

“Modern Israel, Palestine, Etc.”

The Bible and Culture - NLPC Summer 2018 - Week 4

- Introduction

- Questions about modern Israel came to mind again when Donald Trump decided to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.
- This action effectively recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital as opposed to Tel Aviv:
 - Israel has claimed Jerusalem since conquering it in 1963.
 - But so do the Palestinians.
 - The UN officially supports an “international” Jerusalem, but also recognizes “East” Jerusalem as a Palestinian holding.
 - Russia recognizes East Jerusalem as the Palestinians’, and West Jerusalem as Israel’s.
 - In 1995, the U.S. Congress recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.
 - ❖ Every President since (Clinton, Bush 2, and Obama) promised to move our embassy to Jerusalem.
 - ❖ President Trump actually did it.
- One’s assessment of Trump’s move largely depends on one’s view of the region and its politics...
- Today’s discussion will not focus on the politics or wisdom of the move...
 - It will focus on the theological/Biblical significance of it, if any.
 - Speaking of, many believers thought something truly momentous occurred when Trump ordered the embassy move.
- To address any of that, we have to go back to what the Bible tells about Israel and what relationship the Modern State has, if any, to the Biblical one.

- Israel in the Bible...

- Starting in Gen. 12, the rest of the Old Testament (OT) is the account of God’s founding and dealing with the nation of Israel.

- Abraham is promised that through his seed, all nations will be blessed.
 - ❖ He's also told his seed will inherit the whole earth (Rom. 4:13)
 - ❖ Not just the Promised Land (Modern Palestine).
- After rescuing Abraham's descendants from Egypt:
 - ❖ God codifies them as a nation under His rule.
 - ❖ Plants them in the Promised Land.
- Later God promises King David two profound things about a descendant of his:
 - ❖ He will rule over all nations (see Abraham above).
 - ❖ He will rule forever.
 - ❖ Obviously this person is the Messiah.
 - ❖ His age is the Kingdom of God, the Age to Come.
- The OT comes to a close with Israel rejecting God again and again, turning to idols.
 - ❖ 10 of her 12 (Northern Kingdom of Israel) tribes are decimated and scattered by Assyria.
 - ❖ The other 2 (Southern Kingdom of Judah) tribes are taken into exile in Babylon.
 - ❖ God promised full restoration and the age of the Messiah upon condition of full repentance.
 - ❖ Judah failed to repent thoroughly:
 - ➔ Though returned to the Promised Land, she remained under foreign rule.
 - ➔ Clearly Judah was still under judgment for ongoing sin.
- As we all know, God in his kindness sent the Messiah:
 - The promised, eternal Son of David.
 - The Son of God in human flesh.

- As the Christ, Jesus preached against Israel’s sin and called the nation to find refuge in Him and His work.
 - Christ was largely rejected by His people.
 - He was turned over to the Romans and is crucified.
 - Yet, in the surprise of all surprises, his death was for the sins of not just Israel but the whole world.
- Even after Israel’s rejection and murder of Christ, the resurrected Jesus empowered His disciples to preach forgiveness and grace:

Acts 2:36–39 - 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

- Some Jews did come to faith, a surprising number at first.
- But in just a few short years, the Jews turned on the Christians, driving most out of Jerusalem.
- Yet soon after, God called the Apostle Paul to take the gospel of the Messiah to the nations, to the Gentiles!
 - In every Gentile city, he would preach to the Jews first, but most would reject him.
 - He’d then turn to the Gentiles who were much more receptive.
 - In fact, Paul’s experience with the Jews and their rejection of Christ was so hostile, he would later say this:

1 Thessalonians 2:14b–16 - You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

- ▶ This wrath that was about to come upon them was exactly what Jesus had predicted multiple times during his ministry:

***Luke 21:20–24** - 20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

- ▶ Within one generation, as Jesus had promised, Jerusalem was surrounded by the Roman armies (69-70 AD).

- ❖ Though the Christians escaped, as Christ warned.
- ❖ The rest of the Jews remained entrenched in their insane rebellion.
- ❖ Thousands starved or suffered even worse fates; countless were crucified.
- ❖ In the end, millions of Jews were dead; them Temple was leveled and the OT Jewish state was over.

- ▶ What was the spiritual significance of that event? Jesus told us that too:

***Matthew 21:33–44** - 33 “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard [OT image for Israel] and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41 They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and*

let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“ ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

- ▶ Because the 1st century Jews killed God’s own Son, the Kingdom was taken away from them.
 - ❖ National Israel was no longer God’s chosen people.
 - ❖ They were no longer his visible kingdom on Earth.
- Well then who has the Kingdom now? Who is God’s chosen people?
 - ▶ The Church!
 - ▶ The Church made up of all those who believe in Jesus, Jew or non-Jew.
 - ▶ As Paul says:

Galatians 6:15–16 - *15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.*
 - ▶ Now it’s not as if this renewed, multinational Israel has no connection to OT Israel.
 - ❖ Paul’s illustration of the Olive Tree in Rom. 11 makes that clear.
 - ❖ Unbelieving Jews were branches that were cut off and judged.
 - ❖ Believing Gentiles were grafted into the Olive tree (joining the few believing Jews of the 1st century).
 - ▶ To come at this another way, what connects one to this renewed Israel, true Israel is not Jewish heritage, but faith!

Galatians 3:7-9 - 7 *Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

- ❖ Those with faith in Jesus are the true seed of Abraham.
 - ❖ In them, Abraham has inherited the whole world!
 - ❖ Because they are filled with God's Holy Spirit, everywhere a believer lives is the Holy Land.
 - ❖ And they are reigned by the eternal Son of David, the Lord Jesus.
- What does that mean for Jewish people today?
 - Unless they come to Jesus, they are still not part of the real Israel.
 - They are still a people from whom the Kingdom was taken.
 - There is no Biblical evidence of any remaining claim to a strip of land in the Middle East.
 - Is that the end of the story for National Israel? I don't think so...

Romans 11:25-27 - 25 *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: [National] Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, 26 and in this way all [National] Israel will be saved. As it is written:*

"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27 And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

- But a "homeland" is quite unnecessary for what I believe is promised them...but who knows...maybe the time is near!
- And what glorious days those will be!

Romans 11:12, 15 - *But if their [National Israel's] transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! ...15 For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*