for standing with him.

And then Zechariah 14, verse 8 talks about this great day of victory and it says, on that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it towards the eastern sea and the other half towards the western sea in summer and winter alike.

By the way, when we read these Old Testament prophecies, they are symbolic. If you look at what it's saying here, water would have to flow uphill. That can't happen.

[23 : 45] These are symbolic. It's talking about prophecy. That's how it speaks of this stream that's being opened up. This stream of living water that flows out to all the nations in the world.

Well, Jesus said that he is that living water. Remember the woman at the well in John? He said, I'm the living water. And it's from his death and resurrection that eternal life would flow out to the nations which is exactly what happens.

And then verse 9 of Zechariah 14 On that day the Lord will become king over the whole earth.

Well, what did Jesus say in Matthew 28? Let me just read it to you. Verse 18 Jesus came near and said to his disciples, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you and remember I am with you always to the end of the age.

[24 : 59] So the prophecies that people think are talking about future Jerusalem or talking about the situation today have already been fulfilled in Jerusalem in Jesus Christ.

What was happening there when he died and rose again was of world-shaking consequences of all of history. And when we think that those prophecies are talking about something that's happening today we miss everything they tell us about what Jesus has achieved for us.

They've already been fulfilled. And that is why the New Testament says that the true Israel today the Israel of God or the true children of Abraham according to Galatians are not national Israelis in the Middle East but those all around the world who have bowed the knee and become subjects of the true King of Israel those are who true Israel are today.

And those disciples who make up the church today they are called the temple the true temple of God they are the rebuilding of the temple not something that's going to happen in Jerusalem in the

future but the Christians around the world who are the place where the world gets to know who God really is where heaven and earth overlap they are the temple 1 Corinthians 3 16 Paul says don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the spirit of God lives in you that's who the temple is that's who Israel is today and so what about the city of Jerusalem what about the present day city of Jerusalem well let me read to you again what Jesus says in John John chapter 4 again talking to the woman at the well after revealing to her that he is the living water that the prophet spoke about John chapter 4 21 listen to what he says now she asks that very question she asks him what about

Jerusalem you know where are God's plans focusing in the world what location Jesus told her believe me woman an hour is coming when you will worship the father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem verse 23 an hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and in truth yes the father wants such people to worship him he's talking about the church that is Jerusalem that is the place of the worship of God today wherever believers gather by the power of the spirit of Christ around the truth of Christ they are called the heavenly Jerusalem in the book of Hebrews okay so so what about these enemies then that surround the city of Jerusalem in the prophets who are the enemies are they Lebanon are they are they Iran well no [28 : 04] Ephesians 6 let's find out who the real enemies are Ephesians 6 verse 12 for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers of this darkness against evil spiritual forces in the heavens those are our real enemies not Iran or Russia do you see why it's so important to read the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament that's why we have the New Testament and the Old Testament together in our Bibles we have to read the Old Testament through the lens of New Testament fulfillment in Christ where it all coalesces and focuses on or to put it another way the Old Testament is not a Jewish book about the nation of Israel but it's a Christian book about Christ's people and it always has been and when we read it as a Jewish book about the nation of

Israel we completely miss the point and yet so many Christians are doing that you're going to go and you're going to hear on the internet so many Christians still reading it as an Old Testament book about national Israel and Christians love that there's so many Christians who love and prefer to read the Old Testament as if it's talking about Israel today it's very attractive to do that it's actually very attractive I'm tempted to do that as well because it's exciting you see I think the first reason Christians like to read the Old Testament like that and the reason that this topic has drawn draws so many people because it's exciting to see the Bible fulfilled in visible ways in the news isn't it because we actually have little faith and we like it when we see the Bible being fulfilled visibly it's exciting it's a attractive to read the Bible that way but listen to what Jesus says in Luke 17 Luke 17 verse 20 you can just listen the kingdom of God is not coming with something observable no one will say see here or there for you see the kingdom of God is in your midst we want to see the kingdom of God come with something visible that's why we're so attracted to the news and we want the Old Testament to be talking about modern Israel but Jesus says you won't see it it's not coming with something observable where you can say see here or there because it's already in our midst but it's invisible but that's there's another reason I think that Christians love to read the Old Testament in this way that it's talking about Israel today and it's because it gives us an excuse to sit on the sidelines and eat our popcorn and watch the news which is actually what we love doing when it comes to the

Bible we actually deep down inside much prefer to be spectators rather than participants in what the Bible is saying and it's something we need to repent of because when we read the Bible properly what we realize is that the focus of God in the world today is not on the Middle East it's on us it's on his church it's on you and me the Middle East is not in the spotlight of heaven you are God's focus is what happens here on Sunday that's where his heart is that is what he's focused on not what's going on halfway around the world but what's going on in churches on Sundays what's going on in the daily lives of his people we are in the center of what God is doing in this age not Israel but that is scary when we start to think about it because it means we can no longer sit idly by and just watch the news but we need to now be involved in the kingdom work God has given us to do because that is the only way he is working today to save people we are his focus we are his project we are his plan and there is no other and so we need to stop being spectators and we need to get involved we need to read our

Bibles properly and we need to get involved in the work God is calling us to do as true Israel in the world today but that still leaves the question what about the nation of Israel today if that is all true how are we to view the state of Israel Israel because their history is bound up in our Bible so do we just ignore that no but we are to view Israel the same way the Bible speaks about modern Israel and the Jewish religion and by the way not all inhabitants of Israel are Jewish but by and large that is the identity Israel Israel is written into their constitution a country for the Jews so how are we to view the Jewish nation today well how the Bible views it and that is sadly as a people who are in rebellion against their Messiah who has come and who they rejected and that is why we read in Luke 19 41 to 44 this is some heart-wrenching verses I'm going to read them again

[33 : 50] Jesus is standing on the Mount of Olives interestingly where Zechariah said the Lord would come to Jerusalem the other gospel writers tell us where he is but listen to what he says Luke writes from Luke 19 41 as he approached and saw the city and I've been there by the way it's an amazing view of the old city from the Mount of Olives you see the whole thing and the temple would have been right there but Jesus weeps for it as he looks over that city he wept for it saying if you knew this day what would bring peace but now it is hidden from your eyes for the days will come on you when your enemies will build a barricade around you surround you and hem you in on every side they will crush you and your children among you to the ground and they will not leave one stone on another in your midst because you did not recognize the time when God visited you that is what the

Bible says about modern Israel there are people who tragically did not recognize the coming of their own Messiah and so he announces this judgment on them the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of Jerusalem which happened in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed it and you know what they did the Romans came in AD 70 just like Jesus has said and there's many chapters in the Gospels that that Jesus talks about this tragic day when God is going to depart from Israel and the Romans will come and destroy it and what happened is that they did that the Israelites fled and you know what they did they renamed that the emperor of Rome renamed it Palestina to disassociate the Jewish people from their homeland no longer was it called Israel but he gave it the name Palestina it got a new identity new people lived there and that is why we have all the trouble we have today because of the the question of who owns the land and the the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis it's all because they rejected their Messiah that they're going through the troubles they have today and that is why Jesus also says in Matthew 21 43 therefore I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit the church and so when Israel fights for their land today sure of course they have a right to defend their homes they have a right to live in that land the same as anyone has a right to live in their ancestral home but the problem is when they think and when we think that they are fulfilling prophecies and that God is on their side while at the same time they openly still reject his son who came to fulfill all those prophecies and it's so sad that they've done that

Jesus wept when he looked at Jerusalem and he knew the rejection of their own Messiah Paul said he has anguish in his heart when he thinks about Israel's rejection of the Messiah and the kingdom being handed over taken away from them and he says these words in Romans 10 I invite you to turn to to Romans because Paul in Romans 10 and 11 write some very important things about the modern nation of Israel Romans 10 1 to 3 I'm just going to read that and he's already written how he's just so sad like Jesus was when he thinks about the rejection of Israel to their Messiah and he writes these words brothers and sisters my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them he's talking about the Jews in

Israel is for their salvation I can testify about them that they have zeal for God but not according to knowledge since they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and attempt to establish their own righteousness they have not submitted to God's righteousness it's tragic and yet we know that even though they've rejected God even though they knew better God is still gracious so gracious he's been gracious to each one of us who believe and he's also gracious to the nation of Israel and there is still hope for them today and that's what Paul goes on to write about in Romans chapter 11 and he describes I'm not going to read the whole chapter but he describes Israel the nation of Israel as this tree that God planted in history for his fruit to come out of for him to do his work in the world but he also talks about how many of the branches of that plant were broken off talking about those in Israel who have rejected the

[39 : 37] Messiah and he talks about other branches being grafted in that's you and me non-Jews who have accepted the Messiah and become people of God while the original people of God lost their place in that tree but listen to what he says about the broken branches in Romans 11 from verse 23 and even they if they do not remain in unbelief will be grafted in because God has the power to graft them in again for if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree how much more will these the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree I don't want you to be ignorant of this mystery brothers and sisters so that you will not be conceited a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and in this way all Israel will be saved so what he's saying is that God allowed Israel to reject their Messiah this partial hardening Paul speaks about why? well he tells us why have Israel rejected their own Messiah?

well for two reasons firstly so that the Gentiles could be incorporated into true Israel which was always God's plan but secondly so that when Israelites are saved and there are in every generation Jews who come to faith in their true Messiah when Israelites are saved it won't be because of their Jewishness or their law keeping but it will be the same as everyone else there's only one way in for a Jew and for a Gentile through trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus alone for their sins and in that way through trusting Christ alone will all true Israel be saved now whether or not that means that God will cause a mass revival of national Israel before his return and whether or not he may be preserving national Israel until that day remains to be seen history certainly seems to imply that but the more important question that you've got to ask is are you part of true Israel because no matter what your nationality

Jew Gentile no matter what your religion no matter whether you support Israel or Palestine the only question that actually matters is have you submitted to the one that God has sent who has fulfilled all the prophets and have you trusted in him alone for salvation from your sin because that is always been God's one plan and he only ever had one plan as Jesus says in John 14 6-7 I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me and so in conclusion where should Christians stand today in this heated question about Israel and Palestine where should Christians stand well we should stand as God's true people who represent him to the world and that means we stand for both justice what is right and fair and for truth which means two things firstly not giving in to evil anti-semitism and being against Jews just because they're Jewish but actually honoring

Israel as who they were in history and what that means for us as Paul says in Romans 11 verse 18 do not boast that you are better than those branches but if you do boast you do not sustain the root the root sustains you and so what that means is we must recognize what we owe the Israel the Israelite people and we must honor them as the people through whom God brought salvation into the world and we must just honor them as we would any people group with the right to live in their homeland and stand against those who deny them that right that's just but also secondly we are not to give Israel a free pass because of who they are but we've got to recognize that they like all of us are sinners in need of a savior as we heard earlier from Romans

[44 : 26] Jew and Gentile alike all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and sinners with great power sin greatly Israel included as has been shown in their treatment of Palestinians for decades and when they do they need to be held accountable for that but ultimately where we are to stand is with true Israel those on both sides of the conflict Israelis and Palestinians who follow the true king of Israel they are our family they are our brothers and sisters and they are the ones doing God's work and sharing his grace and proclaiming his gospel while opposed from both sides and they are the ones who the true enemies of God are wanting to take out while we're distracted by all the politics but they are the ones

God has promised to be on the side of and they're the ones through whom he's carrying out his plans in that region because it's the gospel of Jesus they carry which is the only true hope for peace in the Middle East or anywhere else let's pray oh Lord we repent of our desire to sit on the sidelines and be observers and how that often skews our reading of scripture we pray that you would help us to to read your word faithfully and understand it in its context so that we understand where the focus of your work in the world is today your church your people help us to understand how Christ has fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies and how we are in the center of your plans and help us to stand up and be counted and do the work you've called us to do in Jesus name
Amen