

### 3. Formation of the Modern Palestinian Population (Gaza Focus)

- Before 1948: "Palestine" (including Gaza) was inhabited by Arabic-speaking Muslims, Arabic-speaking Christians and a small Jewish population.
- After 1948 (formation of Israel): Gaza came under Egyptian control.
- After 1967: After the Six-Day War, Israel took control of Gaza.
- After 2005: Israel withdrew its military and settlements, after which Gaza came under Palestinian administration.
- Since 2007: In 2007, Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip, where it remains the de facto governing authority. Gaza is populated almost entirely by Palestinians.
- Modern Political Development. The first political leader of the modern Palestinian people was Yasser Arafat (1929-2004). He first arrived in the Gaza Strip on July 1, 1994. After the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), the Palestinian Authority was established and governed Gaza and the West Bank, until they were voted out and forcibly removed from Gaza by Hamas.
- There was no sovereign state called "Palestine" before the 20th century.

### 4. Theological Perspectives

- No nation ultimately owns the land—God does (Ps 24:1).
- God's Covenant Promises to Israel. Gaza (and Jerusalem) goes back thousands of years since the time of King David (1000 BC). God's promise to Abraham and his descendant in Genesis 12,15,17, known as the Abrahamic Covenant, included the land of Canaan.
- Biblical Israel vs Modern Israel. Important distinction:
  - Biblical Israel → God's covenant people defined by faith (Rom 9:6).
  - Modern Israel (1948–present) → A political nation-state.Supporting Israel as God's covenant people means honouring God's faithfulness to His promises. Modern Israel as a political state is not the same as biblical Israel.
- A Balanced Christian Response:
  - Pray for the Peace of Israel and the Middle East (Ps 122:6).
  - Recognise God's covenant promises to Israel while practicing discernment about current events.
  - Our ultimate allegiance is to Christ's kingdom, not any earthly government. Our hope is not in nations, but in Christ.

### The Judgment Against Assyria (14:24–27)

- The Assyrian Empire was the dominant superpower of the 8th–7th centuries BC – it was brutal, ruthless, and feared throughout the ancient Near East. For Judah, Assyria was a real and terrifying threat:
  - Destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC (2 Kings 17).
  - Invaded Judah during Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings 18–19).
  - Blasphemed God and mocked His power (Isaiah 36).
- God swears an oath (v24) - emphasising absolute certainty.
  - God's plan will stand.
  - God's purpose will be fulfilled.
  - No power can overturn His decree.God does not merely predict history—He determines it.
- God Himself will act against Assyria (v25).
  - Not through Judah's army.
  - Not through alliances.
  - But through divine intervention.Fulfilment: *"The angel of the LORD.....smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand..."* (37:36; 2 Kgs 19:35). Judah was delivered without fighting. The Assyrian yoke was broken.
- God's judgment is not isolated – v26 reveals His global rule.
  - God governs all nations.
  - Empires rise and fall under His hand.
  - No nation acts independently of His will (Ps 46:6).
- God asks two rhetorical questions (v27): Who can cancel His plan? Who can turn back His hand? The answer is obvious: No one.
  - His will cannot be frustrated.
  - His hand cannot be restrained.
  - His purpose cannot be undone.God's authority is absolute and unchallenged (Ps 103:19).
- This passage shapes how we live today.
  - Trust His sovereignty - God is still on the throne.
  - Rest in His purpose - Even suffering is under His control.
  - Worship Him as King - He rules nations, history, and your life.
  - Humble Yourself Before Him - Those who resist God will be broken by the same sovereign hand.

## The Judgment Against Philistia (14:28–32)

The Philistines (Ancient People in the Bible) – see next page

- King Ahaz of Judah was a weak and unfaithful king (2 Kgs 16). Philistia had previously invaded Judah during his reign (2 Chron 28:18). Ahab's death gave them hope that Judah would become weaker. But God warns them not to rejoice. Philistia believed that the "rod" (likely an Assyrian ruler or oppressive power) was broken and the threat gone. But God warns: a "cockatrice" and "fiery flying serpent" will arise, meaning Assyria's future kings will be worse and more destructive. (Note: "Palestina" here is the KJV rendering of *Philistia*, not modern Palestine).
- Philistia had oppressed others, rejoiced at Judah's weakness, and exalted themselves. God's response to Philistia's pride (v30) - God's people: the poor will be fed and safe; Philistia: their "root" and "remnant" will be destroyed. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Prov 24:17–18; Jas 4:6).
- Judgment against Philistia is certain and unavoidable (v31): "*From the north*" = invading Assyrian armies. No city or defence will stand. There is no escape for Philistia. Only what is built on God will stand (Matt 7:24–25).
- The security of Zion (v32): she is founded by the LORD, secure, and a place of refuge for the humble. This contrasts with Philistia – fearful, collapsing, without refuge. For God's people, security is not found in power or alliances; it is found in God alone.
- A clear contrast:
  - The Danger of Pride and trusting circumstances - result: judgment.
  - The Assurance of God's People - Zion is founded by the LORD. The humble finds refuge in Him (Ps 103:19).History is HIS-story. Nations rise and fall, but the LORD reigns. Build your life on Him, and you will not be shaken.

## Philistines and Palestinians - Biblical & Historical Overview

### 1. Philistines vs Palestinians: Key Differences

- *The Philistines (Ancient People in the Bible)*
  - The Philistines were a people likely of Aegean origin (possibly linked to Greek cultures). Amos 9:7 - they came from *Caphthor*, often associated with Crete or another Aegean Island (cf Jer 47:4).
  - They settled in 5 main cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath (Josh 13:3; 1 Sam 6:17), along the SW coast of Judah in the region of Philistia.
  - The Philistines were a persistent enemy during the period of the Judges (Judg 10:7; 13-17). David defeated Goliath from Gath (1 Sam 17) and the Philistines repeatedly (2 Sam 5:17–25). He subdued them around 1000 BC (2 Sam 8:1).
  - The Philistines were part of the nations judged by God (Isa 14:28–32; Jer 47; Ezek 25:15–17; Amos 1:6–8). They gradually lost their identity through conquest (especially by Assyria and Babylon) and assimilation.
- *The Palestinians (Modern People)*
  - "Palestinians" refers to a modern population. They are:
    - Primarily Arabic-speaking; mostly Muslim, with a Christian minority.
    - Descended from various peoples who lived in the region over centuries. **The Palestinians did not descend from the Philistines.**

### 2. The Origin of the Name "Palestine"

- After Jewish revolts against Rome (Bar Kokba Revolt – 132-135 AD), the Roman Emperor renamed the province of Judea to "Syria Palaestina" around AD 135 to suppress Jewish identity. Palaestina is derived from Latin Palestina, referring to the Philistines, Israel's historical enemies, making the renaming an insult and a way to disconnect Jews from their ancestral land.
- "Palaestina" became a Roman administrative name, which later influenced the geographic term "Palestine." Under the Ottoman Empire (1517–1917), "Palestine" continued as a regional description (Arab, Christians, Jews). There was no independent political state called Palestine.
- The modern Palestinian identity developed mainly in the 20<sup>th</sup>C, when the Ottomans lost control and the region came under British administration known as the British Mandate for Palestine (1917-1948). During this period, several factors helped shape Palestinian identity and political leaders and the media began using the term "Palestinian" more intentionally.