

THE ISRAEL PROJECT

STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to The Israel Project Study Guide. This was created to help groups discuss and process all that is shared in the video(s). We will also try to point out some additional information that could supplement the watching of the video for both groups and individuals.

We recommend that you take 5 sessions to go through the videos and study guide. Before you begin the study content for each week, watch the video together as a group. Then, open each session with prayer, asking Jesus to reveal His heart for Israel and what has been taught in the video. After prayer, proceed with the reading and questions.



Introduction



You probably came into watching this video about Israel with thoughts already formed on the topic. As Francis mentioned, there are a variety of responses when people hear the word "Israel". All throughout history, it's been a nation at the center of much controversy. For many, it can stir up a range of different emotions: anger, hope, sadness, joy, confusion, or indifference.

1 When you hear "Israel," what word would you use to describe how you feel?

It's important to note that the word "Israel" has several different uses in Scripture. It can refer to:

- a. The actual person, Jacob
- b. The twelve tribes; or the entirety of the Jewish people
- c. The political nation of Israel
- d. The Northern kingdom only
- e. The "spiritual Israel" - believers in Jesus

One other sense that often is meant by "Israel" is the actual land that was promised to the Jewish people. Today, we usually think of "c, the political nation of Israel" or possibly the geographic land when we hear the word. Though these are certainly a part of the conversation, we should be focusing also on "b, the entirety of the Jewish people." There is clearly something throughout Scripture that shows the unique significance in God's eyes of people who are descended from Jacob, or Israel.

2 Which sense of “Israel” do you typically think of when you hear the word?

One of the challenges for us in regard to understanding the significance of Israel is that the political nation is often at the center of very complicated and sometimes controversial issues and conflicts. This has only intensified in recent times. There can be a tendency to base our feelings towards Israel primarily on how we feel about their current political situation.

We must recognize, however, that Israel was often marked in the Old Testament by terrible decisions, evil leadership, injustices against others, etc. This brought about God’s displeasure, discipline, prophetic warnings, and eventual wrath in destroying their nation. But at the same time, it didn’t mean that God was done with them. They were still His people to whom He had made promises, and God is always faithful to His promises.

In the book of Jeremiah, God spends chapter after chapter pronouncing judgment on Israel. He even tells Jeremiah not to pray for them anymore because their wickedness was so great and His judgment on them was so definitive. (Jeremiah 7:16) Yet in the midst of Him destroying the nation and sending the people into exile, God says this in Jeremiah 31:20:

“Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,” declares the LORD.

Later, we will wrestle more with the question of whether God’s posture towards the Jewish people has changed because of the New Covenant and Jesus’ coming. For now, let’s hopefully agree that we should fight to get past viewing Israel primarily through the grid of modern-day (or even historic) political controversies. We want to view Israel through God’s perspective.



3 What has been your understanding of the historic significance of Israel to God?

4 Based on reading the Old Testament, what do you observe about God's commitment to Israel in the midst of their sin and unfaithfulness? How might that help our perspective on Israel today?



The Bible was written about events long ago in places far away, so it can sometimes feel like a fantasy or ancient tale. Yet it is so much more true than we know. The land of Israel serves as a great testimony of how real the Bible and its events are. However, its remarkable history can get lost amidst all of the political controversy surrounding it in modern times.

5 As an exercise, let's try to list out some of the most significant ways that God has shown up and done amazing things on that specific strip of land.

History is a very interesting thing. One way we experience it is by reading books and hearing stories. Another way is by going to visit places where battles have been fought, places where significant leaders have done great things, and places where significant world changing events have happened. There is something very special about visiting those places. Many of us have experienced standing there and thinking:

"Wow, _____ really happened right here where I'm standing."

6 Share some of the historical sites that you have experienced. What was that like?

7 Now use your experiences from question 6 to press deeper into question 5. Think about the significance of being in places where God literally showed up in the flesh, performed countless miracles, rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and on and on... Discuss how the history in that land might bring significance to modern Israel.

Reflection

Action