The Name Israel: A Holy Name Misused

Introduction: The Weight of a Name

Throughout Scripture, names carry profound meaning. They are not merely labels, but declarations of identity, purpose, and often divine calling. Among the most sacred of names is *Israel*—a name not invented by men, but bestowed by God Himself. When Jacob wrestled with the angel and prevailed through humility and supplication, God gave him a new name: *Israel*—"a prince with God" (Genesis 32:28). This was not just a personal transformation; it marked the birth of a people called to walk in covenant with the Lord.

But what happens when a name so sacred is later claimed by those who do not walk in that covenant? **What are we to make of the modern political state that bears the name *Israel*, while rejecting the Son of God who fulfills all the covenant promises?** Is such a claim valid? Is it divinely authorized—or is it a misuse of what God Himself made holy?

In this study, we explore the biblical origin of the name *Israel*, the conditions under which it was given, and what Scripture teaches about who truly bears that name today. We will also examine whether the modern claim to that name by **those who reject Jesus Christ constitutes not only error, but a form of spiritual misrepresentation—perhaps even blasphemy**. This is not a matter of ethnicity, politics, or personal offense; it is a matter of truth, reverence, and rightly dividing the Word of God.

Let us proceed **with open Bibles and humble hearts**, seeking to understand what God says about *His* name, *His* people, and *His* covenant.

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1. Jacob Becomes Israel: A Name of Repentance and Dependence

The name *Israel* was not a random or nationalistic label—it was the outcome of divine transformation. Jacob, whose name meant "supplanter," had lived by craft and deception. He took his brother Esau's birthright and tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing. Yet it was not until Jacob confronted his own brokenness and clung to God in humble desperation that he received the name *Israel*.

> ***Genesis 32:28*** *– "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."*

How did Jacob prevail? Not by force, but by **weeping and supplication**:

> ***Hosea 12:4*** *– "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him…"*

This act of wrestling with the angel was a spiritual confession. Jacob was no longer relying on deception, but on God's mercy. His transformation was **inward and spiritual**, not merely external. This is why the name *Israel* carries such sacred weight—it signifies *one who depends on God*.

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2. Israel: A Covenant Name, Not Just a National Identity

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul explains that *Israel* is not defined by flesh, blood, or lineage alone. God's covenant

was always based on **promise and faith**, not ethnic descent.

> ***Romans 9:6-8*** *– "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children… That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."*

True Israel, therefore, refers to those who are **in right relationship with God**—those who are **spiritual heirs** of the promise. This is why Paul writes:

> ***Galatians 3:29*** *– "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

And again:

> ***Galatians 6:16*** *– "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."*

The name *Israel*, then, is not merely about bloodline or geography. It represents the people of God—those united to Him by **faith and obedience**. In this light, Israel is a **spiritual identity** rooted in **covenantal faithfulness**, not political heritage.

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3. The Modern State of Israel: A Political Entity, Not a Divine Restoration

In 1948, the modern state of Israel was declared, and it adopted the ancient name of *Israel*. This move was widely seen by evangelical Christians as a prophetic fulfillment of Old Testament promises. However, the foundation of this belief

stems from **dispensationalist theology**, which often separates the church and Israel into two distinct peoples of God—something not found in Scripture.

Scripture teaches that the **promises of God are fulfilled in Christ**, and those outside of Christ—regardless of heritage—are **cut off** from covenantal blessing:

> ***Romans 11:20*** *— "Because of unbelief they were broken off…"*

Most citizens and leaders of modern Israel do **not** believe in Jesus Christ as Messiah. In fact, Judaism today is rooted in **Talmudic tradition**, not the **Mosaic covenant** delivered at Sinai. The New Testament is clear:

> ***1 John 2:23*** *— "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father…"*

> ***John 14:6*** *— "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Therefore, a people or nation that **rejects Christ** cannot rightly claim to be **God's covenant people**—regardless of what they call themselves.

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4. Is the Use of the Name "Israel" Today a Form of Blasphemy?

To blaspheme means to **profane or misuse what is holy**, especially when it relates to God's name or character. The name *Israel* was given by God to a man who had been **spiritually broken and restored**, and through him to a covenant people. It is **God's name to give**, not man's to claim.

> ***Leviticus 19:12*** *— "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the*

LORD.”

If individuals or nations take upon themselves the holy name *Israel*, while actively **rejecting the Son of God**, they are **misusing what is sacred**. They claim to represent God, yet deny the One through whom all God’s promises are fulfilled. This is **not a light matter**. It is a **spiritual fraud**—and yes, it can rightly be called **a form of blasphemy**.

When contemporary Jews or the modern state of Israel claim to be *the people of God* while **denying Jesus Christ**, they are making a claim that **God Himself does not recognize**. That is not a divine act, but a **man-made assumption**, and it dishonors the name God Himself established.

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5. Zionism and the Political Hijacking of a Holy Name

In order to understand why the modern state of Israel claims the name *Israel* while rejecting its spiritual foundation, we must examine the ideology that helped bring that state into existence—**Zionism**.

Zionism began in the late 19th century as a **secular political movement** led by figures like Theodor Herzl, who envisioned the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This vision, though clothed in religious language, was **not birthed from faith in God**, nor from national repentance or a return to the covenant. Rather, it was **fueled by nationalist fervor** and, for many leaders, a **non-religious or even atheistic worldview**.

Zionism’s power lies in its **appropriation of biblical terms**—*Israel*, *Zion*, *promised land*, *chosen people*—while simultaneously **rejecting the very God who defined those terms through His covenant with Jacob and ultimately fulfilled them**

in Christ.

The tragedy is compounded by the fact that **many evangelical Christians** have come to see Zionism as **part of God's prophetic program**, often interpreting the 1948 formation of the Israeli state as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. However, as previously shown, God's covenant people are defined not by **ethnicity or national borders**, but by **faith in Christ**.

> ***Romans 11:20*** *– "Because of unbelief they were broken off…"*

The Zionist state, built upon a **rejection of Jesus Christ**, cannot inherit the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To claim those promises while denying the Promised Seed—**who is Christ** (Galatians 3:16)—is **a theological contradiction**.

Furthermore, Zionism has led to the **weaponization of the name "Israel"**. Crimes committed by the state are often justified under the banner of divine right. Anyone who criticizes the state of Israel is quickly labeled "**anti-Semitic**," even when the critique is biblical, moral, or humanitarian. This misuse of the name *Israel* fosters confusion, suppresses truth, and turns many away from the gospel.

> ***Isaiah 48:1-2*** *– "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob… which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness."*

Zionism is not the restoration God promised. It is **a political imitation** of a spiritual truth. It is a **false fulfillment** that distracts many from the true work of God—the gathering of His people in Christ, the true Israel.

As believers, we must not be swayed by political sentiment or religious rhetoric. Our allegiance must be to the **Word of God**, and His Word declares that **only those in Christ** are counted as **the seed**, heirs of the promise, and citizens of the true

Israel of God.

Conclusion: Only in Christ Is One Truly of Israel

Jacob was renamed *Israel* only after he humbled himself, wrestled with God, **and sought mercy—not through deceit, but through dependence**. That name, *Israel*, became a covenant identity—not for all his descendants automatically, but for those who walk in **faith and obedience**.

Today, only those who are in Christ are considered part of the true Israel:

> ***Philippians 3:3*** *— "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."*

Thus, to claim the name *Israel* without Christ is to claim the **benefits of the covenant** while **rejecting the Mediator of the covenant**. It is to invoke what is holy while denying the Holy One. It is not merely a mistake—it is, biblically speaking, a **profanation of the name of God**.

Let us therefore not be deceived by titles or political rhetoric. Let us discern **true Israel** as God defines it—through **faith, repentance, and union with Christ**.
