

Part 2: The Promise

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crazy love

As Christians living far away from Israel, almost 2,000 years removed from the last writing of Scripture, we can subconsciously treat the Biblical story as a fantasy or allegory rather than true events that have significant relevance to our lives. We know it's true, but it can feel so disconnected from our experience that we push it into a different category.

Yet we are still in the Biblical story. The Bible is the inspired account of God and His people. Scripture isn't still being written, but that doesn't impact the reality that we are still in the story of God and His people. He is still unfolding history before our very eyes. He is still working miracles, weaving beautiful stories amongst people all over the world, and moving things closer to the final completion. What an amazing time to be alive, right in the middle of such climactic times!

As we've studied Israel together, it's important to note some very significant realities in our current time in light of God's promises to the descendants of Abraham:

- 1948 marks the only time in the history of the world where a nation, which was completely dispersed for over 1800 years, came back and re-formed as a sovereign nation.
- Hebrew is the only language that was spoken for centuries only to come back as a nation's primary language.

The point is not to say that the morality of how Israel came back as a nation was right or justified. There was much evil and injustice that took place in the midst of this coming to be. In Scripture, God often used evil people and nations to accomplish His purposes. Think about Pharaoh, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and even Israel itself. The point is that there are unprecedented promises made to the descendants of Abraham and there have been unprecedented realities that have happened within Israel over just this past century.





- 1 Have you struggled with feeling like the Bible is lacking relevance to our current world and lives?
- 2 How does seeing the connection between the Bible and our current world, specifically in Israel, encourage your faith? How can that change how we think, feel, and live?

It is also significant to think deeper about what was shared in the video of the drastic increase of believers in Jesus among the Jewish people in the last 100 years (from 1,000 to 200,000). For almost the entirety of the Church Age, it would be very hard to imagine how there could be Jewish Christians in Jerusalem praying according to Jesus' prophecy in Luke 13. Yet now there are thousands praying this:

“Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Luke 13:33-35)

Beyond all of this, we are seeing unprecedented movement in the unity of Jewish believers in Jesus and Arabic believers in Jesus. The roots of the conflict of the Jewish and Arabic people traces back 4,000 years to Abraham and his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac was the son of promise, and Ishmael the son born from the flesh (Galatians 4). They have been in conflict ever since, as was prophesied in Genesis 16 and later in Galatians 4 in such an astoundingly accurate way.

But it is in Jesus that we find unity. The team that went to Israel with Francis during the filming of this video were able to sit down with followers of Jesus on both sides who love each other. It's truly amazing to see how God is moving in Israel right now. The world wants to present so many different solutions to the conflict there, and it has created much polarization. But the solution is very, very simple: Jesus. He is the One who brings peace (Luke 19:41-42). Paul writes in Ephesians 2:14,

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”

This unity that the believers are experiencing in Israel comes at a very great cost to them because the conflict is so intense. They are not only rejected for believing in Jesus, but also for loving their ethnic people's enemy.

3 Jesus died for all people. He desires that all would come to faith in Him. As we see ongoing conflict and tension among the Jewish and Arabic people around Israel, how do we walk as Jesus did - in love, compassion, hope, and sacrifice?

4 Why is it so important for Jewish and Arabic believers in Jesus to unite even though it comes at a great cost to them? How does this shape how we can pray for them?

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 16 for not being able to “interpret the signs of the times.” This was directly in reference to His first coming, but we can see many “signs” and prophecies pointing towards His second return. We should be able to discern as things are getting closer. The reality is that, regardless of the times, Jesus clearly taught over and over again that we should be prepared for His return. We must stay ready.





Many Scriptures point to Jesus returning to Israel, that there will be many believers in Him crying out for His return, and there will be intense conflict in Israel during His return. Francis pointed out that we finally have a Christian in every nation around the world, and the Bible is close to being translated into every language.

On top of that, we considered in the video the “partial hardening” of Israel mentioned in Romans 11:25 (of which we may be seeing a shift). We also considered the possibility of looking at a timeline of human history matching up with the 7 days of creation.

The goal here is not to give a bold prediction of when Jesus will return. The point is to bring our attention back to what Jesus called us to - being prepared for His return. We need to be ready because He truly could come back very soon.

- 5** So many things are happening that were unheard of until recently. When you consider the significance of these events, how does that help you in anticipating Jesus' return?

- 6** As we see the world moving more and more in this direction - with great conflicts as well as signs of Jesus' return - how do we ensure that we are filled with hope and joy rather than fear and despair?

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Reflection

Action