



## 'Hope for Palestine' – A Study Guide

Written by Revd. John Howard for Sabeel-Kairos UK to accompany the 2023 Autumn online series.  
[New online series starting Sunday 3rd September! | Sabeel-Kairos](#)

### **Week 1 (3<sup>rd</sup> September) Hope in who - 'Sumud'**

Those of us who have travelled widely in Gaza and the West Bank have often heard words similar to the following "my hope is in God, in the end He will bring justice." As a Christian, and as a church minister I certainly agree with that - though I feel that even God has a right to expect some help from ourselves! I see hope alive in Palestine as I meet the Palestinian people, individuals who have been through so much but remain determined, and in many cases have not been embittered by their experiences.

Much of this Palestinian Character is summed up in an Arabic word 'Sumud'

'Sumud' has been translated into English with all that following words, perseverance, steadfastness, stickability, or bloody-mindedness! To witness the determination of individuals to stay put in their homes despite the threats, the intimidation, and the ways the Israeli authorities make life impossible for Palestinians - especially in area 'C' is to see 'sumud' lived out day by day. It affirms my conviction that in the end the Palestinians people will not be crushed.

Individual Palestinians embody this 'sumud' and in doing so incapsulate hope for those of us who witness their plight and wonder about their future.

#### *An activity:*

A living example of 'sumud' personified are the Nassar family of Bethlehem, farming their land a few miles outside the town, on the other side of the 'wall'. The Nassar family's farm is surrounded by settlements, and they have been physically attacked, and forced to prove their ownership of their land in the Israeli Courts for over 30 years and yet have as their catchphrase "We refuse to be enemies." Many sharing in this study course will have visited their farm, the 'Tent of Nations.' In your groups, those who have been there - describe to others what it is like, your memories of it.

#### **Bible Reading**

**Hebrews 11 verses 4 -12 and 20 - 38.**

*Read this passage together.*

This passage is known as the gallery of faith. But it could also be called the inspiration of hope. The characters of the Old Testament given there could be added to by faithful people living since the passage was written.

*How do you respond to the people listed in Hebrews 11?*

*Who would you add to the list - from people who have lived since Hebrews was written?*

*Who have you met who you would add to the list?*

What is the relationship between faith and hope?



## Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, we bring before you those for whom hope is dying. We give thanks for those who have shown 'sumud' for so many years. May their example inspire us that even when justice seems distant and oppression seems pervasive, we may hold on to hope, hope of a better, and just future. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## Week 2 (1<sup>st</sup> October) Hope for what? - What would a resolution look like?

For years those seeing the situation in the Palestinian territory have called for the ending of the occupation. In the years following the Oslo Accords, almost universally, it was assumed that the ending of the occupation would result in a "two-state solution." This would consist of a State of Israel within agreed borders and a State of Palestine in its own agreed geographical borders. Not everyone saw this as the hope - some Israelis never accepted the concept of a Palestinian State and some Palestinians never accepted the concept of a State of Israel, however a huge majority did see a two-state solution as the future.

Today very few people in Israel Palestine believe any longer in the two-state solution. The growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the associated rise of extreme right-wing politics in Israel makes this outcome now very unlikely. The weakness of the Palestinian Authority and its loss of respect by many Palestinians also undermines the prospect of the two-state solution.

The US and UK Governments still maintain that the two-state solution remains their policy. However, many observers in the land see this as simply a way for the present Israeli Government to be free to continue their policy of effective, de facto annexation - as there is no existing process with any prospect of bringing about a two-state solution.

Across the world there are many different models of Government. The US has a Federal Structure, whereas the UK has a National Government with Devolved Powers. There are many possible future models of government for Israel/Palestine.

What then should we be hoping for?

### *An Activity*

What models of government can you recognise in countries you know?

### **Bible Reading.**

### **Revelation 21 Verses 1 -7.**

The vision of the New Jerusalem describes a city, perhaps we might say a society, in which God is at the heart and suffering and pain are no more. Is it too much to suggest that it is a city where justice exists? "Behold I am making all things new."

*To what extent is the vision of the 'New Jerusalem' a gift of God of the end time, and to what extent is it an objective we must aim for in our struggle for a better world?*



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*How do you understand the idea of “God being in the midst of the city.” Is this the ‘person’ of God or the character of God (justice, peace and love)?*

*What would you see as the essential characteristics of “The new heaven and the new earth.” How would they apply to Israel/Palestine?*

What is the relationship between institutional justice and human rights?

### **Prayer**

God, source of all wisdom and truth, guide and direct those who look to a better future for all Palestinians and Israelis, to seek out and promote just and fair structures of government. Grant respect for the human rights of all peoples by all the people of the land. May the way of peace be found as a manner of being that those who have viewed each other with suspicion and fear may discover their common humanity.

Amen

### **Week 3 (5<sup>th</sup> November) ‘Hope by us’ – What can we do?**

While the political situation in Israel Palestine is at its darkest, there seems to be a stirring of support internationally for the cause of political liberation for Palestinians. There is now widespread agreement that Israel is committing the crime of Apartheid in the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan. This international recognition goes hand in hand with an awareness that the present situation cannot continue indefinitely. While prospects of peace in Israel/Palestine seem to be at their lowest, hope in the international community is perhaps rising compared to previous years.

In this renewing world context, the question ‘what is the role of internationals in bringing about justice for all in Palestine and Israel’ becomes an important one to consider. Much of the present situation exists because of inappropriate interference from outside in matters that should have been the concern of the people of the land. Britain and the US hold specific responsibility in this way. The same mistake should not be made again. Internationals are needed for support, to help create the environment for change, but the question of what that change should look like is for the people who are of the land.

The role of internationals is to enable the voices of the voiceless to be heard. It is also the role of internationals to make clear, as the international community did over South Africa, that an Apartheid State is not acceptable. Neither is occupation acceptable as permanent arrangement.

### *An Activity*

In the post COVID world how can internationals help Palestinian voices be heard?

### **Bible Reading**

**Matthew 5 verses 3 -12.**



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This passage known as the Beatitudes, describes some of the qualities that are encouraged in the followers of Jesus. Ghandi (a Hindu) described this passage as one of the finest ever written. Humility, gentleness, peace-loving, they describe much of the nature needed by those who want to be peacemakers in the Middle East.

*Go through the beatitudes and list the qualities spoken of or alluded to, using words that don't appear in the version of the bible you are using.*

*Who are 'the peacemakers' in the context of Israel/Palestine?*

*Jesus uses the term 'poor in spirit.' What do you understand by this term?*

Without internationals - is there any hope for Israel/Palestine?

### Prayer

We lift before you Lord those countless people across the continents of the world who each long for peace in the Land called Holy, - peace with justice. We give thanks for the growing numbers of people who are recognising the unacceptable nature of the present situation and we pray for increasing effectiveness of the international voice calling for peace and equal human rights in Israel and Palestine.

Amen

### **Week 4 (3<sup>rd</sup> December) Hope in the darkness - How can you keep hope when everything looks hopeless?**

Year by year the plight of the Palestinian people seems to deepen. Many internationals who have been activists have spent most of their lives waiting to see an end to the occupation, and justice restored. However, many would say that it is harder than ever today to see how peace and justice will come. The government of Israel is very right wing, the Palestinian Authority seems helpless, the settlements increase year by year, Palestinians lose land daily. How do we hope when it seems all is dark?

Perhaps the first thing is to recognise just how dark it is. Looking logically at the political situation today it is very difficult to see where improvement will come from. However, there is a saying that 'the darkest hour is just before dawn.' Perhaps the very darkness itself is a sign of hope. A short time before the Berlin Wall came down few would have foreseen its end. Could it be that something similar will happen in Israel/Palestine?

### *An Activity*

Can you think of times when all seemed hopeless and yet change came quite unexpectedly?

### **Bible Reading**

**Colossians 1. 1 -13.**



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Paul is in prison, or more likely house arrest in Rome. He has travelled there under guard during which he has faced shipwreck and humiliation. It is one of the darkest moments in his life. His dream of traveling to Spain to preach the Gospel there seems increasingly remote. Yet in this time of hopelessness, as far as any objective consideration of his situation might suggest, we find Paul writing a very upbeat letter to encourage others.

*What is it that sustains Paul's hope?*

*Paul is writing to people who face all sorts of problems as a result of their faith. What can we learn from his support for the Colossians for our support for Palestinians in their situation?*

*Paul promises in verse 9 to pray for the Colossians. What is the role of prayer in our support for Palestinians?*

When it feels as if matters are at their darkest, how do you respond? How do you enable Palestinians and Israeli Peace activists to know they are supported?

### **Prayer**

We bring before you Lord, those who live with the present darkness. Those held in administrative detention, prisoners, those living in the shadow of settlements, those who face danger every day due to the increasing tensions. May the present darkness soon be transformed by your light of justice, truth and love. We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.