



**The Gaza – Israel war** is indeed horrific and deeply shocking. As a follower of Jesus, a practicing Christian, this writer is deeply grieved! He is also angry about all the bloodshed and the many innocent lives that are lost in Gaza, Israel and many other conflicts. As he was praying for those who suffer the question came to mind, “What would Jesus do?”

Jesus, whose Hebrew name was Yeshua, was born in Bethlehem of Judea in Israel about 2000 years ago. At that time the nation was under Roman occupation. His Jewish mother’s name was Miriam, and His Jewish followers were named Yaakov and Shimon and Yehudah, among others. And He was the Messiah (Christ in Greek) because He was hailed as the long-awaited Saviour of the Jewish people and as the Savior of the whole world. He was born King of the Jews and died King of the Jews. And when He comes again, He is returning to Jerusalem.

To be a follower of Jesus means to repent, believe, learn from him and in his strength to apply the principles of what he did in our own lives. The situation he was born into was not unlike the one experienced in Israel, Myanmar, Yemen, Syria, Nigeria, Ukraine and many other places today. Here is a summary of some of the things Jesus did. Pondering over it will help answer that crucial question, “**What would Jesus do?**” You can find details and sources in the footnotes.

1. **Jesus suffered with the suffering people. He was compassionate and wept.**<sup>i</sup> He shed tears over Jerusalem because people did not believe his message of the Gospel (Injeel). Neither did they accept his deeds that were designed to bring them peace. Jesus prophesied this would bring about the destruction of their city and the nation. He asks his followers to weep too over those who do not accept his Gospel and suffer terribly, ultimately as a result of it.
2. **Jesus did not agree with plans of his disciples to destroy their enemies.** The dispute arose on the way to Jerusalem. A village in Samaria (near today’s Nāblus, Westbank) refused to give him hospitality, due to long standing, major religious differences.<sup>ii</sup>
3. **Jesus was not opposing political but religious leaders and followers, because his kingdom is not of this world.**<sup>iii</sup> Therefore, our conduct in the kingdoms of this world will determine our position in the kingdom of Jesus, once he establishes it at his second coming. Jesus only opposed religious leaders and followers who prevent people from being successful in his kingdom that is yet to

fully break into this world. This is further confirmed by the fact that among his followers were people of sharply opposing political persuasions. Simon the Zealot possibly used to belong to a group that was known as underground freedom fighters against the Romans. Matthew used to be a tax collector who collaborated with the Roman occupiers.<sup>iv</sup> In normal life they may well have hated and possibly stabbed each other. Jesus taught his followers new kingdom values. His focus resulted in lives that were changed from the inside out. Addressing the root cause of our problems will eventually affect all other parts of our lives, including our political views. Only Jesus enables us to love people who we would have hated in our "old lives."

- 4. Jesus did good deeds and proclaimed the good news of God, to repent and believe in him.<sup>v</sup>** Here is a summary of it: The eternal kingdom of God is where the story begins in Genesis, chapter 1 to 2, and where the story ends in Revelation chapter 21 to 22. It is where the relationship between God, humans and creation, and between humans and creation, is at peace, safe, sound, complete, right, just and good.

In between are currently the kingdoms of the world. These intruders are governed by belief systems, such as liberalism, socialism, communism, Islam, democracy, capitalism, colonialism, globalism and many more. All have common characteristics, like: broken relationships with God and one another, oppressors, oppressed,<sup>vi</sup> greed. They all have a beginning and will come to an end.

Here is how the kingdom of God breaks into the kingdoms of the world: In the Bible, also known as Torah, Zabur and Injeel, God has revealed Himself and His will as follows: He is absolutely Holy. All of us have failed to keep some of God's commandments, such as not to lie, steal, be greedy, proud, lust after women, etc.

The punishment for such selfish behaviour that brings dishonour upon God and people is physical death and eternal separation from Him in hell. God requires justice but also offers to be the justifier because he loves us.<sup>vii</sup> Therefore, he took the sentence for sin upon himself in Jesus and died on the cross for it.<sup>viii</sup> There he paid the ultimate price that we all deserved, but could never have paid ourselves. Afterwards He rose again from the dead on the third day.

On Christmas we celebrate the fact (not the exact date) that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He lived a sinless life, was suffering with the people, performed many miracles and taught his followers to be just. When it comes to the end time issue of the state of Israel, Christians have different opinions. Just like Islamic scholars who disagree on the nature and order of some events, Christian experts too differ regarding the end-time sequence and the meaning of Bible prophecy. Nevertheless, all Christians are called by the same Scriptures to treat everyone justly.

The Christian faith is unique in that Jesus has revealed God as a loving, perfect, heavenly Father who suffers with his children. Even those of us whose earthly fathers were disappointing, know how a perfect father should be. In all other faiths God is distant and absent because suffering is beneath him.

The Gospel announces the real king and the real kingdom. You and I are invited to pick sides and participate. Start by repenting and believing in the Jesus described here. Be prepared for suffering in your efforts to stand up for truth and bringing about justice. It is worth it. The best is yet to come!

- 5. Jesus told people to turn to God in repentance when confronted with the question why some people were suffering more than others.<sup>ix</sup>**

## 6. More “to do” teachings regarding the kingdoms (governments, states, leaders) of this world:

- Pray for them.<sup>x</sup> - Submit to them, as their task is to keep law and order. This will allow a peaceful life and the propagation of the Gospel. Obey God more without fearing them, if they act contrary to his commands.<sup>xi</sup>

### Summary:

In the current precarious times dominated by wars and rumours of wars, social media has made it easy to just follow the masses. Many feel compelled to hate, condemn, demonstrate, boycott businesses, even plot to kill others. What are followers of Jesus, practicing Christians, to do? Here is a summary of what Jesus would do, judging from what he did in very similar situations in the past. Let us do the same:

- Suffer, be compassionate and weep with the suffering.
- Love, in practical ways, instead of hate.
- Oppose religious rather than political leaders and followers.
- Share the Gospel.
- Turn towards God, not away from him, in times of chaos and unanswered questions.
- Pray for governments and leaders.
- Obey authorities unless they make you disobey the commandments of God.

For questions and comments find out more at:

<https://christianityexplained.net/>

Here is a four-minute video summary of the article above: <https://youtu.be/78kPDWI7gWQ>

### Sources and Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> 41 And when he (Jesus) drew near and saw the city (Jerusalem), he wept over it, 42 saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)

For other passages where Jesus wept see: Hebrews 5:7, John 11:35. See also Luke 23:27-30 where people are asked to weep over those who reject Jesus.

Every 28th December many churches pray particularly for innocent children who are being massacred in Gaza, Nigeria and in many other places in this world. <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/nigeria-attacks/>

28th December is known “as the Holy Innocents” in the book of Common Prayer. It dates back to the period of the reformation. In the calendar of the Anglican church, “Childermas” means “the service of the children”, remembering the children, massacred by King Herod in Bethlehem, two years after Christ was born. They were really the first martyrs for Christ. Similarly, Christmas on 25th December means “the service of Christ's birth.” Here is the background to that special day:

Matthew 2:13-18

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13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

This is what is prayed in the Anglican church and many other churches who follow the church calendar:

"We remember this day, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by the order of King Herod. Receive, we beseech thee, into the arms of thy mercy all innocent victims; and by thy great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish thy rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/holy-innocents/> <https://www.bcponline.org/>

ii 49 "Master," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." 51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them[b]?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village. (Luke 9)

Here is the context for that story found in the Injeel. The Samaritans were known as 'Cuthites' (2 Kings 17:24), aliens (2 Kings 17:18), who were taught to worship God. Later they built a rival temple on Gerizim. (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/luke/9-53.htm>) In the days of Jesus Samaritans were hated because they built a different temple. The disciples of Jesus wanted to punish them for their lack of hospitality. Jesus rebuked his followers for it.

iii ". . . 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" . . . 19 (Jesus replied) show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." 22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. (Matthew 22)

36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." 37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18)

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. . . .

25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. . . . (Matthew 23)

iv <https://overviewbible.com/simon-the-zealot/> <https://overviewbible.com/matthew-the-apostle/>

v Mark 1:14-15

vi For example: Dhimmis in Islam cannot preach the Gospel to Muslims anymore. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhimmi>

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Furthermore: Surah Al Taubah, 9:29 says that one of the reasons for the jizya tax is that the People of the Book 'acknowledge their subjection.' This is interpreted by the Ahmadiyya community as 'admitting the superior power of Muslims.' (see footnote here: <https://www.alislam.org/quran/view/?page=1150&region=E52>) How can such a humiliating status be reconciled with the idea they are not oppressed?

<sup>vii</sup> Exodus 3:7-10 Isaiah 59:7-16

<sup>viii</sup> John 1, Philipians 2

<sup>ix</sup> 13 1-5 About that time some people came up and told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed while they were at worship, mixing their blood with the blood of the sacrifices on the altar. Jesus responded, "Do you think those murdered Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die. And those eighteen in Jerusalem the other day, the ones crushed and killed when the Tower of Siloam collapsed and fell on them, do you think they were worse citizens than all other Jerusalemites? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die." (Luke 13)

<sup>x</sup> 2 Therefore I exhort first of all those supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. <sup>3</sup> For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (1 Timothy 2)

<sup>xi</sup> 13 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. (Romans 13)

<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (1 Peter 2)

<sup>27</sup> The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup> "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." <sup>29</sup> Peter and the other apostles replied: "**We must obey God rather than human beings!**" <sup>30</sup> The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. <sup>32</sup> We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (Acts 5)

<sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10)