

# Should Christians Support Modern Israel's Wars?

## Deuteronomy 20 – Special Addendum

Expository Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

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### I. Introduction

- a. The **Book of Deuteronomy** consists of a few speeches that Moses gave to the Israelites near the end of their 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness.
- b. In the previous message, on **Deuteronomy 20**, we discussed various instructions that Moses gave the Israelites regarding when they went to war against other nations.
  - i. We considered practical lessons for us in the spiritual war we are all currently engaged in. It is against powerful spiritual forces, for which we have been given access to powerful spiritual weapons (offensive and defensive).
  - ii. This was a reminder that we Christians are still a nation at war, even though it may not appear that way on the outside (superficially).
- c. The events of the past 24 hours (regarding the US government bombing Iran, in support of the modern State of Israel) caused me to pause before we move on to the next chapter in Deuteronomy, to address things that may be of more immediate concern, regarding Israel and war.

### II. A Timely Subject: U.S. Involvement in Israel's War

- a. This past week there has been a lot of discussion about the Israel-Iran war that Israel started (by bombing Iran), and which the US just entered last night by bombing three nuclear enrichment facilities in Iran.
  - i. This could be the start of World War 3, or even Armageddon (the famous last battle). Or it could 'blow over' and amount to very little.
  - ii. There was a great deal of intense debate over the past week regarding whether or not the US should participate in this war.
  - iii. **Question:** What does this have to do with what we are studying (the Law of Moses, Israel, the Bible)?
    - 1. One of the most outspoken groups in the U.S. advocating entry into this war is *conservative evangelical Christians*.
    - 2. **Question:** Why?

- a. Some of them are “Christian Zionists” who believe they are ‘helping’ God to fulfill the prophecy regarding Israel and the End Times.
- b. In a recent interview that turned into a debate, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz said his desire to support Israel in their war with Iran was based on something he had learned in Bible class as a child.
  - i. Cruz said: “I was taught from the Bible that ‘Those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed.’”
  - ii. As far-fetched as this statement by Cruz may seem to many of us, there are millions of ‘conservative Christians’ in the U.S. who hold this position or a very similar one.
  - iii. Read **Genesis 12:2-3**.
    - 1. This, believe it or not, was the reason Cruz used to support entering Israel’s war against Iran and bombing Iran!
    - 2. (Note that some also point to Balaam’s third oracle in **Numbers 24:9**, “Those who bless You are blessed, and those who curse You are cursed.” However, this appears to be regarding a prophecy about Jesus.)
    - 3. **Question:** Using the Scriptures, how would you respond to someone like Senator Cruz, who attempted to justify going to war to support the modern State of Israel with these two versus from **Genesis 12**?
- 3. A more accurate picture of the Lord’s use of the nations is found throughout the Scriptures. For example:
  - a. God did promise righteous Abraham that those who blessed him (Abraham) would be blessed and those who cursed him would be cursed, **HOWEVER**, God also warned Israel that *if they abandoned God, He would raise up enemies who would defeat them* and even carry them into captivity.

- i. Read **Deuteronomy 28:15-29, 28:36-52**, etc.
  - ii. Read **2 Chronicles 36:23-25**.
  - iii. Sadly, Israel did, in fact, abandon God, and He did exactly what He promised: brought enemies against them who defeated them and carried them into captivity.
- b. Further, Moses had warned Israel in **Deuteronomy 18:15-19** that the Lord would raise up another prophet “like him”, and that they must heed everything he said. If they rejected that future prophet, *the Lord would call them to account*. We know from **Acts 3:22-23** and **Acts 7:37** that this prophecy referred to Jesus.
- i. The current nation of Israel rejected not only the teachings of Moses, but Jesus (who was promised by Moses) as well.
  - ii. Recall that Jesus had said, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.” (**John 5:46**, NKJV)
  - iii. Since the Israelites rejected this future prophet (Jesus) the Lord has now “called them to account”. Or as Peter stated it in **Acts 3**:
    - 1. “And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet *shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*” (**Acts 3:23**, NKJV)
- c. In fulfillment of prophecy and as a consequence of the Jews rejecting and killing Jesus, the Lord raised up the Roman Empire to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70 . (See Parable of the Wicked Tenants, in **Luke 20:9-19**.)
- d. **Question:** How does God view the nations who are used to punish Israel?
- i. David Lipscomb, a noted teacher in the Restoration Movement, wrote in chapter 1 his treatise, *On Civil Government* about the times the Lord used other nations as His agents to punish Israel for their sin. Lipscomb was writing in the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War, at a time when many in the North believed their victory in that

war indicated their moral superiority over the South.

1. Lipscomb cited **Isaiah 10**, where the Lord referred to the nation of Assyria as “*the rod of His wrath*,” like an “*axe or saw in His hands*”. He would those pagan nations as His instruments to *execute judgment on Israel*.
  2. However, the Lord also said in **Isaiah** that He would deal with the Assyrians ultimately, as well!
4. Now let us reconsider the view held by Senator Cruz’s (and many other ‘conservative’ Christian believers in the U.S.) that the United States should unconditionally support modern Israel in its wars.
- a. As we can see from the Scriptures cited above, that viewpoint is complete nonsense, the result of taking verses from **Genesis 12** out of context.
  - b. The Jewish people have rebelled against God by rejecting His direction, now including rejecting His Son, Jesus.
- iv. **Question:** What is God’s view toward the Jews (and modern Israel) today?
1. In **Romans 11**, Paul explained that the nation of Israel was like the branches of a cultivated olive tree that were *broken off* from the tree, and *rejected* (because they had rejected Jesus). We (the Christians, the church) have replaced them in the kingdom of God, by faith.
    - a. The physical nation of Israel has lost connection with God. However, if they repent and follow the teachings of Jesus (including loving their enemies, feeding them, turning from sin, etc.) then the Lord will graft them back in again.
  2. We Christians (Jesus’ church) have become the new, spiritual Israel. *We* are the ones who are now God’s nation, His own special people. The Jews who did not believe were broken off from the tree (but can be grafted back in if they repent).

- a. “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” (**Matthew 21:43**, NKJV)
- b. “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” (**Romans 2:28–29**, NKJV)
- c. “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are *not all Israel who are of Israel*, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’” (**Romans 9:6–7**, NKJV)
  - i. Note that ‘Israel’ is used in two senses in this passage.
  - ii. Early Christian writers, consistent with the passages cited above, saw that *Israel of the flesh* had been replaced by *spiritual Israel*, those who had the faith of Abraham, the true sons of Abraham.
- d. From Justin Martyr, writing c. 160 AD:
  - i. “For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (who in uncircumcision was approved of and blessed by God on account of his faith, and called the father of many nations), are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ...”
    - 1. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 11; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 200)
- e. From Irenaeus, writing c. 180 AD:
  - i. ‘For his [*Abraham’s*] seed is the church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord, as John the Baptist said: ‘For God is able from the stones to raise up children to Abraham.’ (**Luke 3:8**) Thus also the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians: ‘But you, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.’ (**Galatians 4:28**)”

1. (Source: Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 32; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 561)
- f. From Cyprian, writing c. 250 AD:
  - i. “I have endeavoured to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God’s favor, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.”
    1. (Source: Cyprian, *Treatise 12, Against the Jews*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 507)
- g. For additional early Christian references to this, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, article on ‘Israel of God’.

### III. Conclusions

- a. Let us boldly reclaim the teaching of Scripture regarding Israel, and be prepared to give an answer to anyone who challenges us.
  - i. Despite what many now claim, there is no such thing as a ‘Judeo-Christian’ religion. There are Christians, and there are Jews (and there are also Jews who also are Christians).
  - ii. Throughout history, going back to the warnings of the Law of Moses, the Jews were warned that if they did not follow the laws handed down by Moses (and the prophet who would come later), then the Lord would reject them and bring up enemies to defeat them. He did it with the Babylonians, with the Romans, and many others.
  - iii. The church has supplanted the nation of Israel as God’s special nation and people. We Christians, by faith, have become the true heirs of Abraham. We are the ones who have inherited the kingdom of God.
  - iv. God longs to graft Israel back into His “olive tree”; but they need to repent and follow His Son, the Christ.
- b. A Call to Action:

1. Christians are not called to support modern Israel in its wars. However, the church today, the new spiritual Israel, is involved in spiritual warfare against spiritual foes.
2. We must obey our Commanding Officer, Jesus.
  - a. Offer prayers for leaders of the world, for all those in authority, for peace to prevail (**1 Timothy 2:1-4**).
  - b. Fight off the temptations of Satan.
  - c. Use this threat of physical war breaking out *as an opportunity to spread the message of the kingdom* to others who are worried and anxious.
  - d. Keep in mind that those who know how to use the Scriptures have access to the true spiritual “bunker busters”.
    - i. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s.” (**2 Corinthians 10:4–7**, NKJV)
  - e. Love our enemies; and if they are hungry, feed them (instead of bombing or bullying them).
    - i. Read **Matthew 5:43-48**.
    - ii. Read **Romans 12:17-21**.
3. We must submit to the governing authorities (**Romans 13**). At the same time, we must always keep in mind that whenever the laws of human government conflict with laws of God’s kingdom (such as participating in the wars of worldly governments), we must always obey God over man, regardless of the consequences (**Acts 4:19**).