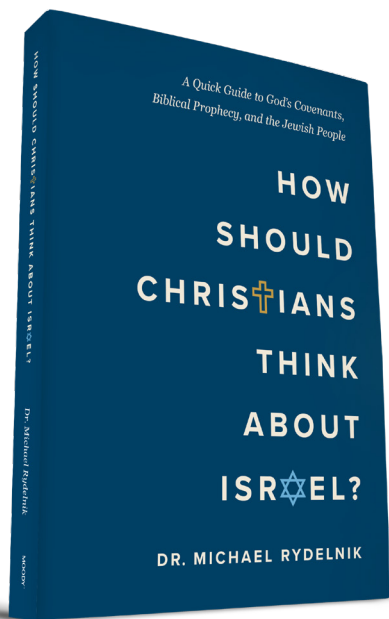




Christians are wondering about the modern State of Israel and contemporary Jewish people. A biblical worldview should guide us. This essential resource provides clear answers to important questions, using a Scripture rather than a political perspective. Readers explore ancient prophecies, their fulfillment in modern times, and Israel's unique identity.

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A MERE QUIRK OF HISTORY?

The modern State of Israel is merely a quirk of history, no more—no less!”

So declared a Christian college professor. He and I had been invited, as teachers from different schools, to hold a joint forum about Israel during one of the persistent conflicts the terrorist group Hamas had provoked with Israel. This professor maintained that the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 was a mere fluke, a secular oddity, and utterly irrelevant to divine providence, biblical prophecy, or the biblical people of Israel. In his view, the church is the true Israel; the land grant God gave Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants belongs to the church, which will not receive the land of Israel but rather “inherit the whole earth.” According to him, the Jewish people are no longer distinct in the plan of God, and they have no biblical right or even a relationship to their historic homeland.

Sadly, every time Israel is forced to defend itself from nations or terrorist groups that seek its destruction, there are those in the Christian community that share this professor's view. These mistaken ideas arise from a lack of understanding of several key concepts. First, people are often confused about what constitutes Israel, who the Jewish people are in the Bible, and how these people are connected to contemporary Jewish people and the modern State of Israel. They wonder if the Abrahamic covenant, found way back in Genesis (12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–22; 22:15–18) has anything to do with current conflicts in the Middle East.

A second area of confusion concerns the Jewish people as a chosen people and raises several questions. What covenants and promises did God give this nation in the past? How is He working them out at present in our world? Are Jewish people redeemed by virtue of their birth, or must they, as everyone else, trust in the Messiah Jesus? And what does biblical prophecy reveal about God's plans for Israel in the future?

Yet a third area of misunderstanding is related to the relationship of the church and Israel. Has the church replaced Israel as the true chosen people of God? Or does God have distinct plans and programs for Israel as well as for the church?

Finally, people are puzzled about whether believers in Jesus should even care for the Jewish people. They think that Israel is just one of many nations. Since Jewish people for the most part do not believe in Jesus, why should we even be concerned for this people?

The purpose of this book is to clear up all this confusion and misunderstanding. In chapter 1, I will explain who the Jewish people are in the Bible and how they relate to the Jewish people and the State of Israel today. In chapter 2, I will address God's choice of Israel, the covenants He gave Israel, and how these affect the past, present, and future of the Jewish people. Chapter 3 will deal with the issue of the differences between Israel and the church, showing them as distinct entities. In the fourth chapter, I will offer several biblical reasons Christians today should still care about Israel and the Jewish people. Finally, to pull all this together, I will address why any of this is practically important to Jesus followers today.

Some of you may know that I host *Open Line with Dr. Michael Rydelnik*, a weekly Bible Q&A program. Although the program is designed to address questions about the Bible, God, and the spiritual life, I am amazed at how many listeners call with questions about the Jewish people and the State of Israel. So why do they call? I suppose it is because I am a Messianic Jewish follower of Jesus and have been a professor of Jewish Studies for more than thirty years, so they must presume I can answer their questions.

But the cause of listeners asking all these questions about the Jewish state and the Jewish people is the media's magnitude of misunderstanding regarding Israel and the bewildering information reported about the Jewish people. And it is not only the mainstream media. Preachers, politicians, and podcasters all feed

the disinformation pipeline. People who love the Lord Jesus just want to have their questions about the Jewish people answered. That is what this book proposes to do. So, let's get started.

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