

The Church and Israel

by David Pawson

The church has a debt to Israel, is dependent on Israel, and has a duty to stand with and bless Israel, lest it face the danger of God's curse.

Duration: 46:16

Scripture: Psalm 17:8, Matthew 6:33, Romans 11:11, Romans 11:24, Revelation 21:1-4, Revelation 22:4

Topics: "Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the decline of the British empire and the nostalgia associated with it. He emphasizes the importance of looking towards the future rather than dwelling on the past. The speaker also discusses the duty of Christians to stand with and support Israel, particularly during times of great tribulation. He shares a personal story about his wife's battle with cancer and how it deepened his understanding of God's protection and care.

Transcript

This climax - has God rejected the Jews? Never! And it's the strongest negative in the Greek language - Meganoita - never let it be. Paul was horrified that Christians in the Roman church should believe that God had discarded the chosen people. God has a future for Israel and in Romans 11 Paul goes on to outline that future plan that God has for his ancient people, and we are part of that plan.

The dispensational view, which I was criticising in my first talk this morning, has what I call a double-replacement theology - that the church has replaced Israel only temporarily, and that God is going to reverse that and Israel will replace the church. At a future date, when the church is whisked away in the rapture, Israel will take over the task of the church and complete world evangelisation. That's what I call the double-replacement theology, though I'm the only one to use that term.

But nevertheless, that seems to me as crazy as the first one. Two other responses I want to make. Many people in the mainline denominational churches felt so bad about what had happened to the Jewish people in a Christian country that they've gone - well, they're bending over backwards - to tell us that Judaism is a saving religion and we must now dialogue.

Out of that reaction came a movement called the Council of Christians and Jews. I've spoken for them, but usually it has been one of my double visits, first and last rolled into one. When I get back from ministry, my wife always says, was that a double visit, your first and last? Well, it hasn't been my last year.

Nevertheless, I have spoken for the Council of Christians and Jews, but the basis of that council is Christians don't try to convert Jews and Jews don't try to convert Christians. They each accept each other's religions as equally ways to God and ways, therefore, of salvation. It's now known as the dual-covenant theology - that Jews are saved by Moses and Christians by Christ.

That's again a theology that is appealing even to some Christian Zionists. Who don't want to evangelize Jews, but who do want to support them. There's another reaction, and alas, it's now taking over.

You see, after the Holocaust we saw the Jewish people as victims. We saw them as those who'd been exploited, as those who'd been downtrodden. But now they have the sixth largest army in the world, they have atomic weapons, they have a growing economy, they are now powerful.

For the first time in two thousand years we're having to face the fact that Israel is a world power, small though they are in numbers and in territory. They nevertheless have now taken their place among the world powers. The world is finding it very difficult to adapt to such a reverse situation.

The world was very sympathetic to what they'd gone through in the Holocaust, but now the world is beginning to be very antagonistic toward this new power on the horizon. I'm talking of the Christian Church apart from Christian Zionists. But the Christian Church as a whole is now, I believe, turning against Israel on a wide scale.

It is in my country. The Church of England, which God had used mightily to establish the State of Israel, the Church of England is now almost officially pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel. I'm in a tiny minority in England still supporting Israel, which I will do to my dying day.

I've got two rings on my hands. One was given to me by my wife on our 25th wedding anniversary and I watched it being made in a little jeweller's shop in Jaffa Road in Jerusalem. It's got my name in Hebrew backwards - David and the walls of Jerusalem.

Come and look at it afterwards if you wish. My wife gave it to me and said, you are to be a watchman on the wall. And I gave it to her.

So I wear that, not just to keep me out of trouble but because I'm proud to wear that. But this one was given to me less than a year ago when they were digging the foundations for a new block of offices in East London and found they were digging through an old Jewish cemetery. Among the bones they found this ring with my name on it again - David.

Some Jew of that name had worn that a long, long time ago and they gave it to me after they found it in that cemetery. I'm proud to wear that too. But my name there in Hebrew goes forwards.

I couldn't understand. I could understand why it's on a white stone - that's biblical. But I couldn't understand why in Hebrew the name goes forwards.

And then it suddenly dawned on me it's a signet ring to press into wax and therefore it is my way round. So there we are. I wear the right way round on my left hand and the wrong way round on my right.

But it reminds me that I stand by Israel, not just Israel as a state but Israel as a people, including that bit of Israel that's not in the State of Israel yet, and that's a good half of them. But I wear that to remind me and I hope they'll bury me in that. Well now, the Church and Israel.

I want to suggest just five ways, or five things, the Church needs to think about as they think about Israel. We'll look at them separately. First, the Church's debt to Israel, which needs to be repaid.

I told you yesterday how much the world is in debt to Jewish people in music, architecture, dentistry, you name it. Whatever profession there is, you'll find Jews at the top of it. And when I looked at the twentieth century, the four greatest influencers on the twentieth century, three were Jewish.

The four men who influenced the century of most of my lifetime, who were they? Darwin, Freud, Einstein and Marx. Those four men shaped the twentieth century, and three were Jews. Darwin wasn't, but Einstein, Freud and Marx were Jewish.

Did you realise that those men shaped my world? But they did. But I'm concerned about the Church's debt to Israel. Many, many years ago, 1972 I think, we put on a meeting for Jewish people in a park in north-west London in Finchley, a park where there were three oak trees, and we were guided to that park from the book of Genesis.

We laid on a meeting in a big marquee, a huge tent, for hundreds of Jewish people because Finchley is so full of Jews. The bus conductors used to say, anybody for Tel Aviv? And the Jews would get off at north Finchley. Margaret Thatcher supported our meeting.

The police would not protect the marquee because at that time synagogues and cemeteries were being attacked and vandalised, so the police wouldn't come near us. They said, it's on your head if the marquee is burnt down. But hundreds of Jews came, including - well, we included in the programme a kosher meal for them.

Then I spoke to them and my subject was, the time has come for Gentiles to repay their debt to the Jews. Little did I know, but recordings of that went all over the world, were played in synagogues and churches, and even went to the Israeli Prime Minister. I got a shock.

I touched something. It was like putting a plug into a socket and finding it was turned on. It lit up immediately.

Never forget that evening. A Jewish rabbi who had been in the British Army and been the first to liberate Dachau concentration camp in Germany spoke after I had spoken. He said, tonight, for the first time, I have hope.

He held up a photograph of himself in army uniform standing at a grave of thousands of Jews. If you want to get a recording of that, you can. But it was a turning point in my life, that meeting.

Forever afterwards, people talked to me about the Finchley meeting. But in that I acknowledged Christian debt to Israel. You owe them your Bible.

You wouldn't have a Bible but for the Jewish people. Out of forty authors, thirty-nine were Jewish, and that one was a Gentile doctor who got all he wrote about from Jews. It is a Jewish book from beginning to end, and you owe it to Israel.

You wouldn't have had it but for them. We owe our Saviour to Israel, and in particular to two young people, married couple, who saved Jesus' life before he was two years of age. And had they not done so, Jesus would not have been there to die for you.

They saved his life by becoming refugees and leaving their country with a baby. He is a Jew and always will be our Saviour and the Lord of the nations, King of kings, Lord of lords, and he's Jewish. We owe the Jews our church.

The Twelve Apostles were all Jews. The early church was all Jewish. That's how the church was born, and we owe them that.

And as Jesus said, salvation is of the Jews, so we owe them our salvation. What a debt! I can never repay that, you can never repay that, but it's time for the whole church to remember its debt to God's ancient people Israel. The second thing I've written down is the church's dependence on Israel.

Now that comes as a shock. We think the Western church is surviving without Israel. We don't need Israel.

Many churches never even think or talk about Israel, and they think, church dependence on Israel? Never. But actually, when we read the New Testament, we find that the church couldn't survive without Israel. There is only one olive tree in God's thinking, and it's the Jewish olive tree, and the trunk is Jewish, and the roots are Jewish, and you draw the sap from Jewish roots or the church would not survive.

Many churches are totally unaware of their dependence on the Jewish people. The replacement that's taken place is not the Jewish tree by a Christian tree. A few of the Jewish branches have been replaced by many Gentile branches, but that's the only replacement I know.

But they've been grafted into the old trunk of the tree and the old roots. Whether you know it or not, when you go to church and you draw life from worship and fellowship, you are drawing your life from Jews, from that olive tree that God has planted. There's no change of tree, there's no change of roots, there's only a change in some of the branches.

Replacement theology, which began in Rome, is not the truth. The third thing I want to talk about that the church needs to remember now in relation to Israel - first, our debt to Israel, second, our dependence on Israel, third, we need to remember our danger from Israel. Did you realise that there's a danger attached to Israel which can damage the church? Let me explain.

The Mosaic covenant made at Sinai is obsolete and redundant for Christians, according to our New Testament. But the Abrahamic covenant is still in existence and is still ratified by God's oath and still stands. That's the covenant that gave Abraham and his descendants the land.

But God added this - whoever blesses you will be blessed and whoever curses you will be cursed. God is a God who blesses and curses. He's a God who heals and kills.

He's a God of justice and mercy. He's a God of love and hate, and we tend to overlook the other side of God. But he is a God who curses people, and he said, you curse my people and you curse me.

He said, this people are the apple of my eye. Now I got that all wrong. I used to think of a lovely rosy red apple in your hand and think God is saying, they're like that.

But the apple of the eye is the iris of the eye, and if you look at the iris in your eye in a mirror you'll see an apple on end with the dark centre where the stalk usually is. That's the apple of the eye. God is saying to you, that's the most sensitive part of me, for the most sensitive part of your body is the iris of your eye.

God has provided us with eyelids that slam down as soon as anything touches the iris of your eye - the eyelid. And the Hebrew word for eyelid is the same as the Hebrew word for keeper, and God is our keeper. He's the eyelid, and Israel is the apple of his eye, the iris of his eye, and he will slam down when anyone touches that most sensitive part.

That's the meaning of that phrase. It's very real to me because I told you my wife was suffering from deadly cancer. It was in the iris of her eye, in the apple of her eye.

That's why it was so serious, and so I really know this. In fact, when she was in hospital and we'd just heard the verdict, I didn't know what to preach on the next Sunday, and I said, Lord, what can I preach with my wife in a hospital like this and possibly dying? What can I preach? And he said, preach on Psalm 121. And I looked it up, and every verse was about eyes, every verse.

It began with, I will lift up my eyes to the hills. And then it says, God never shuts his eyes, he watches over Israel night and day. And then it says, the Lord watches over you.

Three times he watches over Israel, and then it says, the Lord is the keeper, the eyelid, and he will keep you. I preached on this and took the recording to my wife in hospital. She was in a famous hospital where they used to save Spitfire pilots in World War II when their faces were terribly burned.

A skilled surgeon used to reconstruct the faces of Spitfire pilots during the war. She was in a ward where everybody was in for surgery on the eyes. I said, you'll never guess what I preached on.

On Sunday I preached on eyes. And it said, I will lift up my eyes to the hills. And do you know one week later I drove her to the Canadian Rockies, and we lifted our eyes up to the hills.

A New Zealand nurse in the hospital, who'd only been a Christian two months, had given her a little bit of paper on which she'd written Psalm 121. So the Lord's eyes mean a lot to us, and his eyelid, his keeper, which slams down when anything touches the apple of his eye. Have you got the message now? Well now, here's what I wanted to say.

Other things being equal - and they're not - but other things being equal, I believe a church that blesses Israel will be blessed. And a church that however unintentionally engages in cursing evil will come under the curse of God. That's what I mean by the church's danger from Israel.

We can bless Israel and be blessed, or we can curse them and be cursed. That's God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. And when I think of the nations and empires of the world who have cursed Israel and disappeared from the world - let's go back to Egypt.

There are no Egyptians today, there are Arabs in Egypt, but no Egyptians. Egypt, that powerful, most powerful nation in the ancient world that built the pyramids, how they did it I don't know. But they ruled the world and they're gone, and the only people interested in them now are archaeologists and historians.

I think of Assyria, left mighty monuments behind, but Assyria cursed Israel and they're gone, disappeared. I think of Babylon and they're gone. I think of Greece and they're gone.

I think of Rome, they're gone. And so it has been through the ages, any nation or empire until Hitler himself lifted up his hand against God's people and he's gone. He was hoping to establish the German Reich or empire for a thousand years, he said, and in less than twenty he was in the dust with the empire

with him.

Learn from history. There's only one nation that's still there, and it's the nation that many empires cursed, and I believe Britain did the same. Britain in 1947 washed her hands of Israel and said, we're fed up with them, we're not going to look after them any more, and within the next five years the British empire had gone.

As if God said, if you won't look after my people, you can't look after any people, and my British empire into which I was born has gone. The splendid spectacle of the past is still here if you watch the Royal Wedding, but it's all nostalgia. The uniforms that the household guard of the Queen were wearing for the Royal Wedding with plumed helmets and polished breast plates and red jackets - those men are fighting in Afghanistan but not in that uniform.

If they fought in that uniform they wouldn't get very far. It's all looking back to the great days of the British empire, but it's all looking back. It makes a wonderful spectacle.

I dare to say Britain is second to none in pageantry and in spectacle. I tell you, what a show! But it's a show of what we were in the past, not the present. How did I get on to this? If this happens to nations who break that covenant of Abraham, it can happen to churches too.

I have noticed that other things being equal, churches which bless Israel are blessed. One of the things that excites me about IHOP is its support of Israel. No wonder God is blessing.

He's got to. He's promised it. So that's the third point - the church's danger from Israel, and the danger will only come from taking a negative attitude towards the people that God has chosen.

Fourthly, the church's duty to Israel we must remember as we draw to the end times. What is our duty then to Israel? And by Israel I'm thinking of the people, not the place or the state, because the people are bigger than the state and half of them are still here in America and elsewhere. So I'm thinking of the people.

Our duty to the people of Israel - first to stand with them. That is going to be increasingly unpopular, increasingly difficult, but I believe God is calling us to stand with Israel. Less and less anyone else will stand with them.

America, support for Israel - I see it really shaky now. Other nations are deserting Israel. The Bible says they are going to be left on their own, but the church must stand with Israel.

I am so thrilled that even in Germany in the early 1940s there were some pastors in Germany who stood by Israel when the Holocaust began. One of them was a man called Paul Schneider in a church in a suburb in Berlin. He is one of my heroes.

He preached against Hitler. He supported Israel and he was warned by his church, please stop doing this, they'll come for you. Even the town council pleaded with Pastor Paul Schneider, please stop preaching this.

You're running risks for yourself, your family and your church. But he went on and one night at four o'clock in the morning, which was when the Gestapo used to arrest people, they came for him and he went off in the back of a German army lorry. To the concentration camp, and his wife never saw him again.

He paid the price. But I have his letters from prison to his people in the church, and you know the one word came so often in Paul's letters that I underlined it, and it came up every other paragraph. It was the word joy, joy, that he could write letters from a concentration camp full of joy.

I remember that Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians from prison and that letter is full of the word joy and full of the word rejoice. I say again, rejoice, and he's in prison. And Paul Schneider died in the concentration camp.

But I'm looking forward to meeting that man. I want to shake his hand. Paul, you stood for the Lord and his people.

You stood by them when it was very unpopular. I tell you, though it is not costly in America to do it now, the day will come when if you support Israel you will pay the price. It's come already in my country.

You are regarded as a crazy crank if you support Israel. So that's the first duty we have, to stand with God's chosen people. They're our future, as I'll come to in a moment.

The second duty we have to Israel is to suffer with them. When we get into the big trouble, the Great Tribulation, the two peoples who will suffer most are Christians and Jews. Suffering will throw us together in a way that will unite us.

One of my heroes is a lady missionary who went out to Congo as a missionary, and when the Civil War was at its height, she and a nun were taken prisoner by the rebels and they were systematically raped by the rebel soldiers. Here she was, a Protestant evangelical missionary woman, lying on the same floor as a Roman Catholic nun while both were being gang-raped by the soldiers. She said, when you're in that situation you don't trouble to ask each other, what denomination you are.

I've never forgotten that. They were suffering together for the Lord, and that's all that mattered. Christians and Jews will come together in suffering in the big trouble, and that perhaps may draw us closer to the Jewish people than anything else has done.

But the third duty we have is the most delicate one. We do have a duty to share the gospel with Jews, and I believe many of us are neglecting that duty because we're not even thinking about it. But it is our duty.

When we say Christ, that is not Jesus' surname. We treat it as that. We say Jesus Christ as if Jesus is his Christian name and Christ is his surname.

But Christ is not a name. Christ means Jewish King, the Anointed One. It's the Greek version of the Hebrew word Meshiach, the Anointed One.

Whenever you say the word Christ you should realise you are speaking about a Jewish King. But how often do you do that? In the name of Christ, that means in the name of the Jewish King I heal you. Well, it is our duty.

Paul says in Romans again that he is debted to the Jew first, to take the gospel to the Jew first. In any country we go to as a missionary, we should surely follow that priority - to the Jew first. If the Jew turns it down, we can turn to Gentiles.

But the gospel is for the Jew first. God intended the new covenant for the house of Israel and the house of Judah. That was his first intention, though it will be the last effective turning to Christ.

Nevertheless, we have a duty to share Christ. I get many opportunities to speak to Jews, even in Orthodox synagogues, which are pretty tight to get into. But I never do so without talking about Yeshua HaMashiach.

They know that. They know I'm a Christian. They expect it.

So I always make quite sure that I say, they know I love them and they know I'm speaking in love. I'm not trying to remind them of their sufferings. I'm not digging up the past.

I want to share with them the good news of the gospel. But here let me underline one very important word. In Romans 11 Paul says the method is to arouse them to jealousy.

That does not mean envy. Between envy and jealousy there is a huge difference, and even the New International Version has got the wrong word in Romans 11 and put envy. Paul did not say stir them up to envy, but stir them to jealousy.

What's the difference? It's vital that you should know this so that you don't make a big mistake when you approach with the gospel. I can explain it simply this way. If I met another man's wife whom I preferred to my own - which I haven't yet, but supposing I did and met another man's wife that I preferred to my own - I would envy him his wife.

For envy is the malice I feel towards something that belongs to someone else. But if somebody ran off with my wife, I would feel jealousy. That's a very different emotion because that's about something that is mine, that has been taken from me.

Have I made that distinction clear? We are not called to stir up Jews to envy, and that's to say we must not go and say, we've got something you haven't. We want you to envy us. We want to tell you of our joys so that you may envy us our joy and our sense of purpose in life.

That's provoking to envy. God is never a God of envy, but he's a jealous God. He's jealous for what's his, and jealousy is provoked when you talk about something that belongs to them.

In other words, when you go to a Jew and say, I've found your Messiah - not I've found my Saviour, but I've found your Messiah. I love your scriptures - that stirs them up to jealousy. What do you mean, ours? Because it's all theirs, and we've come into it like wild olives grafted into the olive tree.

But it's not our tree, it's their tree. It's their own tree, says Paul. And therefore, to make people jealous is to arouse feelings in them for something that belongs to them, not something that belongs to you.

So I was talking to a Jew in a shop, and I said to him, you know, my best friend is a Jew. And he looked up a bit, he looked more cheerful, and I said, do you know he once saved my life? And he began to lift his head and look happier and even began to look a bit proud that he was a man who was saved by a Jew. Oh, he said, what's his name? Would I know him? And then I was able to tell him, and he took it very well.

But that was stirring up to jealousy. What belongs to them already? It's always been theirs, and we've learned to tell them not what we've found and what's ours, but what is theirs that we've discovered. And that's a totally different attitude.

So think of that in your mind. How can I make him jealous for what is his and belongs to him? And that's perhaps a totally new approach for some people, but it's a very profitable one. Lastly, and I must hurry

now, the church should remember her destiny with Israel.

I've talked about her debt to Israel. I have to look at my notes again. I've talked about her dependence on Israel, her danger from Israel, her duty to Israel, and finally her destiny with Israel.

One of the things that the Bible makes quite clear is that the day of the Gentiles will come to an end. God has set a target figure for the number of Gentiles he wants in his kingdom. And when the fullness of the Gentiles is in, says Paul, then he's going to turn his attention to the Jews again.

Jews were the first followers of Christ and they will be the last followers of Christ. They will come back in at the end, as they were there at the beginning. Do you know that in A.D. 70, when the temple was destroyed, twenty-five percent of the Jewish population in Jerusalem believed in Jesus - a quarter of the city.

We forget that. And they all escaped the siege of Jerusalem because they believed in Jesus. Jesus had warned them to flee from Jerusalem and not even go back into the house to pack, but flee.

And the Christian Jews - if you'll forgive that, I don't like calling Jews Christians, that's a Gentile word - the Jewish believers believed Jesus in A.D. 70, and when the Roman army appeared to besiege the city, all the believing Jews left and went across the Jordan to a place called Pella, where they all survived, whereas all the Jews left in Jerusalem didn't. And the terrible siege of that city, when women were cooking their own babies and eating them just to survive, the terrible horrors described by Josephus the Jewish historian, the believing Jews escaped all that by listening to Jesus and obeying him. But the early church had a terrific impact on the Jewish people.

Thousands, according to the book of Acts, became believers in Jesus even at that time. Well, when the Gentiles were all in, we're told God will turn back to the Jews and bring them in. Isn't that exciting? Again, you can whisper Hallelujah here, you know, as long as you don't make it too loud.

But don't do it because the preacher tells you to. Amen? No, you shouldn't say Amen. I don't like preachers who manipulate congregations, but if you feel like saying Hallelujah, say it.

I don't mind. No, don't say it because I've just mentioned it. So the time of the Gentiles will end and the time of the Jews will begin again.

Hallelujah! They come back in at the end, and then all Israel saved, we shall be one new man. And in the long run we shall find ourselves in one city, and it will be called Jerusalem. And there'll be twenty-four names inscribed on the gates and the foundations, and all twenty-four will be Jewish names.

Luther won't be named, Augustine won't be named, Calvin won't be named, Hudson Taylor's name won't be there, William Booth's name won't be on the walls, but twenty-four Jewish names will be there. So you're going to finish up in a very Jewish city called the New Jerusalem. How about that? And the exciting thing is that that's going to be God's new address, and never again will you say, Our Father which art in heaven, because he's going to come down and have his dwelling among us, and we shall see his face.

And the Bible ends with the God of Israel making his home with men on a new earth. I can't even begin to imagine it, but I'm looking forward to it. What a day, what a place, and Jews and Gentiles together living in the New Jerusalem with twenty-four Jewish names on the walls and foundations and the gates.

That's our future destiny. You see, I'm afraid a new thinking about the future took over. When the Jews were cut out of the future, there was just Christians die and go to heaven to be with Jesus, and that's all.

It's far more than that. Christians are going to join up with the Jews in a new Jewish city, and the God of Israel will be there, and we shall see his face, and the Son of God will be there too. There'll be no more sun, no more sea, and no more sin, and no more sex.

Do you know, when I went to Australia, I preached on the new earth. We were about five miles from Bondi Beach, which is a famous beach for the Sydney people to go to. I said, in the new earth there will be no sun, no sea, and no sex.

There wasn't a single hallelujah. And they all looked as if they wanted to get out of the meeting and get down to Bondi Beach, where there's plenty of all three, before they lost the chance. But I'll tell you this, you won't miss any of that.

You'll be too excited because you'll be with the Lord, with God the Father and his Son, and live there forever and ever and ever and ever. Amen. Thank you, David.

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