

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

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Christians have long been aware of our responsibility to pray . . . not only for ourselves, our families, our country and our political leaders but also for world peace and for all those suffering in the world because of sin. We're also told—very specifically—to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” Psalm 122:6¹ That need has never been so great as it is today.

Last Friday, I was privileged to be in attendance at the Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference (formerly the Manning Conference) in Ottawa and to hear—among a number of outstanding speeches—a powerful and moving address from former Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett.²

Prime Minister Bennett spoke—of course—about Gaza and the situation that has developed since the brutal Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. He frankly admitted that the events of October 7, while entirely the fault of a godless and malicious organization (Hamas), also represented an abject failure in Israel, a nation known for its efficient and comprehensive state of preparedness. The failure of systems meant to prevent the possibility of such an attack allowed a highly-coordinated series of breaches in the wall and subsequent acts of savagery that have not been seen in recent years . . . at least, not on such a scale.

The former PM's main point, in addressing us here in the West, was to counter the prevailing narrative being widely promoted in the mainstream media that Israel—and not Hamas—is the aggressor and bears moral responsibility for the deaths of thousands of civilians in their attempt to root out and destroy Hamas operatives and installations.

He pointed out that every war is terrible in its tragic impact on civilians—so-called “collateral damage”—and that there have always been and will always be mistakes made in the “fog of war” that result in unintended deaths and injuries to women, children and non-combatants. There is no way to make war nice; the loss of civilian lives is always a profound tragedy.

The difference here . . . as the former PM explained it to the audience . . . is that the IDF (Israeli Defence Force) goes to great lengths to minimize civilian casualties while Hamas, during its Oct. 7 incursion, deliberately targeted civilians, killing and torturing men, women and children—raping, beheading, mutilating and burning victims, including babies. Rather than expressing regret at the loss of innocent lives, Hamas terrorists revelled in and celebrated those killings and torture, even videotaping the brutal details and sharing those videos around the world to their bloodthirsty sympathizers.

It reminds me of the crowds who attended the bloody executions by guillotine during the Reign of Terror in France or the Roman crowds who came out to watch Christians eaten by lions in the Coliseum. It's a tragic reminder of the sinfulness of man and his propensity for evil. While the shedding of innocent blood troubles a nation and leads ultimately to cultural collapse, we remind ourselves that the innocent blood shed on Calvary makes possible individual and cultural renewal.

PM Bennett reminded listeners that the IDF—unlike most armies—frequently warns civilians of an impending raid to allow non-combatants to evacuate. He repeated what many of us have heard before: that Hamas routinely locates their communications headquarters and grenade launchers in heavily-populated areas, sometimes in schools and hospitals in order to deliberately invite missile attacks from the IDF with heavy civilian casualties. They do it for two reasons: first, they hope to prevent attacks on their installations, knowing that Israel is reluctant to inflict civilian casualties. Secondly—and perhaps most importantly—they know that any civilian casualties can be utilized to influence public opinion in legacy media around the world. He noted that this strategy is highly effective. For some reason, world opinion has quickly shifted from sympathizing with Israel’s tragic losses on Oct. 7 to a mood of hostility towards Israel and support for Hamas, the instigator of this bloody conflict.

As the former PM explained, Hamas still holds hostages. Some of the original group of hostages have been killed, and some have suffered brutal torture. Hamas—while demanding a permanent ceasefire—has not offered to release the remaining 133 hostages in exchange. The hostages and their families continue to suffer, and Hamas continues to threaten and demand. Of course, Israel’s other hostile neighbours are adding their voices to the conflict, and the future is far from clear. As PM Netanyahu has often said: If the other side would lay down their arms, there could be peace; if Israel were to unconditionally lay down its arms, there would be no more Israel.³

We know from our reading of both the Old and New Testaments that the nation of Israel has a special place in the unfolding history of the world. The Apostle Paul expressed his deep desire to see his people saved by faith in Christ: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”⁴

We are called to pray for all men everywhere, for the Israelis and even for Hamas terrorists . . . that they might be saved spiritually and that peace might come—first in their hearts and then in their lands. Until that happens, we have a responsibility not to be taken in by media narratives but to look beyond the headlines and ask God for His wisdom in understanding world events, including those in Israel.

CHP Canada⁵ stands with Israel in its right to defend itself from barbaric attacks. We recognize that Israel—like every other nation in this fallen world—is not perfect and cannot be perfect until our Lord returns. But they have a right to exist and a right to self-defence; we support them in their aspirations to prosper and to live in peace.

Footnotes

¹ www.bible.com/bible/1/PSA.122.KJV

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naftali_Bennett

³ www.goodreads.com/quotes/513129-if-the-arabs-put-down-their-weapons-today-there-would

⁴ www.bible.com/bible/1/ROM.10.KJV

⁵ www.chp.ca

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