

Pray For The Peace Of Jerusalem

'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper who love you' (Psalm 122:6).

'His tabernacle is in (Jeru)Salem, and His place is in Zion' (Psalm 76:2).

'Blessed be the Lord from Zion; Who dwells in Jerusalem' (Psalm 135:21).

Jerusalem is the chosen spiritual earthly 'home' or 'dwelling place' of the Lord. 'For the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen ... For Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel ... Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David My servant may always have a light before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put My name (1 Kings 11:13 & 32 & 36). The Lord loves Jerusalem and considers it His holy sanctuary (Malachi 2:11). There were many kings who ruled over Jerusalem, beginning with Melchizedek, King of Righteousness who was also the King of Peace and the Priest of the most High God (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1 & 2), so Jerusalem had a very good start. North of Jerusalem is Mount Moriah, the location where Abraham offered up Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:2). It is where the temple was built years later (2 Chronicles 3:1) and even more years after that, it is the place where Jesus overturned the tables (Matthew 21:12 & 13), where He introduced communion (Matthew 26:28), where the Last Supper was held (Mark 14:12 to 15), where Jesus was tempted (Luke 4:9), where He taught in the Synagogues (John 18:20), where He was crucified (Matthew 16:21; 20:17 & 18), buried (Matthew 27:57 to 60), raised from the dead (Mark 16:6), where He proclaimed the mandate of the Disciples (Luke 24:47 to 49; Acts 1:8), and where the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place (Acts 2:1 to 5). Jerusalem sits on God's holy mountain so it truly is a holy place and is the city of our Great King (Psalm 48:1 & 2; Matthew 5:35). When Jesus was on earth, He lamented over Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, murdering the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a mother hen gather her chicks under her wings, and you refused" (Matthew 23:37). The Lord regards Jerusalem as our spiritual 'mother'(land). 'Hagar (the woman of bondage) represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and she corresponds with the present Jerusalem, for she (Hagar) is in bondage together with her children. But this Jerusalem is free, and she is our mother' (Galatians 4:26).

Here is a brief history of Jerusalem: The city was first called Shalem (Salem), meaning 'peace'. Jerusalem means 'City of Peace'. The Hebrew pronunciation sounds like 'Yerushalayim'. Salem is written in the Bible four times; Jerusalem is written in the scriptures 870 times. The Lord chose Jerusalem to be the only place on earth where He allowed a temple to be built in His name. "I have chosen Jerusalem, that My Name might be there" (2 Chronicles 6:6). There was a gap of about five hundred years when Jerusalem was not inhabited by God's people, the Hebrews; from the time when Jacob and all the Israelites went away to Egypt, up until well after they returned from Egypt. From the time of Abraham until King Adoni-Zedek (Joshua 10:1), Jerusalem was not considered important to the Hebrews. Adoni-Zedek means 'Lord of Righteousness', however, he was an unrighteous king in opposition to Joshua and was executed along with four other unrighteous kings (Joshua 10:23 to 27).

The area where Jerusalem is, and the surrounding land was given by lot to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:1 to 12) and has been inhabited unceasingly by Jewish people ever since. The word 'Jew' comes from the name Judah, so descendants from the tribe of Judah have been living in Jerusalem unceasingly for thousands of years. At that time, the tribe of Judah had trouble driving the enemy (the Jebusites) out of the land, so they seemed to give up for a while and continued living along side the Jebusites (Joshua 15:63). The tribe of Benjamin shared Jerusalem with Judah (Joshua 18:28). With the help of the tribe of Simeon, Judah finally forced the Jebusites out of their part of Jerusalem (Judges 1:3 to 8). However, the tribe of Benjamin did not help Judah and Simeon, so they were forced to live with the surviving Jebusites in their part of Jerusalem (Judges 1:21). The Jebusites were still causing problems in Solomon's day until Solomon made them slaves (2 Chronicles 8:7 & 8). Way back then, it was called the city of the Jebusites and was also nicknamed 'Jebus' (Judges 19:10 & 11). The nickname 'Jebus' is significant, because Jesus said Jerusalem would be 'trodden down' by Gentiles and would once again be restored to the Jewish people (Luke 21:24), and the word 'Jebus' means 'Trodden Down'. Jerusalem was 'trodden down' or occupied by the Jebusites for hundreds of years; then it was 'trodden down' or occupied by Gentiles for 2,000 years. At the time Jesus said this, Jerusalem still belonged to the Jews, so in order for that prophecy to be fulfilled, Jerusalem had to be lost to the Jews then regained, and the Jews have regained control of Jerusalem. The prophecy spoken by Jesus was fulfilled in June 1967 when Jerusalem came under Israeli governance once again. When that happened Jews everywhere rejoiced, but the moslems were very upset. Isaiah prophesied to that effect;

'Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn over her' (Isaiah 66:10).

Saul had his palace in Jerusalem and after David killed Goliath, he took the head of the giant to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 17:54). King David ruled for forty years (seven years from Hebron), but ruled from Jerusalem for thirty-three years (2 Samuel 5:5). He and his men warred against the old enemy, the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:6). David named Jerusalem, 'The City of David' (2 Samuel 5:9) and it became the capital of Judah. David took many wives and concubines from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:13). David's affair with Bathsheba happened at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 11:1 to 27). Jerusalem is where Absalom tried to oust David from the throne, but the fight ended with Absalom losing his life (2 Samuel 15:1 to 18:18). Throughout the skirmish with Absalom, the tribe of Judah remained loyal to King David when the rest of Israel withdrew (2 Samuel 20:2). The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon in Jerusalem (1 Kings 10:2). Solomon ruled over all Israel from Jerusalem for forty years (1 Kings 11:42). King Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem and gathered 180,000 specially chosen warriors from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to fight against the House of Israel, but the Lord told him not to fight against his brethren, so they all went home (1 Kings 12:18 to 24). Rehoboam reigned for seventeen years in the city of Jerusalem, where the Lord had chosen to put His Name out of all the tribes of Israel (1 Kings 14:21).

If we continue reading the books of Kings and Chronicles, we can read about the many kings who ruled over Judah and Benjamin from Jerusalem, for hundreds of years. Seventy years after many Jews were taken by force to Babylon, The Lord told the Gentile King Cyrus of Persia to build Him a house in Jerusalem in Judah, and he allowed the Jews from both Persia and Babylon to return to their land with everything they owned (2 Chronicles 36:22 & 23; Ezra 1:2 to 4). That happened in 458 BC. The old enemy, the Jebusites had never been fully conquered, and were still around in the days of Ezra (Ezra 9:1). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are about the rebuilding of Jerusalem after it had been burned. Even though they were allowed to return to their land, many Jews chose to remain. The Jews who chose to remain in Persia and Babylon about 2,500 years ago, still have descendants who live in Iran and Iraq to this day. The Jews who stayed and their descendants, knew that the Messiah would be born somewhere in Israel, then called Judea. When Jesus was born, the Lord revealed the wonderful event to these Jews, still living in the East. 'When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea ... behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem asking, "Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1 & 2). Even though these people chose to remain in the east, the Lord God never forgot about them, and they received the blessing that many Jews in Jerusalem missed out on. They were among the first people to see and worship our King; they blessed Him with gifts.

Here is some geography about Jerusalem: Ezekiel inferred Israel is the centre of the earth (Ezekiel 38:12). There are copies of ancient maps that show Jerusalem as the centre of the earth. The city's location is on the Judean mountain summit, 2,500 feet above sea level on an elevated plateau, so every person visiting the city always has to 'go up' to Jerusalem. A natural spring in Kidron was once Jerusalem's only water supply, but it was sporadic. Later, cisterns were built to store rain water and conduits were built to bring water into the city. Ancient cisterns and conduits can still be found. The oldest conduit is a channel hewn from rock and enters the city from the north. Deep valleys divide the plateau. The valley of the brook Kidron (John 18:1) begins north of Jerusalem, runs south and deepens, cutting off Jerusalem to the ridge of olives, opening out near the Dead Sea. The Valley of the son of Hinnom (Joshua 15:8) begins west of Jerusalem and joins the Kidron, south of the city. Jerusalem is located at the junction of these two valleys, as though its sitting in the fork of a big 'Y'. A third valley begins in the north of Jerusalem and cuts right through the city growing deeper as runs into the Kidron, thus dividing the city into four parts, each built on a hill; Acra, Bezetha, Mount Zion and subdivisions Moriah and Ophel where the temple was built (2 Chronicles 27:3). The city is divided into 'quarters'; the Jewish quarter, Christian quarter, Armenian quarter and the moslem quarter.

Jerusalem is a holy city. In fact the whole area is holy and genuine born-again believers are considered to be already living in that spiritual area as we can read in the following sequence of verses. 'You have come to the city of the living God ... the heavenly Jerusalem and to countless multitudes of angels in festal gathering' (Hebrews 12:22 & 23). 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God. He shall never go out of it and I will write on him (or her) the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name' (Revelation 3:12). 'I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified for her husband. I heard a mighty voice from the throne saying, "See! The abode of God is with men (people) and He will live among them and they shall be His people and God shall personally be with them and be their God" ... then He showed me the holy city of Jerusalem descending out of heaven, clothed in God's glory'

(Revelation 21:2 & 10). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate destination for all those who believe in Jesus and walk with Him.

A former mayor of Jerusalem, Mr Ted Kollek stated, "For 3,000 years Jerusalem has been the centre of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion and consciousness of a people as Jerusalem has in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of Jewish exile, Jerusalem has remained alive in the hearts of Jewish people everywhere ... if you want one word that symbolises all of Jewish history, that word would be Jerusalem." During the centuries of exile, every year at Passover, the prayer of Jewish people has been, "Next year in Jerusalem." The Lord has made it clear, that His people would once again live freely in Jerusalem and that prophecy is being fulfilled today. 'Thus says the Lord, "I shall return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord, the Holy Mountain. Old men and old women shall again dwell in Jerusalem and sit out in the streets, every man with his staff (walking stick) in his hand for very advanced age. The streets of the city shall be full of children playing in its streets. Because it will be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of My people in those days, should it also be marvellous in My eyes? Behold, I will save My people from the east country and from the west and I will bring them home and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people and I will be their God in truth and faithfulness and in righteousness"' (Zechariah 8:3 to 8). Jerusalem is the city where Jesus will return when He comes back to this earth.

Jerusalem is no ordinary city. The sparsely inhabited quiet little plateau that started with Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek, abandoned by the Israelites, then given to the tribe of Judah, ruled over by several kings, fought over by nations, the birthplace of Christianity, occupied by Gentiles, is currently divided but will be wholly given to Abraham's descendants once again, is loved by the Lord and is our spiritual home, and God will live with us in the New Jerusalem for eternity. Jerusalem is one of the oldest and holiest cities on earth; holy to Jews and Christians. Nobody living at the time of Jesus, could have understood that it would take close to 2,000 years before Jerusalem would belong to the Jews again. When Jesus spoke His prophecy regarding Jerusalem, the prophetic setting is specifically in the Land of Israel and Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15 to 25). This cannot be anywhere else. The language was specifically for Israel. Jesus said, "When you see the abomination of desolation in the temple." Only Israel has such a temple. He said, "Pray your flight not be on the Sabbath." Only Israel celebrated a Sabbath when everything closed down, and they still do. "Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Judea was in Israel. In 70 AD during the tyrannical reign of Nero, it is estimated that about 2,000,000 Jews perished in that war and the remainder were sold as slaves and were scattered amongst the Gentile nations just as Jesus said would happen.

Every prophecy regarding Jesus' return, speaks of Israel as being a nation in their own land. None of these prophecies could have been fulfilled before World War Two because Israel was not a nation until 1948. Just as the Bible said it would, Jerusalem has become a cup of controversy. 'Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling or stumbling to all the nations round about ... and in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all nations. All who burden themselves with Jerusalem will be sorely wounded, and all the nations of the earth shall gather against her' (Zechariah 12:2 & 3). At this moment there are increasing threats from many nations against Jerusalem, and there are escalating tensions surrounding the inhabitants of the land of Israel. Through all of this, God is watching. He has caused Christians the world over to pray fervently for Israel and all her inhabitants. We are called to pray for peace in Jerusalem and stand with the people. 'Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem which is built as a compact city to which the tribes of the Lord go up as was decreed as a testimony for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord ... Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they prosper who love you! May peace be within your walls and prosperity within your homes! For the sake of my brethren and my companions I will now say, "Peace be within you!" For the sake of the house of God I will seek your good' (Psalm 122:1 to 9).

Christians should pray for the holy city for the sake of the Lord's advancing Kingdom, and let us see history unfolding in this generation. There are many threats against Israel's safety, yet the Jews continue to celebrate God's holy feasts. The Jews go to the remnant of their temple, the Western Wall and blow shofars (rams horns). God has kept Israel as a nation. Never again, will Jews be put out of their land. 'Jerusalem shall not be overthrown, uprooted or destroyed ever again' (Jeremiah 31:40). Only by the hand of God, will Israel be able to deal with her enemies. One day soon, the Jews will be internationally accepted as God's people and Israel as God's Holy Land. Israel will be attacked and will survive. 'All who devour you (Israel) will be devoured ... those who plunder you will be plundered; those who prey on you will be preyed upon' (Jeremiah 30:16). The many declarations of the Lord throughout the Bible regarding His love for Israel and the blessings He will bestow upon them, smashes the replacement theology and crushes any claims made

by anti-Semites. Jerusalem is holy to the Lord. 'Has God totally rejected His people? Of course not! ... No God has not rejected His people whom He appointed from the beginning' (Romans 11:1 & 2). God chose Israel first so He could bring redemption to the world. Solely by faith, have Gentiles been added to Israel. The replacement theologians are filled with religious pride, something we are told not to feel. We have been grafted into the holy root that is Israel and one day all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:16 to 26).

The Prime Minister of Israel is trying to walk on a wobbly 'tightrope' across the abyss of global anti-Semitism, as he both leads his country and tries to bring peace to his nation. He has an exceedingly difficult job ahead of him. It is impossible for peace talks to succeed under the current circumstances. What would bring instant and lasting peace to Israel would be for the whole world to recognise and accept Israel as a God-chosen sovereign nation. It was God Who chose that patch of land for the Jews. They did not choose the land for themselves. 'On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, "To your descendants I have given this land; from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the great River Euphrates"' (Genesis 15:18). As God's chosen people, and God's chosen land, the nations should back away and leave Israel to continue to grow. That is the only way true peace will come to Israel and one day that will happen. The Islamic people have said they will not allow that; they said Israel must stop growing and building or the so-called peace talks will end, but peace is not the goal of Israel's enemies. Israel has every right to build and grow on their own sovereign land. The land was never promised to any people other than the Jews. It is not the Jews who are blocking peace in their own land; they all want peace. It is the enemies of Israel that are stopping peace. Israel was chosen to be the nation that would be God's light to the whole world. The Lord gave the Jews the Law, much of which is still enforced today, which is the path to righteousness and holiness. The Lord gave the Jews the nation of Israel and He gave them the land of Israel. Israel is their birthright and heritage. It was prophesied that the Jews would one day return to their land, and they know that their return would bring the redemption of their people. Since the beginning of international Zionism, many Jews have realised their Messiah wouldn't be far behind their return to their land. They are an exceptional people. Their history is our history. Their destiny ties in with our destiny. We have the Jews to thank for our salvation (John 4:22) and we have the Jews to thank for our Bibles. Every book in the Bible was written by a Jewish person. Without the Jews, we would not have our Bibles. Now the Father is saying to us, the hope, the freedom from sin, the fellowship with God Himself, have all come to us because of the Jews. We owe them our salvation and it is time we repaid them by standing with Israel and praying for them. We need to extend the mercy we have received through the Jews, and show mercy to them. When we show mercy, we will receive mercy (Matthew 5:7). Christians are commanded to comfort and keep comforting the Jews (Isaiah 40:1), which means we are to minister to them and support them in any way we can. We can enjoy all the goodness of God because of the Jews. Once we get to heaven, we will find people from every tribe, nation and language (Revelation 7:9). That means every tribe that is alive today plus all those now extinct, will have at least one believer in heaven. Every nation that was ever built; every language ever spoken on the face of the earth, currently spoken and extinct, will have someone representing them, thanks to the Jews. We do not need to become Jewish; we need to accept the Jewish Messiah. God brought the Jewish Gospel message from it's Jewish context to the Gentile nations.

God's peace is not the absence of problems or war, it is the presence of a Person. Peace in this sense means complete wholeness for body, soul, mind and spirit. It is a peace that passes all human comprehension (Philippians 4:7). Our role is to do His will on earth as His will is done in heaven. Through prayer we bring the Lordship and rule of Jesus to our experience on earth. We are the ambassadors of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to bring heaven to earth. By praying for Jerusalem, we are bringing God's rule and purposes to earth. Why do we pray for Jerusalem? For the sake of our family, our friends and for the sake of the house of God. That means, as we pray for Jerusalem, we are in effect, praying a blessing on our family, friends and Christianity as a whole, as it overflows into our world. If we need a motivation to pray for Jerusalem, we only to study Psalm 122. What we pray comes back to bless us.

The word 'pray' in this sense means to inquire, to ask God about His agenda regarding Jerusalem. This Psalm is not a suggestion to pray for Jerusalem, it is a command, and in obeying God's call to pray for Jerusalem, He then blesses us in return. Praying for His holy city unites us with the Jewish people. All that God gave to Israel remains hers and will never be taken away, even during the time of the Diaspora. Israel will one day enjoy all the promised blessings. In the meantime, we have been given the job of praying for God's land. Israel is our 'older brother'. Christians are the 'younger brother' and is being blessed before the older brother; receiving the inheritance before the older brother, as every model in the scriptures outlines. We now are called to minister mercy back to Israel. We must never forget that Israel is our older brother, and our older brother is in desperate need of salvation and he needs to know his Messiah. We are related to Israel by God's redemption in a way we are not related to any other nation. We have been added to, or

adopted into the 'family' of Israel by virtue of our salvation, so praying for Israel is our responsibility, just as those who have been adopted into any family accepts the blessings and responsibility of that family.

The Hebrew word for 'branch' is Natsar. 'I am the Vine. You are the branches' (John 15:5). Jesus called all Christians, branches. Another Hebrew word, Natsrim comes from the same root word and is the modern Hebrew word for Christian. Natsrim comes from the scriptures and it means watchmen. 'There shall be a day when the watchmen on the hills of Ephraim shall cry out, "Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God"' (Jeremiah 31:6). So Christians are God's watchmen. Jews and Gentiles who believe by faith Jesus is the Messiah, become the Natsrim or the watchmen on the wall. We do not physically sit on the wall, so the Lord means we are to be spiritual watchmen. We take our lead from the knowledge that Jesus reigns and we bring His reign into every circumstance in our lives. We must take our lead from the Lord, not from our environment. As His appointed watchmen, we declare His purposes and stand upon the 'Rock' wall in defence of Israel through prayer, and by trusting God we will do our task effectively. As the world becomes shakier, we can stand firmly upon the Rock, Who is Jesus. Another word, Netsar, also means 'branch' with a slightly different meaning. 'There shall come forth a Shoot of the family of Jesse and a Branch out of his roots shall grow and bear fruit' (Isaiah 11:1). That word 'Branch' is Netsar. Jesus called Christians, branches (natsar); Isaiah called Jesus a Branch (netsar). We become the Natsrim, the people grafted into the Vine, and our calling and role is to be the watchmen for Israel and declare the soon coming King. The Lord has appointed watchmen who will never cease praying. 'I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, who will never hold their peace day or night; you who put the Lord in remembrance, keep not silence, and give Him no rest until He established Jerusalem and makes her a praise in the earth' (Isaiah 62:6 & 7). We, the watchmen have been called to pray day and night for Jerusalem. That does not mean we never get to sleep, it means that people around the world are called to pray, and with the different time zones, while it is night and some are sleeping, on the other side of the world it is daylight when others are praying, but for Jerusalem, that effectively means we are praying day and night. We have to do our part which is to pray, while we watch God do what He desires. Praying for Israel is not a church oriented exercise, it is eternity oriented. It is not a prayer for anything earthly, it is a spiritual prayer that will have a supernatural outcome.

So how do we pray? Cover Israel's Prime Minister as he walks the political 'tightrope' that he continues to keep His eyes on God and is able to continue with the wisdom of the Lord; and pray for his protection – both physical and spiritual. Pray the Jews will be able to stand up to the nations and declare, "Enough is enough." Pray for the Jews to be able to declare their Biblical and historical claim to the land of Israel. Pray against the nations that are scheming to try to force Israel to submit to their unGodly demands. Pray for a united Israel so they can stand alone against threats and the anger pointed in their direction. Pray for the media to stop reporting in their evil, biased manner against Israel and tell the whole truth. Pray the Lord will remove Israel's enemy leaders of other nations, from office. Pray for the Lord's protection from all terrorism, rockets and threats directed towards Israel. Pray for the Lord's protection over all Christian missionaries and volunteers in Israel. Pray the Lord will open the spiritual eyes of our Jewish brothers and sisters so they too can know Jesus as their Messiah. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the land of Israel.

'Never lag in zeal or diligence; be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, serving the Lord ... continue in steadfast prayer, meet the needs of God's people, be given to hospitality' (Romans 12:11 to 13).

Amen and God bless you.

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