

Crisis in Israel: A conversation with Dr. Jim Denison

TRANSCRIPT



NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.

Recorded on the morning of Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023.

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** You're listening to the Denison Forum Podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, Executive Director of Denison Forum and your host for today's conversation. Thank you for spending some time with us.

The goal here at the Denison Forum is from Ephesians chapter 4, verse 12, which says that we are to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the church, the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of God's son growing into maturity with stature measured by Christ's fullness. We do this by providing Christ-centered resources that help you to understand today's cultural issues and to respond with biblical redemptive truth. We want to help you to speak the truth in love and live the truth in love in every area of influence that God may give you.

Today we are talking about the very, very heavy and sad reality of what's going on in the Middle East, the new war that has broken out between Israel and Hamas. And we're going to ask Dr. Jim Denison, our co-founder and CEO, our cultural apologist, who is very deeply engaged in Israel, has led more than 30 trips to Israel. He's going to join us to talk about what's going on. Why is this happening now? How should we as believers understand it? So we look forward to you being a part of the conversation. Thanks for being here, Jim. Welcome back to the Denison forum podcast We're glad to have you today

[00:01:25] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Happy to be with you today as well, my friend honored for the opportunity.

[00:01:28] **Dr. Mark Turman:** We come today to talk about a very urgent And a weighty issue that just grieves our heart today. We want to talk about the crisis in Israel, the war that has broken out between Israel and Hamas I know that this is very dear to both of us in an extreme way, a significant way with you into Israel more than 30 times, now thousands of people to discover in all kinds of pilgrim experiences, the joy, the beauty, the wonder of what Israel is all about.

When I was there the first time about 10 or so years ago, I just had the impression after being in Israel for four or five days that God does have the whole world in his hand, but his index finger is on Israel. It is a. Very incredible, unique place. It's the place where Jesus walked. That's enough said in and of itself.

But you have many dear friends and I know you've been checking on them. Other people that we know that are in Israel and we're praying for all of them and for safety and for peace to come. But can you just give us kind of a brief synopsis? I know people are hearing headlines and bits and pieces here and there.

Tell us as clearly as you see it. What happened over the last four or five days between this organization called Hamas and Israel? What did they decide to do in this fresh attack that has resulted in war between now Israel and Hamas. What happened?

[00:03:02] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, thank you for that. So by way of some context, Hamas, the word means fervor in Arabic. It's an acronym backwards for Islamic resistance movement was founded officially in 1987, though it's got roots prior to that it's charter that was published in 1988 requires the eradication of Israel. Hamas exists to eradicate Israel. That's the reason the organization was founded.

[00:03:25] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Okay. Let me, let me, let me ask for clarity on that. Does that mean they want to eliminate the nation of Israel or they want to also eliminate all Jewish people?

[00:03:36] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Thank you. The first and they go together. They want to eliminate the nation of Israel. In fact, they want the Palestinian flag to fly over every square inch of what they consider Palestine, they believe the creation of Israel in 1948 is a theft of land from its rightful Palestinian people.

They therefore want there to be no nation called Israel. They don't want a two-state solution. They don't want the nation Israel to exist. They want to go back to where it was prior to the really, I guess you could say World War One. And then after that, with the British partition plan and the beginning of a geopolitical thing that we call Israel, they want to reverse from that.

They want there to be the nation of Palestine. They don't want to be the nation of Israel at all. The Jewish people are obviously supportive of their government because it's a democracy. So they see the Jewish people as complicit in this attack on Palestinians in specific and Islam in general.

Surah 2 verse 190 in the Quran requires Muslims to defend Islam. Specifically, the Quran sees the Jews, it identifies them as apes and swine. In three places, and so Hamas sees the Jewish Israeli citizens as complicit in this democracy that is a theft of land from the rightful Palestinian Muslim people.

But it also denigrates the Jews as people. It sees the Jews as a subhuman class, sees them in some ways the way the Nazis did. They have dehumanized the Jews and have been doing that for generations now. They've been teaching their children in classes. We've seen textbooks that don't have the nation Israel, only Palestine, and describe Jews in horrific terms.

So they see the Jewish people as their enemy because they see the nation of Israel as their enemy.

[00:05:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So would they extend that same view to Christians and to Americans?

[00:05:22] **Dr. Jim Denison:** On a second level, the Quran sees Christians and Jews more generally as people of the book. They believe that God revealed himself to the Jews, but they corrupted the revelation.

Then he revealed himself to Christians, but they corrupted the revelation. So he finally revealed himself to the world through Muhammad in what's known as the Quran, and that's the final perfect revelation. So they see Jews and Christians as a precursor to Islam, and have historically granted them some measure of respect, but they have not to others.

Now they see us as infidels, no question about that. There's apostates, which are former Muslims. They're worthy of death, they would say. There's infidels like you and me. And then there are the believers, which would be the the ummah, the global Muslim community. And so they've historically granted some privilege to Christians and Muslim or Jews.

When they conquer a Christian land, they'll allow Christians not to have to convert to Islam. They have to pay a higher tax. It's called the Jizra. And they live as second-class citizens, but they've allowed them some privilege they wouldn't to somebody else. Now, what makes this different geopolitically is that America supports Israel.

So that means America, by extension, is complicit in this attack on Islam through the support of the state of Israel. And that would mean that Americans, and because America is a democracy where our citizens vote for our government as well, that we're complicit in this as well. That's why 9/11 was not an unprovoked attack on innocent Americans, according to Osama bin Laden.

It was a defense of Islam, striking back at the heart of Western crusader imperialist aggression. Twin towers for financial, the Pentagon military, the White House political. If it was the White House, they were White House or Congress, they were attempting to attack. So it all goes together. In a sense, but they do see America more specifically than the West as complicit in this attack on the Palestinian people and are therefore willing to attack Americans.

And we've seen at least 11 Americans at this point that are held hostage in Gaza that we know of. We're aware of several Americans that have been killed by Hamas. Now that news is coming out. And they would see them the same way. I'm afraid they would see the Jews in that context.

[00:07:21] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Help us a little bit. You're so qualified when it comes to the geography of Israel. Israel, basically about the size of New Jersey is usually the way we talk about it. But we get confused sometimes because most people, when they think of Israel, they think of Jerusalem and they think of the Temple Mount. They see that in news reports all the time.

Some of us may think of the Sea of Galilee. We may think of Bethlehem or Nazareth. But we get confused when we start hearing about things like Gaza and we start hearing about the West Bank as particular areas in this conflict. We sometimes think it's Gaza, its own nation, and that's where Hamas is basically established. Help us understand the geography of this reality. In the proximity that not only Hamas has in the southern region, but there are other similar organizations like Hezbollah in the north. You can talk about that a little bit, but help us understand just how all of this lays out geographically for a moment.

[00:08:27] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It's very confusing. It really is. And I understand why people are often trying to get a sense of the geography and the geopolitics that come out of it because it is such a tiny place. And so it's roughly about 50 miles from the Gaza Strip to Bethlehem. If you want to think of it in terms of geographical terms, Gaza Strip is on the Mediterranean coast.

It's on the extreme southwest part of what we think of as Israel. It borders Egypt to the south. It's about 25 miles long. It's about four to seven and a half miles wide, depending on where it is at that point in time. 2. 1 million people live there. Wow. It's the most densely populated place on earth is Gaza Strip.

That's on the western side. If I was looking at a map of Israel today. On the eastern side is a thing oddly called the West Bank, even though it's on the eastern side of Israel. It's on the west bank of the Jordan River in the Dead Sea. That's why it's called the West Bank. So you mentioned the Sea of Galilee.

That's to the far north, as you know of Israel. The Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee and down to the Dead Sea. About halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is where the so called West Bank starts. And if I was looking at a map and here's the Jordan River and here's the Dead Sea about right there, it comes over like this, so it's like a kidney, and then comes and then ends back over at the Dead Sea down here.

It's roughly the size of Delaware, what we think of as the West Bank. That was part of Jordan. Gaza was part of Egypt. So after the Ottoman Empire loses the First World War, the British mandate takes over here and the Arab populations start moving primarily to the West because they're under Egyptian support and protection, and to the West Bank because that's under Jordanian protection.

And the Jewish populations start congregating toward the middle. And that sliver of land there that we think of is in the middle. At one point it's only six miles wide. Between the Mediterranean and the West Bank, a tiny little country. By 1947, there's the partition plan that the British bring forward to the United Nations that kind of solemnizes all of that, that has Gaza over here, West Bank over there as the nation of Palestine.

Hard to think of a discontinuous nation, but that's what would have happened. It would be a nation in two places. That's what would have happened because of, because Egyptian control over here and Jordanian protection over there. The Jews accepted the plan, the Arabs rejected it. So thus the Jewish war for independence breaks out May 14, 1948.

At the end of the day, Israel has its independence. Gaza is still under Egypt, West Bank still under Jordan. Then 1956, the the conflict with Egypt, they gained control of the Saap Peninsula

as well. 67, the six days war, 1967 breaks out. At the end of that, the Jews have control of Gaza and the West Bank as well.

73 Yom Kippur, which is the closest to the present conflict that Israel's ever faced. They, again defended West Bank, Gaza and what's called the Golan Heights, which is on the border of asy up to the far north. And from that time to the present, those have been under Israeli control. Just to finish complicating matters, in the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, 1993, with Yasser Arafat, Israel negotiated with the Palestinians limited autonomy, whereby they would have some level of autonomy over the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for their recognition of Israel's right to exist.

So now, Gaza has some autonomy, West Bank has some autonomy, it's all under Yasser Arafat's party called Fatah as the political party. Then there's elections in 2005, this group called Hamas, we mentioned before, runs against Fatah. They get the largest measure of support in Gaza, Fatah has the support of the West Bank.

So now it kind of splits in two. That's like the red states over here and the blue states over here. It'd be like the Republicans are in charge of red states and the Democrats are in charge of the blue states. There have been no elections since then. So now Fatah, under Mahmoud Abbas, is the, has limited autonomy in the West Bank.

Gaza on as limited autonomy under Hamas, and that's what it has been from then till the present. So if you're not confused by that, I didn't do a good job.

[00:12:30] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Okay. Yeah. You've done a great job. I can see everybody agreeing with me. You did a great job. So one happy to be confusing. Yeah. One more point of clarity around this. And that is the use of the term occupied territory. So that is usually a term that is applied to the West Bank part of this discussion. And when they refer to it as the occupied territory, who's doing the occupying?

[00:12:51] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, that's a great question. Something I left out before in 2007 when Gaza took over, when Hamas took over, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip. Gave them pretty well autonomy over there. Now what people don't know and what hasn't been reported much is Israel is still supporting Gaza with electricity. Thank you. With water, with basic sanitation, Gaza couldn't exist without Israeli support over all these years. But there are very few Israelis living in Gaza.

There aren't Israeli settlers over there. There aren't people trying to populate that area. That area belonged to the Philistines to go back to the biblical era. That's the area of Goliath and the Philistines. In fact, it's called Palestine. Because to go back way into history, when the Romans,

there was a Jewish revolt that destroyed the temple in AD 70, there was a second revolt called the Bar Hakba Revolt, AD 132-135.

After that, the Romans said, we're done with these Jews. They renamed the whole area Palestine, which is the Latin version of Philistine. That's why it's called Palestinian. And from then until 1948, the whole thing was called Palestine. Back to your point, the Jews haven't for a long time been living in the Gaza Strip area since 2007, they pulled out.

However, West Bank, they consider Judea and Samaria, biblical Judea and Samaria. So it's in three areas, Mark. Now, aren't you glad you asked me? There's areas A, B, and C. One of them is under somewhat autonomous, Palestinian autonomy. Bethlehem is that way. Bethlehem has a Palestinian mayor. It has a Palestinian What we would think of as a city council, it has its own security.

B is mutually shared. C is pretty well under Israeli control. But it's not as simple as A, B, C. It's pockmarked all through the West Bank. And then in B and C, you have Israeli settlers. Moving in and setting up their own towns, especially in C, and to some degree in B. That's why others call that the occupied territory, because you've got Israelis moving into what's supposed to be Palestinian land.

They just don't recognize it as such. They call it Judea and Samaria. They don't think there should be a nation of Palestine, just like Hamas doesn't think there should be a nation of Israel. They don't want a two state solution either. They're as far to the right over here as Hamas is over there. And they want there not to be any Palestinians here, and they're occupying the Palestinian territories with these so called illegal settlements.

Now, in a broader sense, because Israel retains ultimate authority over the West Bank, people will call it an occupied territory. Even the parts that Palestinians have the most autonomy over are still under ultimate Israeli control. So some call it the occupied territories, just to be deprecatory toward Israel, to be denigrating of Israel.

Just because they haven't pulled out completely. They haven't just turned it over to the Palestinians. Others are more specific. It's occupied to the degree that settlers are occupying parts of the West Bank with these illegal settlements. One last thought. People come along and say look, why don't you just turn over the West Bank like you did Gaza?

Just let them have it like they have it. To which the Israelis say look what Hamas did when we gave them Gaza. We don't want to give them the West Bank too. That's a much larger area than Gaza. That borders Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is in the West Bank. If they gave them the West Bank, now you're not 50 miles away.

Now you're neighbors with terrorists. People get mad at Israel for building the border wall around the West Bank, the security wall around it. Before they did that, there were regular suicide bombings coming across the border every day. That's been shut down enormously since that wall was built. And so they would say look, if we just gave the West Bank to Fatah, we'd have the same problem there we have over here with Gaza.

It's a massive issue. But that's essentially West Bank and Gaza. That's why there's two parties there. That's why Israel doesn't know how to negotiate for peace. It'd be like Canada trying to do a treaty with America, but do they negotiate with the red states or the blue states? Because they have two separate governments that can't get together and have their own elections.

And so it's a horribly corrupt situation. The Palestinian leaders are in so many ways failing the Palestinian people. Hamas has been given millions, if not billions of dollars in aid over the years. Which we now know they've been using for military preparations to the absolute starvation of their own people to the horrible denigration of their own people.

My friends in Israel say the Palestinian leaders never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. And I don't mean that to be unkind to the Palestinian people. I have a number of friends who are Palestinians in Israel, and they're some of the most wonderful people I know. One of my dearest friends in the Middle East is a person that owns, you've met him, is a person that owns a business in Bethlehem with him.

We've worked for 30 years. I'm praying for his family right now. He's a dear Christian brother. Far more Christians on the Palestinian side than on the Israeli side. Far more Palestinian Arab Christians than there are Jewish Israeli Christians. And I'm praying for my friends in Bethlehem who were themselves victims of what's happening here.

But in the leadership of this, there's been enormous corruption, financial corruption. It's being said these days, I haven't verified this, but it's being said that Yasser Arafat died a billionaire. That Mahmoud Abbas is a billionaire. I don't know if that's true, but that's being said in the media right now.

So there's a lot of corruption on the leadership, the people, the Palestinian people, I think are victims just like the Israeli people are victims in many ways here.

[00:18:07] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And it's extremely complex and extremely confusing at times. And it's, it feels that. Maybe the Hamas group is the more extreme group compared to the Fatah group, but that I would say that's true, but that would not necessarily hold true if Israel just gave complete control to the west of the West Bank to Fatah, you might see them rise up in a renewed kind of strength, similar to what with Hamas.

[00:18:37] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Plus, oh, I should say quickly, Mark, plus in West Bank, it's not just Fatah. They have control of it, but Islamic Jihad is over there. There are Iranian militant groups that are there as well, and militias operating there as well. So even if Hamas stayed in Gaza, if you gave, if you got rid of the security wall and gave complete autonomy to the West Bank, Fatah, I don't believe would be able to control the militias that are in the West Bank.

I think Israel would face terrorist attacks as they did prior, even if Fatah wasn't part of those attacks specifically. It's not just Fatah and Hamas. I didn't mean to say that before. There are other groups, Islamic Jihad on both sides and other groups as well.

[00:19:10] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, which just adds to enormous levels of chaos. But Jim, why do you think Hamas chose now to launch such a large scale and ravenous kind of attack? Why? We were talking to one of our common friends I saw an email from him yesterday. He listed. Well over 10 experiences of conflict between Hamas and Israel. And he's knowledgeable.

He's lived there a long time and traveled there often. Why this particular conflict? Why now? Why on this scale? Do you think?

[00:19:49] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's what one of the things people are asking right now. I don't think we know now, but we will know if this unfolds on a larger scale, if this spreads beyond Hamas.

And we may come back and talk about that in a little bit, what's going on right now with Hezbollah and with other groups as well. There may be timing we're not yet aware of here, but it's on two levels on what we do know is on two levels on the micro level. The attack happened on Shabbat. At the end of a very significant Jewish holiday, it happened at a time when there was significant unrest in the West Bank.

And so a great deal of Israeli security forces were deployed to the West Bank rather than to Gaza. Now there's some question about whether that was coordinated or not, which would again say this isn't just Hamas. If they have coordination causing some unrest in the West Bank to withdraw Israeli support over to the West Bank, and perhaps there's, like I said, a larger narrative at work there.

So on one level, it's because of the holiday and because of the Shabbat. On a much larger geopolitical level, I saw this said yesterday in Tablet Magazine, this was an Iranian attack using Hamas. The Iranians desperately do not want Saudi Arabia to enter into normalization with Israel. That's been happening.

They've been taking significant steps in that direction. Now that's all on hold. The Saudis, in fact, have had to come out supporting the Palestinians. That's been the case across the history of this conflict, and we can come back and talk about some of that. And so the Iranians clearly They did not want the Saudis in a normalized relationship with Israel.

We can talk about reasons for that. They did not want the other Arab nations continuing normalization with Israel, and this has put that on hold. And they had to do it now before Saudi Arabia developed a normalized relationship with Israel because the Saudis might have to help Israel in their attack against Hamas.

And by extension, Iran. So that was the why now, was to keep the peace process from continuing forward with Saudis and those that would follow behind Saudi. If the Saudis developed a normalized relationship with Israel, a number of other Arab nations would likely do so as well. And that seems to be the precipitating moment for now, from what we know now.

Now, there could be a much larger strategy at work here, and we can talk about that, but that's at least what we know at this point.

[00:21:59] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Okay, so let's, yeah, let's talk about a little bit about the possibility of a larger. Ramification here and we're all becoming much more attuned to these kinds of things.

I looked just very briefly on the internet depending upon what website you go to right now, there are somewhere between 32 and 130 active wars on the planet as we speak. And sometimes it's just astounding to us. I would imagine many of our audience feel this way. How is it that this little place continues to create so much havoc?

I, like many people, I was watching college football on Saturday. The game was interrupted. The president came out to pledge unqualified support for Israel in this conflict. And we're like, what is going on now and why does it matter? And how does it possibly involve us? We all tend to have those kinds of questions.

What might be, and it's troubling when we start talking about Iran may be in this, and the Saudis are connected to this, and then a similar type minded group to the north, up in the northern region of Israel. It's very lush, it's very green. It's up in the area of Galilee where Jesus spent about 80 percent of his time.

You get even further north of that year into the area of the ancient tribe of Dan, and then you find the Lebanon border. And there's this group up in Lebanon called Hezbollah, who has a very

similar mindset to Hamas. So you did a great job in your daily articles the last couple of days trying to sort all of this out a little bit, but talk about how this could be involved and connected to a much larger geopolitical reality.

That's not just about these two entities of Israel and Hamas, these two. and nations, but could actually have much bigger players behind the scenes, and it may unfold that way. Talk about some of your thoughts and concerns in that direction.

[00:24:02] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, absolutely. As I said earlier, thank you, Marcus. I said earlier, Hamas has pledged to the destruction of Israel.

So we have to be asking, why are they doing what they're doing? You always want the metanarrative. You want to know what is it that nation ultimately wants to accomplish and then judge its actions in the light of that. George Friedman and others have talked about this idea of this meta narrative, that's Hamas's meta narrative is to destroy Israel.

They can't do that on the road. What they've done since Saturday has no possibility of eradicating Israel. They have no military capability to do that. They don't have atomic weapons. They don't have anything like Israel's very advanced armies and militaries. Not to mention just the sheer numbers that we're talking about here, it'd be, by analogy, something like Taiwan deciding I'm tired of China, I'm just going to destroy China.

It'd be something about, obviously China's bigger than Israel is, but you get the idea of them being massively outnumbered. If Hamas by itself was trying to do this, they also have to know that by doing more than launching weapons that Israel can respond to as they have in the past, but by doing the horrific, unspeakable things they're doing now, Israel has to.

Respond on a level that many are calling for the absolute eradication of Hamas, the absolute destruction of Hamas, take back over Gaza. Don't know what they'll do with it once they get it. That's a huge issue inside all that. But they have to know that the response to this is going to be on a level they've never seen from Israel.

They have to know that. So we have to be asking ourselves, why would they do this? On one level, some Muslims, radicalized Muslims, believe that if they die in a declared holy war, they're guaranteed paradise. So in some sense, it could be a suicide movement of some sort, but not on this level.

You'd be asking, why would they be doing this and risking the kind of wrath that is inevitably going to be coming back at them? Why would they do that if this is all there is to it? And so now

we've been hearing reports in recent days, Wall Street Journal broke the story that Hamas and Hezbollah senior officials have been saying that Iran has been planning this for more than a year.

That in fact there was a recent meeting in Beirut in Lebanon with senior officials from Hamas, Hezbollah and other groups. That launched this, that planned it, that gave the go ahead approval for the actual creation of this as the first step in a larger strategy. Now, Iran is denying all of that, but of course they would.

One of the principles of radical Islam is the belief that they can lie to the infidel to support Islam. And that's an actual doctrine that they sometimes follow. We should pay no attention to their denial here. They're denying that. We'd expect that they would. But Iran would do that because that's their metanarrative.

They want to build what they can see as a Shiite crescent from Iran all the way through Syria, all the way to Lebanon to eradicate Israel. Iran ultimately believes that the Mahdi, which they think of as their Messiah, many in Iranian leadership, I should say many, especially in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Supreme Leader Khamenei, believe that this Mahdi won't appear.

Unless Muslims take steps to eradicate Israel. And if they do that, then this Mahdi, this this Messiah like figure will appear. If they launched a nuclear attack they'd have to know there'd be retribution at that point. But, if they could get Hamas and Hezbollah and the West Bank and Islamic militants in Syria and in Iraq, all to attack Israel at one time, a recent Israeli defense expert said that would be an existential crisis for Israel.

Now, how could Hamas get Hezbollah and others to do that? If they can incite an Israeli reaction that is characterized as an attack on Palestinians. Including Palestinian civilians and a larger attack on Islam against her a two verse one ninety requires Muslims to defend Islam. Now, perhaps, Hezbollah to the north would be required to join the battle mark.

They have 125,000 rockets capable of reaching Jerusalem. Hezbollah is far more severe an enemy than Hamas. From a military point of view to Israel, and they're right to the north on the Lebanese border, and then you get over to the West Bank, and it's not just Fatah, but Islamic Jihad and Iranian militant groups, and then you get up to Syria on the border there, and then Iraq beyond that.

Now you're looking at an existential crisis for Israel that Iran could perhaps believe could be the beginning of the end that could lead to the coming of the Mahdi. They believe that they are in the last era prior to the coming of Mahdi. These, what's called 12ers, they believe in the 12th. I could get into the 12th imam that occluded, but he'll come back.

That's the Mahdi. A lot of complexity of this, but they think they're at that end of times. Some of them think there has to be a world war prior to this. And they see Russia's invasion of Ukraine as that world war. Others think that what I've just described could be that world war. That could bring about the coming of the Mahdi.

All that to say there are theological reasons Iran could be. Behind a much larger strategy that would involve far more than Hamas and would make Hamas's attack make sense. So if what I just said is true, that would make sense as to why Hamas would do what it's done on a level that other explanations so far don't seem to make sense.

[00:29:14] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So if I follow you it's A theologically, at least in part, theologically motivated strategy could be that Iran is trying to basically pick a fight through Hamas that creates a larger fight. That achieves their ultimate in now you have a way to see this. Yeah, that's one way to see this and only time will tell if it actually plays out to be that to be the case.

But we know that everything is connected to everything else. That's true in our own lives. It's true geopolitically as well. Jim, you've written so much and spoken so often over the years, more than two decades about radical Islam. There is a temptation here for all of us. So when we see these kinds of things and we hear the kinds of explanations that you've been given it's sometimes tempting for us to just say the problem here is all of these Muslims, all of these Muslims around the world.

And what you've attempted to do, particularly in some of your writing is to explain radical jihadist or radical Islam. Help us understand that what we're seeing in some of these movements with Hamas and with some of these other things. Does not necessarily represent the predominant views of all Muslims.

Can you speak to that, sort that out for us so that we don't go down this temptation and say, you know what, all of those people in the Muslim world are our enemies and need to be destroyed. Talk to us.

[00:30:49] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah. I'm so glad you asked me that, Mark, because that's really a practical, critical part of this conversation that we need to keep emphasizing.

I'm really grateful to you. So all Muslims believe in what's called the five pillars of Islam. The witness, there is no god but God, Muhammad is his prophet, the Shahadah as it's called. Praying five times a day, facing toward Mecca, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms to the poor, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca.

At least once in your lifetime, the Hajj. Those are the five pillars. Radicalized Muslims add two others, what could be called pillars. The first is the belief that the West has been attacking Islam since the Crusades for a thousand years. And because, again, Surah 2, verse 190, verse 192, require Muslims to defend Islam.

Radicalized Muslims believe that they are required to attack the West to defend Islam. Second pillar, because we in the Western democracies I mentioned this earlier, there are no innocent victims in the West. We vote for our leaders, we tax the support of military, our children, grandchildren serve in the military.

So attacking what we think of as an innocent civilian on a street in London is a defense of Islam required by the Quran, according to a radicalized Muslim. That's why what we think of a suicide bombing, they would call that person a martyr. That's why attacking what we would think of as innocent Israeli citizens and kidnapping them and using them as human shields and all of that is within the purview of so called radicalized Muslims.

Some years ago, Gallup wanted to know what percentage of Muslims could be seen as aligning with those two values. Best they could determine it's 7%. Others would much disagree with that number. They'd say that's far too high. They see it might be one or two percent would agree with those two so called radical pillars.

Also need to say Gallup was not saying that seven percent of every hundred Muslims in the world, seven percent of the Muslims in New York City or in Dallas, it'd be much lower than seven percent in the United States. It'd be much higher in Yemen or in Somalia. That's just an aggregate number. You get to 7 percent and a lot of, like I said, a lot of people think that number is far too high.

So all that to say, this is a very significant minority, a very small minority that we're talking about here that is behind so much of what we're seeing right now. One other thing to add, by far, on a factor of some say of 100 to one, even more than that, Muslims have been the victims of radicalized Muslims far more than non Muslims have.

It's what we're seeing right now with what Hamas is doing to use innocent Palestinian civilians to protect themselves, Netanyahu said in a previous conflict, the difference between us as they were using human shields for their missiles, as they were placing missiles in hospitals and in mosques and in neighborhoods and in houses to protect them, to hide them, knowing that the Israelis wouldn't attack innocent Palestinians to get at Hamas missiles.

Netanyahu made the point, here's the difference between us. In Israel, we use our missiles to protect our people. In Hamas, they use people to protect their missiles. They have been far more,

the non radicalized Muslims have been far more victims by radical Muslims than non-Muslims have been, I would say.

And I think that's an important point. One last thing I would mention, we're calling them radical Muslims. That's what people typically call them. That's, a way of making this clear, but that's not really a fair statement. I don't really know what, I often call them jihadists instead, although people don't quite know what that means either.

Jihad is holy war, although typically in Muslim history that's been a war of peace, not a war of violence, a lot of stuff inside that. I wouldn't want Jim Jones group or some radical sect that claims Christianity to be called radical Christian. I wouldn't want the KKK to be called radical Christian. And I think it's probably a fair point to say Muslims wouldn't want Hamas to be called radical Islam or radical Muslims.

And that's a good point because it almost implies that they're Muslim and they would say they're really not. They would say that they've really, by what they're doing now, they're violating so much of the Quran and they're violating the basic tenants they think of how Islam should relate to the world.

One last fact to point out, the Quran was revealed to Mohammed in two basic sections. part in Mecca where he lived at the first part of his life, the last half in Medina. When he gets to Medina and he starts facing all sorts of opposition from the tribes that are there and the other groups that are there, that's when you get the so called sword versus like the Quran chapter nine verse five that requires Muslims to kill infidels, that sort of thing.

The moderate Muslims, 93 percent of the world say you have to interpret the sword versus in light of the peace versus, which is the first half of the Quran. Radicalized Muslims say it's just the opposite. Called the doctrine of abrogation. They say the later the revelation, the more authoritative. And so the moderate would look at verses in the Quran that require them to kill infidels and say I'm not bound by that.

I interpret that by this. It'd be like me looking at the command of the Jews to conquer the Canaanites. I'm not required by that to go kill Canaanites. I interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. I find the principles that are there, but I don't see that as a law binding on me.

That's how the moderate Muslims look at the sword verses. Radical do it just the opposite. So it's a theological issue as much as anything else, but that's at least some of what we think of when we think of this radicalized Islam.

[00:36:08] **Dr. Mark Turman:** I want to chase that idea in just a second, but it reminds me of when we were in Israel a year ago and we were talking to one of our Jewish friends and he said, yes, there are real tensions and there are real problems between Israel and Palestinians between Jews and Muslims. Those issues are real, but they pale in comparison between the issues that Palestinians and Muslims have with them with each other.

It's what you're talking about, that there's so much, especially in this radical these various radical groups are often so much at odds with each other and attacking each other in very significant ways is very much a picture of a house divided. In some ways but talk about that. And this is basically impossible to do, but you're much more capable than anybody I know of this whole idea of radicalization and how radicalization in our time and not limited to this part of the world of Israel and Palestine, but this reality of cloaking geopolitical power and the pursuit of power in religious garb how do you sort that out in your own mind?

The theological pursuits and motivations versus what we might just call in some ways, just the raw pursuit of power. How do you sort that out, particularly when you look at this kind of an event?

[00:37:38] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Thank you. I think you have to put that in the context of spiritual warfare. You go to Genesis 3, where the very first temptation was to be your own god, knowing good and evil.

I would say Mark often said that's the only temptation there is. Everything else the enemy does is a variation on that theme. Be your own god by stealing this. Be your own god by having that affair. Be your own god by whatever the temptation is. It's a temptation to be your own god. It's what Nietzsche called the will to power.

He said it was the basic drive in human nature. And I think he's right. Disagree with a whole lot of what Friedrich Nietzsche said, but I agree with him there. I think that's absolutely right now. He thought that was a good thing, by the way. I think that's a very bad thing, but the will to power, it's a basic drive in human nature, and that's what the enemy loves to use.

If he can do that in the context of spiritual or religious power, now he's added a whole nother layer because now we're thinking about eternal power, eternal reward versus eternal damnation. Now we're thinking about a will to power that I can exercise on a level that brings me the blessing of God or the gods, depending on what your religious kind of perspective might be.

And so now we have we've mobilized this. We have enhanced this will to power enormously on a level that really no other motivation can compete with. Will to power, will I get more money?

That's great, but there's only so much money, right? Will to power could lead to relationships, but relationships come and go.

Will to power that gets the gods on my side. Will the power that gets God blessing me in this life and the life to come, that's going to be enticing as nothing else is. And that's why Satan loves, I think, to use spiritual means to tempt us to this very carnal, very fallen, very fleshly desire for power that's inbred in all of us.

And I would love to tell you I'm immune to that, but I am not. Right now as we're having this conversation, Mark, I am tempted to try to impress you with my spiritual knowledge. As a means to my will to power. When I get up to speak on Sunday or when I write an article, I am tempted. To try to impress people with what I know or in some other way, impress them with myself.

So as to earn God's blessing and their support as a reflection of the will to power. I want God to like me. I want God to bless me. I want to do things that God will bless a transactional religion. Place the sacrifice at the altar so the God will bless your crops. Go to church on Sunday so God will bless you on Monday.

Start your day with a quiet time so God will bless your day. Give money so God will bless your money. Refuse that temptation so God will bless your life. Transactional, I do this so God will do that. Will to power, Genesis 3, in spiritual terms. That's what you're seeing right now with so called radicalized Islam or jihadist Islam.

There's a very specific eschatology. But the Iranians are working with that. I mentioned before attack is attack Israel to bring about the coming of the Mahdi because then we win when the Mahdi is back. He rules the world for Islam and we're on the winning side. That's a will to power and their theological terms.

If you're on the Sunni side, which is 85 percent of the Muslim world, they also have a body. They also believe, but not in the same degree that the 12 first go up in the Iranian side of all of that. But for them, there's geopolitical power here. And there's also the desire for paradise. And the desire for the blessing of Allah.

One thing I should add, except for a person who dies in a recognized jihad, some Muslims believe they are guaranteed paradise. Apart from that, there is no security of salvation in Islam. In fact, Muslims will tell you they are not a thousand percent certain that Muhammad They do not believe in a security of salvation.

That's one of the great attractions Christianity offers Muslims. It's the security of salvation based on grace. They think Allah is going to weigh the good and the bad. And so they have this constant perennial pressure to please Allah for the sake of being judged in this life and the life to come, favorably.

And the enemy loves to use that. He loves to use that desire for God's blessing as a means to the end of our will to power. And that's a lot of what in the corruptions that is what religion is made to do in not just in Christianity or really across the world religion spectrum.

[00:41:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And it just seems to me to be very strong powerful example of what it means to take the name of the Lord in vain, to wrap our pursuit of power in a religious cloak and make it sound noble, make it sound like we are attempting to serve God in these ways when in fact what we're attempting to do is to serve our own ends.

And this is, as you mentioned, the difference between Christianity and Islam and other religions as well, is this attractiveness of grace and the preeminence of the transforming love of God, as opposed to the capture and attaining of simply power. I've heard you and others say that the difference between Christianity and other religions is that Christianity is about the power of God's love and all other religions are really about the love of power.

And that's one way to sort this out. Jim, but before we finish up today, I'm going to, at the end, I'm going to ask you to just pray and pray for this and for other things as well. But one thing I'm just. I'm wondering, I just woke up pondering this in my own thoughts and in my own prayer time, which is Should Christians, should you and I and other Christians, should we care about this particular conflict between Hamas and Israel and potentially others?

Should we care about it more or in a different way than we would, say, other conflicts that are going on the African continent or the terrible conflict that's going on between Ukraine and Russia? Should we think of this one more or differently? Should we think of it as more spiritual? Or should we think of them in similar categories and then give us some practical tools of this is what we should do, obviously, starting with prayer.

But what else could we do as concerned believers? Wanting to see God bring peace and hope.

[00:43:48] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's a great question, Mark, and the answer to the first is a yes and no, depending on your theological overview here. There's a particular, as there's a particular way of seeing the end times doctrine of eschatology, which believes that the creation of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy.

And would see what happens from that point forward as part of the end times or the final generations, and they would say that this is the hinge of history, not only across history, but in terms of God's redemptive purposes in the world today, and they would see this in a prophetic context. And so if you come at it from that point of view, then the answer to your question would be yes, this conflict should matter to you in a way that no other conflict does, because this is part of God's prophetic.

in times eschatological work in the world. That's a minority view in the larger world of Christian scholarship, but it's a very popular view, especially in popular media these days. The Left Behind series, a number of the study Bibles that are available today would see this in that kind of a context. And so in a theological way, if you come at it from that point of view, then the answer to your question would be yes, from a theological point, that this is unique.

Whether we do that or not, I do think myself I can say this pretty adamantly, I think that God has a redemptive purpose for the Jewish people. That's unique to the Jewish people. I do believe they are still as chosen people. I do believe that he's still using them in redemptive ways. Even though I, myself, now this may anger some people, may frustrate some people.

I, myself. Don't see 1948 as a fulfillment of prophecy, and I don't see the state of Israel as itself part of God's prophetic work in the world. I could certainly be wrong about that, and I have dear friends with whom I would just disagree over that as an interpretive point. But I also do not, I'm not a replacement theologian who thinks that when when Jesus came and the New Testament begins, now the church has replaced the Jewish people.

And now the Jews are like nobody else. So the answer to your question is that a conflict there is no different than Ukraine or a conflict in the African subcontinent or any place else. That would be another answer. I wouldn't have that answer either. I wouldn't on the one side say it's unique in a prophetic sense, nor would I say it's not unique because they're, they've been replaced by the church.

I think God is still uniquely using the Jewish people and American history. The Jews have never been more than 2.5 percent of our population, 37 percent of our noble Lawrence. They are a remarkable culture. It's one of the reasons I love the Jewish people so much. I might not love being there 35 times over the years.

And I'm praying desperately for my dear friends that are there right now. One of whom has a grandson that has only now been a week in the Israeli Defense Force. Just enlisted before all of this started. Now I don't know where he is in all of this. Grieving for my dear friends that I love who are there.

There's a uniqueness to the Jewish people. A uniqueness to their culture. A uniqueness. I think on so many levels, and I think God's still using the Jewish people in ways that are redemptive. I don't understand all of that. I don't understand how all that's going to work in whatever end time scenario that might or might not fit its way into.

But I do think the Jewish people are unique in a way, and I think that God Works through Israel that tiny hinge of history in remarkably unique ways and still does today So I see it as different kind of a third category middle category isn't work But I want to hasten to add Galatians 3:28 There's neither Jew nor Greek slave are free male nor female or all Abraham seeded ears according to the Covenant Augustine say God loves each of us as if there were only one of us So I say that to say God's heart is just as broken by Palestinian deaths As he is by Israeli Jewish deaths is just as heartbroken by Ukrainian deaths and by Russian deaths and by African tribal deaths as he is by what's happening right now in the Middle East.

He loves each of us as if there were only one of us and so should we. So maybe that's a bridge over to what can we be doing now? I think the first thing we ought to be doing is asking for God's perspective. Before I pray, God, how should I pray before I start using my social media influence or my other means of speaking into this?

God, what's your heart here? Give me your heart. Break my heart for what breaks your heart. Help me to see this through your eyes. Help me to feel this and sense this conflict. As you do. Give me your heart. Help me to be aligned with your purposes right now. God, I know you redeem all you allow. How are you redeeming this?

What can you be helping me to know and to feel? So first of all, God, give me your mind. Give me your heart on this second. Holy spirit, help me to pray, help me to pray very in the daily article that I wrote just today, I asked us to pray specifically for leaders there in the Middle East, that God would give them wisdom and that this would not exacerbate.

That that those that are fighting Hamas would be protected and that the innocents and civilians would be protected in the midst of all of this. Pray for a spiritual awakening. There's a remarkable thing happening in the Muslim world right now. As as Muslims who seek visions and dreams of Jesus, multitudes are turning to faith in Christ.

Pray for that to happen. A remarkable movement happening underground among Israeli Jews. Right now, we're seeing a large movement of Messianic Judaism there of Jews who are making Jesus their Messiah. Some of my dear friends in Israel are observant Jews. They observe the Shabbat or the Sabbath, they keep all of the traditions, but Jesus is their Lord.

I'm convinced he'll be in heaven. I'm thinking of some of them right now with tears in my eyes who love Jesus as their Lord. Pray for that. Pray for that awakening to continue there and for God to redeem this by showing people how desperately they need Him. So that's the second thing. God, give me your heart.

And second, help me to pray. And then third, God, help me to act out my prayers. At the end of Matthew chapter 9, Jesus calls his disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into the harvest. Then you turn the page to Matthew chapter 10, and here's Jesus calling his disciples out of that harvest.

Be willing to be the answer to your prayers. I don't know what that might mean for you. I don't know what influence you have that can be brought to bear here. You can be giving money that can be supportive here. You can be supporting disaster relief efforts that could be happening right now in the Middle East.

I'm aware of Texas Baptist Men, which is a group we've supported for years and years, my wife and I. We're going to be doing feeding programs relative to refugee populations that are there, other ministries that can be reaching out that God could lead you to be supporting financially. How could your church be supporting refugee groups and humanitarian aid in this part of the world?

How could your church be engaged here on a missional level with those that are there? Who do you know? That is engaged in this conflict with whom you could be praying and reaching out directly would be practical ways. God might lead you to be the answer to your prayers here, but at the end of the day, one of the thoughts as small as the world now is, and especially as connected as we are through social media, pretty good chance that most of the people hearing this conversation have an ability to reach out to someone who's directly affected by this.

On the Palestinian side or on the Israeli side. Somebody who on some level feels this on a personal level. Pray for sensitivity to them. Be very careful what you say. In ways that could be harming of your witness to them. That could be injurious to them. Speak the truth in love. In everything you say. Look for ways God could be opening doors to neighbors.

Physical neighbors. Geographical neighbors. As well as ideological neighbors. For ways that God could be placing you. in positions to be able to be his hands and his feet with people who are directly grieving or directly affected as a result of what's happening in this horrible tragedy. So those are some thoughts about ways God could be directing us as we try to be salt and light in this critical and tragic thing.

[00:51:25] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Thank you for that. And I want you to lead us in a prayer before we finish here in just a second. Just reminds me of what you've written and said, which is that the devil is behind all of this, that he comes to steal, kill and destroy, and that he is wanting to hurt God by hurting his people, by hurting all of those people that he has created to bear his image.

And that's what's really behind this, that this is, as the book of Ephesians tells us, a spiritual battle behind a physical earthly battle. And that what God wants to bring is peace and grace and joy and abundant life to all of us. And the devil is set against that. And war is one of the most horrific expressions of how much he is set against that.

And as we know, it's usually the, it's civilians. It's the innocent people who end up hurting the most and suffering the most in these conflicts. Usually. Jim, thank you for your insights. Thank you for bringing us so much clarity in a very confusing and troubling situation. Great to get to have the conversation with you.

Would you lead us in prayer as we just continue to carry this burden in our hearts?

[00:52:36] **Dr. Jim Denison:** You been marking. Thank you for the conversation for all you're doing in these days. I'm so grateful to be part of the ministry. that exists to speak biblical truth to critical issues and for such a time as this. So grieve that we're in this place, but honored at the same time to partner with you and the rest of our team and trying to bring light and trying to bring the grace of God's love into such a critical time.

So let's pray together. Father God, we're coming to you right now, knowing the Lord that as our hearts are broken, yours is even more so that you're grieving for every person who is grieving right now. that father your heart is broken with all that's happening not just here but in the conflicts literally around the world that is the will to power being used by the enemy to steal kill and destroy so god give us your heart give us your mind help us to think your thoughts help us to think biblically help us to respond redemptively help us to be your agents of change and reconciliation and grace and hope in our own homes in our own jerusalem's mints of the earth and god even now give us your grace and strength and your peace and your encouragement And then Father God, as we pray from this moment forward, help us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Help us to pray, Father, for peace and then be agents of peace. Show us what that means for us. Show us what we can give our time and our talent and treasure. Show us what we can invest in our intercession. Show us how we can use our influence and our platforms and our opportunities. Make us a means to the ends of accomplishing your purposes here, that your kingdom might come and your will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And then God, prepare us, even today, for that great day. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for that great day when people from every tribe and language and people and tongues will be gathered around your throne before the Lamb. Father, may this day be sent that day and use us to that end, we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord.

[00:54:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Thank you for that, Jim. And thank you to our audience for listening today. We hope that this has been helpful and encouraging clarifying in the midst of a really tragic situation. If this has been helpful, please rate review us on your podcast platform and share this with family and friends. We hope to bring back more to you in the coming days.

You can also find more information from Dr. Denison and others on our website, denisonforum.org. You'll find a white paper as well as daily articles dealing with the crisis in Israel, and there'll be more to come in the days ahead. Thank you again, and God bless you.