

ISRAEL: A Biblical Response¹ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is so very good to see you this morning. And to get to worship with you.

Listen, today is going to be a little different. We are working our way through the study of 1 Peter in a teaching series we've called, "Unshakable." But we are going to press pause on that this morning as I feel led to share with you a message that is birthed out of the ongoing conflict in Israel. Recent escalations have reignited questions and concerns that I feel led to speak to this morning.

I can tell you that preparing for this message has been one of the most challenging. I have spent more time than usual digging into the Scriptures, reading articles, listening to commentators, and monitoring news sources. And to be honest, I still feel inadequate to bring this message in many ways. In effort to be completely transparent, there's just so much on this topic that I do not know. I also feel inadequate is because I'm not sure that would ever be able to answer all of your questions, at least not in a definitive way. And also, due to the range of opinions, not only on this topic, but also surrounding theological and eschatological views, I know that I cannot offer expert commentary as I am just a student of those things as well. However, before jumping into today's message, I do want to give you rationale and try to share my heart in addressing this topic today.

There are several reasons I feel led to do this. First, recent escalation of conflict involving Israel has now involved another nation. This past October, the radical Islamic resistance group, Hamas, unprovoked, attacked civilian gatherings in Israel, creating what would be equivalent to our Pearl Harbor or 9/11. That action led to Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, declaring Israel at war for the first time in 50 years. Then Saturday a week ago, Iran launched over 300 drones and ballistics at Israel. Israeli allies joined in eliminating 99% of those threats. Israel has since retaliated in strategic attacks. Iran vowed to continue attacks if Israel responded. No end is in sight.

Another reason to address this topic is that escalation has piqued interest as demonstrated by the number of Google searches about it. Some of you have

asked my thoughts regarding this. Others are asking questions surrounding the potential for World War 3 and what this might mean about Christ's return.

Another reason I think now is an appropriate time to address this topic is the tension we all feel rising in our own country. While we live in a pretty sheltered area, there have been increased protests and political posturing across the country. Differing views on what is happening is playing on our already divided nation and seemingly driving division even further.

I also want to address this topic to perhaps give us some tools to navigate misinformation and hysteria generated by social media, biased news outlets, and YouTube shorts, painting what is happening in Israel in certain bents.

I think this has also revealed the need to help us develop a Biblical Christian worldview about the events in the world. We need to learn how to think Christianly, especially what pertains to Scripture.

I also want to leverage this message to reinforce and maintain the biblical urging to have a sensitive heart toward all people desiring for all to experience salvation in Christ. The gospel is the answer to peace here. And according to Christ's teachings is available to anyone that would call upon His name.

In addition to those things, I want to equip us to have biblically intelligent conversations with people. And people that may not see things from our perspective.

But above all those reasons to do this message, the most compelling for me is a sense that I have been prompted by The Holy Spirit. That prompting has been affirmed by our elder council, to encourage and exhort you, our congregation in these days, to learn how to respond to these things biblically.

Now, let me share with you what this message is NOT. It is in no way indented to be political. My view is that this entire situation is way too nuanced with many different components. So, my desire here, and always for that matter, is to be biblical. I can also tell you that there are probably other pastors that are far more informed and way more intelligent than I that can speak to this situation.

My heart is to simply be obedient to the prompting of The Holy Spirit and a faithful servant to the congregation that God has asked me to shepherd. And

my hope is that even though we are not preaching on 1 Peter, that today will help us develop an unshakable faith, rooted in The Lord Jesus. Because the one thing I do know for certain is that Jesus is on His throne, none of this caught Him off guard, and He's working all things for His glory and purpose. Amen?

Now, we will NOT exhaust this topic today. I already feel pressure to get us out of here on time. So, this morning, I am going to approach this topic in 3 ways. I want to talk through a biblical and historical worldview, address some end times implications, and give 5 thoughts on how Christians should respond.

MESSAGE:

So, with that said, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 4. Now, I promise that we are going to make our way to that passage today. But I will be covering a lot of ground first. Let's look at a...

1) Biblical and historical worldview.

I want to examine biblical history that has led us to this point as we seek to think Christianly about the Israeli conflict. It's important to our understanding.

The truth is, everyone has a worldview, a lens by which they view the world. But who has final authority? Who gets to decide which view is correct? For the Christian, that authority is clear. God and His Word is our source, our lens, by which we are to view the world. This is why I've entitled today's message "Israel: A Biblical Response." As believers, we don't base our views of this conflict on what culture, government, demonstrators, or social media says. As a biblically rooted people, we view this conflict through the lens of Scripture.

Now, I recognize there may be those of you here today that are not believers in Jesus, and I'm so glad you've joined us this morning. I want to be upfront that as a believer, I look at this from a biblical standpoint. The Bible shapes my position. Now, there are extra-biblical evidence, archeological discoveries, and modern history that support biblical views. But first and foremost, a Christian's lens is the Bible. And so when it comes to the discussion regarding the land in which Israel occupies, God's Word has a lot to say about to whom it belongs.

It all started with Abram, later named Abraham. God told him to leave his country and go to the land that He would show him. Genesis 12. So, Abraham is ultimately led to the land that is now the state of Israel. And as God shows

him this land, makes a covenant with him and tells him 2 things: 1) I'm giving this land to you and your descendants, and 2) I'm going to give you a son.

Well, Abraham and Sarah had no children. They are in their 90s and Sarah thought it impossible for her to bear a child. So, she and Abraham decide to side-step God [never a good idea] and he had a son with their servant, Hagar. The name of that son was Ishmael. But he was not the son that God promised. God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, not Abraham and Hagar.

So, later, Sarah did have a son and named him Isaac. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation. And God reminded Abraham, again, that He was going to give the land to he and his descendants.

This is the first sign of trouble. Which son's descendants are going to receive that land? Ishmael was the firstborn, and typically the birthright went to the firstborn son. But Isaac was the promised son. God chose to make that covenant with Isaac not Ishmael. That's Genesis 17. So, God bypassed the typical birthright, and that's not the only time He did that. God is God, and therefore He has a right to do what He wills. Isaac is the one God chose.

And, God extends that covenant through Jacob, not Esau. Again, bypassing Esau's birthright (Genesis 27). Then in Genesis 32, God changes Jacob's name to Israel. So, who are the descendants of Abraham? Well, the descendants of Ishmael are the Arab peoples and the Edomites are descendants of Esau. These two people groups are the group that most people refer to as Palestinians, although there really isn't any such thing as Palestine. The Israelites, on the other hand, are descendants of Isaac. So, all are descendants of Abraham. But again, the covenant involving the land was with Abraham, then Isaac and then Jacob and their lineage. You see in the Old Testament text the phrase, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Reinforcing the covenant. And so, the hatred toward Israel began.

Fast forward and because of disobedience, God allowed Israel to be sent into captivity as a judgment. But hear me, their disobedience never meant a permanent forfeiture of the land God promised. We know that because God brought them back to the land after captivity.

But think about the hatred toward the Jews dating back to Old Testament days. The Jews were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. Moses led them out of slavery

(Book of Exodus). They wander in the desert. Joshua, following Moses' death, leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. A period of judges and kings led them to world prominence. King David and Solomon led them to be the most prosperous nation on the earth at that time. And Solomon constructed the long-awaited Temple in Jerusalem on what is still currently the Temple Mount.

Then, captivities came at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians. And during those captivities, the Temple was destroyed. The most sacred symbol of The Jews, desecrated. God then sent Nehemiah, Ezra and Zerubbabel to lead in the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple.

Later, Greek and Roman oppression, before, during and after the time of Jesus, led to the temple being destroyed again in AD 70. The remains of the western wall of that Temple are still there, and it is a sacred place for Jews to this day. In fact, the prayers they write out, fold up, and place in the cracks of that wall are done so where it is believed is the closest to the Holy of holies.

I share all that to show us that the Jews, from the very beginning, have fought the hatred of their people. What about modern day? In more recent history, the Nazi regime persecuted and murdered 6 million Jews in efforts to wipe them from the earth. In 1947, the British initiated U.N., at that time called League of Nations, conversations on establishing a Jewish state of Israel. On May 14th, 1948, Israel was born, British pulled out, and they became a sovereign nation.

But, the very next day, May 15th, 1948, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked Israel on the basis of a refusal to recognize them as a state. 1 day old and Israel is already having to defend itself. Miraculously, because God watches over His people, Israel survived. Ever since that day, a steady barrage of attacks has been launched toward Israel. 1967 was the 6-day war. In 1973, on October 6, same day as the recent October attacks, Yom Kippur, Syria and Egypt attacked and Israel declared war. Israel won that war, too. All throughout the 80s and 90s, and early 2000s, Israel defended itself from terrorist groups. My point is that Israel, a very small nation, surrounded by enemies seeking their obliteration. Life in Israel is lived under constant threat.

Attempts at peace have been made. The proposal of a divided state in 1948 was embraced by Israel but rejected by Arab nations. Israel has conceded and completely vacated the Gaza strip, yet peace cannot be achieved. President Clinton negotiated a peace deal but that wasn't embraced by the Palestinians.

The Bible and our biblical worldview show us Israel's right to exist, in that land, as given by God Himself. Therefore, they have a right and a desire to defend themselves. Yet they remain the object of hatred and mistreatment. Why?

I want to show you a map. This is Israel. [\[show picture\]](#) A little piece of land 8,000 square miles, the size of New Jersey, and it is the object of conflict today. Why? A couple of reasons: 1) the claims of Islam, and 2) middle eastern ideologies. Let's talk through those 2 things for just a moment.

First, the claims of Islam. Islam is a religion that started in the 600s based on the writings of their prophet, Muhammed. It ties back to Abraham, through the lineage of Ishmael. And it is important to consider what they hold as sacred, specifically their 3 most holy sites.

First, the mosque in Mecca, which according to the Quran, is a place that was established by Abraham and Ishmael. The second holy site of Islam is Medina. The mosque located there was the house of Muhammed. Then, you guessed it, Jerusalem. Specifically, the mosque that is now constructed on the original Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock, is believed by Muslims to be the place that Muhammed ascended into Heaven.

This is the same place the Jewish Temple Holy of holies existed but has been destroyed. So, we have the collision of 3 religions, all in one spot, laying claim to possession based on the lineage of Abraham. According to The Bible, God's Word, it belongs to the Jews. But the Quran teaches it belongs to the Arabs.

ILLUSTRATION: Dallas Cowboys Star

How many of you remember this picture? [\[show picture\]](#) 49ers wide receiver, Terrell Owens, after scoring a touchdown, celebrated on the Cowboys logo. Shortly after that, Emmitt Smith scored a touchdown and set the ball on the star reclaiming the logo. But then, Terrell Owens scored again and went and celebrated on the star but was met with resistance in George Teague. A fight almost broke out. Why? Because of a sense of disgracing something. That is what we have in this Israeli – Palestinian conflict times a gazillion.

Now, you might think, why can't peace be established. Surely, we can negotiate something. Well, there've been many attempts at peace, but they all fail. Why? Because of reason number 2, middle eastern ideologies, in particular the ideologies of Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas occupying the Gaza strip and

Hezbollah on the north in Golan Heights. Both are positioned and have expressed hostility toward Israel. Even though Israel has more than demonstrated their willingness to negotiate, but it is not reciprocated by those organizations.

In fact, article 13 of the Hamas Charter, the group's founding document, says, "We will never negotiate the settlement of the land and our only answer is Jihad," war. It is clear that Hamas and these other organizations are solely after one thing: the eradication of Israel. In fact, their leaders have said that they want to eradicate the little Satan, Israel, then the Greater Satan, Christianity. They have said we are first coming after the Saturday infidels and then the Sunday infidels on their way to world domination. It is impossible to make peace with someone that holds to and operates on that ideology.

Now, Iran, another nation, has launched attacks. As a result, it opens up the line of questioning as to where this all ends. So, that leads me to the second thing that I want to talk through today...

2) End times implications.

It's important to know the history here and the Biblical point of view. But what does all this mean? Is this the beginning of World War 3? Is this the fulfillment of biblical prophecies opening the door for Christ's return and the Great Tribulation as outlined in Scriptures? There have been some that have suggested that the timing of this conflict and what is going on with Russia and seemingly China is the fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38, Gog and Magog. What is happening? What is your thought, Pastor Chris?

Well, there are differing views of eschatological events. Again, I feel as though I am just a student on these discussions. So, the short answer is, I have no idea if this is the beginning of the end times or the fulfillment of those prophecies or not.

But here's what I can say. Jesus is coming again, as He said He would. His return has been immanent since His ascension, at least that was the view of the New Testament writers. I also know that no one knows the day and time in which He will return. That was Jesus' words, not mine.

But what I can say definitively is that end times discussions and perceived events in the pastoral epistles, contained in the New Testament, was a comfort

to the early believers. The mentioning of Christ's return brought hope and encouragement, not hysteria, confusion, nor over reaction. There is a difference in preparedness and hysteria. Preparedness speaks to having our spiritual houses in order which hysteria creates doomsday preppers. The New Testament writers never intended for Christians to be hysterical regarding the events of Christ's return. But rather to be confident and even at peace in the midst of chaos.

Again, our biblical worldview speaks to this. The Bible is full of teaching regarding Christ's supremacy. That is that He reigns and rules on His throne. The supreme reign of Jesus means that He is sovereign and at work, yes, even in the cataclysmic events in the world, to bring about His will and purpose. That's Romans 8:28. *28And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* And a believer that fully understands that lives a life of confidence and security in that truth.

Now, to circle back to the question, I don't know what the Israeli conflict and recent escalation of Iran means in terms of an eschatological timetable. No one does. And if someone says they do, run. The one thing second coming predictionists have in common is that they've all batted 1,000; 100% wrong.

Listen, if this is the unfolding of the eschaton, we have reason to take heart, our King is coming. We should be expectant and watchful. But if this is just another historical continuation of the hatred of the Jews, then we are to take heart knowing 2 things: 1) God will see to the protection of His people. We would do good to support and pray for that, and 2) these are what Jesus referred to as the birthing pains to His return. But again, either way, God is on His throne, He is in control and for those of us that are believers in Christ, there is peace immeasurable in that. For those that are not in Christ, these are opportunities to evaluate your eternity.

So, we've talked about this from a biblical and historical worldview and end times implications. Now, quickly, in the time we have remaining, I want to mention...

3) 5 ways believers should respond.

5 ways I want to urge you, Trinity Baptist Church, to respond biblically to the unfolding of events in the Middle East. And I want to do this in the context of

the passage I've asked you to turn to. 2 Timothy 4, verses 1 through 5. *¹I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and **by his appearing and his kingdom:** ²preach **the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. [Sounds like our day and time. But], ⁵As for you, always be **sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*** I think the overall admonition of this text is great advice to us today. Jesus is coming again, we are to preach God's Word. People will turn to myths. But as for us as believers, let's be sober-minded, endure any suffering and persecution that might come our way in these days, share the gospel, and let's leverage this time as an opportunity for unprecedented ministry.

5 ways I want to urge you to respond. First, respond with...

1) A Hopefulness

If there is anything in you that is anxious about the situation in Israel and pushing you toward hysteria, I want to ask you to rest in the reign and rule of Christ. Should we be concerned? Sure. Should we be watchful? Absolutely. But we should not lose hope. Hope is a characteristic that has always defined followers of Jesus, not hysteria. If Jesus is indeed on His throne, and believe me He is, then He is working all things according to His plan and purpose. Let's respond with a hopefulness in that. Secondly, ...

2) A Biblically Rooted Approach

In other words, be a student of the Bible. Search the Scriptures and be biblically informed. Do not depend on social media or biased news outlets pushing agendas. We don't need a cultural worldview when it comes to this issue, but rather a Biblical Christian worldview. You and I develop that when we are in God's Word. Respond with hopefulness and a biblically rooted approach. Thirdly, ...

3) A Surrendered Life

What our world needs now is Christians living like Christians, surrendered in all areas of our lives to The Lord Jesus. We are to live in light of Jesus' immanent

return. If Jesus did come back today, how would He find us living? Respond with hopefulness, and a biblically rooted approach, and a surrendered life. Fourthly, ...

4) A Prayerful Heart

We need to pray. What do we pray for? Pray for peace. Pray for the divine protection of Israel. Psalm 122:6-9 says, *⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! ⁷May they be secure who love you! ⁸Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" ⁹For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" ⁹For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.* What else do we need to pray for? Pray for the enemies of Israel, who are the same enemies of Christianity. Jesus says that we are to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us. Pray for the salvation of Hamas and all those opposed to Israel. Did you know that there are many fellow Arab believers that are opposed to all this? Can you imagine what it is like for them? Pray for their safety and the protection of civilians. Pray for God's will.

Respond with hopefulness, a biblically rooted approach, a surrendered life and a prayerful heart. Finally, ...

5) A Renewed Urgency

The unfolding of these events produce in us a relentless desire to share the gospel with all people. People's only hope is a relationship with Jesus. And if the gospel can reconcile a sinful people to a Holy God, then it can bring about peace in the middle east. We should have a desire that all people come to faith in Jesus as Lord. We should desire the members of Hamas and Hezbollah, and the entire region, to come to a saving knowledge in Jesus Christ. The Gospel saves. It is the power unto salvation, Romans says. It does not take into consideration one's past, nationality, worldview, or beliefs. No, it radically saves sinners, which is something we all share in common.

Listen, let's stay alert, watchful, with our minds focused on God's Word, respond biblically by maintaining a hopefulness, a biblically rooted approach, a surrendered life, a prayerful heart, and a renewed urgency to share the gospel.

CONCLUSION:

If you are here today and you are apart from a relationship with Jesus, I can tell you that God loves you and desires a relationship with you. You can have the hope and peace that flows from that relationship today...

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in the development of this message: The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, 2001, Crossway Publications; History Channel, “*Five Pillars, Nation of Islam, and Definitions*,” article published by History.com, March 26, 2024, accessed online: <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/islam>; Jack Hayford, “*8 Biblical Reasons to Stand with Israel Today*,” article published by FIRM, November 15, 2023, accessed online: <https://firmisrael.org/learn/8-biblical-reasons-stand-with-israel-today/>; “*History of Israel*,” published on Wikipedia (typically not a good / regular source), accessed online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel; Tommy Politz, “*Christians and Israel*,” message preached at Hillside Christian Church, Amarillo, Texas, October 15, 2023, accessed online: <https://hillsideonline.com/messages/christians-and-israel/christians-and-israel/>; Skip Heitzig, “*Israel or Palestine? Who’s Right? Facts and Myths*,” message preached at Calvary Alburquerque, October 25, 2023, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/332/sermon/4834>; Mark Driscoll, “*Israel & Hamas: A Biblical Explanation*,” message preached at Trinity Church 5 months ago, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AJbu-OPfqq>; Many other articles, essays, and publications.