

Zionism

in the
New Testament



At the time of writing this teaching letter, we are nearing the one-year commemoration of the Hamas terror attack on October 7 and the start of the ensuing war. Looking back, it is particularly tragic to see how the worst atrocity committed against the Jewish people since the Holocaust unleashed a tsunami of antisemitism instead of support and solidarity. However, those who stand so firmly against Israel refute the charge of antisemitism, claiming they are merely anti-Zionistic.

Zionism is the persuasion that the Jewish people have a right to their ancestral homeland, the biblical Land of Israel—in much the same way as the French people have a right to France and the Chinese to China. Anti-Zionism then is the belief that the Jewish people have no right to the biblical Land of Israel as their ancestral homeland, that the rebirth of the modern State of Israel was unjust and that Israel thus doesn't have a right to exist.

A great friend of Bridges for Peace, Rabbi Ari Abramowitz, once said, “Naturally, Jews focus on *Jewish* Zionism and Christians focus on *Christian* Zionism, but there's really one Zionism to focus on, and that's *biblical* Zionism.”

For Christians to be authentic biblical Zionists, we must be well versed in both the front and back of the Book. Christian scholars have studied the Old Testament extensively and compiled various resources in biblical support for the Jewish return to Zion and the Gentile role in that process. Since the New Testament could use closer inspection on the matter of Zionism, let's go on a short Bible exploration to search out Christian Zionism in its pages.

It's the Land of Israel

“Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel...” (Matt. 2:20a).

An angel of the Lord gave this instruction to Joseph, Jesus' (Yeshua's) father, as the family sheltered in Egypt. Take



note of where Joseph was directed to go—not “Palestine” but to *“the land of Israel.”* This provides Christian Zionists with heaven’s definition of the territory in the international spotlight.

Then consider Jesus, the Jewish exile, fleeing Herod’s murderous rampage against the baby boys of Bethlehem. Yet after Herod’s death, the family returns to Israel, presenting a prototype of Jesus’ people who would be driven out by the Romans, later to be returned by God in an era of Christian blessing and cooperation.

As Christian Zionists, we echo the angel’s message to Joseph when we exhort our fellow Christians to *“go to the land of Israel.”* A tour to Israel is not a vacation but a life-changing encounter with the God of Israel who is regathering His people to His land.

Many Christians arrive a tourist and depart a Zionist with a mission to serve the Jewish people as they return from exile. Several Christian Zionist organizations are now headquartered in Israel. Bridges for Peace is one of them. Over more than 50 years, thousands of volunteers from around the world have provided food, shelter, home supplies and much-needed moral support to needy Jews coming home.



His Earthly Family

“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’” (Matt. 25:40).

When Jesus returns as *“the King,”* He will call nations not individuals to account in His judgment. He won’t judge based on beliefs but on works, specifically about how the nations (plural, Gentiles) treated His nation whom He holds dear as *“His brethren.”*

The Christian Zionist plays a key role in determining his or her nation’s fate. Through our consistent biblical message to the nations and our holy actions toward the vulnerable of God’s nation, we set a standard of right conduct and inspire others to join us in the work of feeding the hungry, clothing the destitute and taking

in the stranger. Our duty becomes our honor to serve Jesus' earthly family.

Declaring the Shema

“Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”” (Mark 12:29–31).

Every Christian knows the priority Jesus places on loving the Lord and your neighbor, but are we aware of the context of the command? Jesus recited the prayer that is foremost on the heart and mind of every Jew—the *Shema*: *“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one”* (Deut. 6:4).

This is also the hallmark of the Christian Zionist: fulfilling Jesus' command to love in the context of declaring Israel's one, true, and living God. Sadly, Church fathers banned Christians from reciting the *Shema*, calling it “anti-Trinitarian.” How strange, considering how highly one person of the Trinity valued it. Christian Zionists correct that theology every time we declare Israel's God who is One, while loving our Jewish neighbors as ourselves.

All Things Tanakh

“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).

Both Jewish people and Christian Zionists uphold our founding document: the Bible. Jews call the Hebrew Scriptures the *Tanakh*, an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the Bible's three traditional subdivisions: *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.), *Nevi'im* (“Prophets”) and *Ketuvim* (“Writings”). Jesus called it the same thing, although it has been translated as the *“the Law of Moses*



and the Prophets and the Psalms.” The point is that Jesus affirmed its canonicity and authority when He declared that all things written in it must be fulfilled.

In Acts 3:21, Peter also preached about upholding “*all things*” of the Tanakh, while Paul professed to “...*believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets*” (Acts 24:14b). The “*all things*” include Gentiles who would someday help bring Israel home, comfort them and aid them in restoring Zion for God’s glory. The restoration is established in the Old Testament, affirmed in the New Testament and is now coming to fulfillment before our eyes.

Among Them, With Them

“You, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them...” (Rom. 11:17b).

The Church was not birthed to replace Israel but to join God’s cultivated Jewish olive tree by bringing in the wild Gentile branches for God’s miracle work of in-grafting, “*contrary to nature,*” as Paul explains the divine horticulture (Rom. 11:24).

Romans 11:31 teaches that “...*through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.*” It touched my heart deeply to realize that after centuries of my Christian forebears inflicting curses upon the Jewish people, I could be a vessel of God’s mercy for the healing of Jewish hearts.

Rejoicing with His People

“Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: ‘For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.’ And again he says: ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!’” (Rom. 15:8–10).

Paul’s exhortation comes from Deuteronomy 32:43 and informs us that “*His people*” Israel are rejoicing regardless



of their suffering, for God will provide *“atonement for His land and His people.”* God also commands Gentiles to rejoice with His people. What kind of Gentile might we expect to do the rejoicing? Christian Zionists naturally, especially as they make pilgrimage from the nations to join in the biblical feasts and other celebrations amid restored Jewish sovereignty in the Promised Land.

Eyes on Israel

“Observe Israel after the flesh...” (1 Cor. 10:18a).

Paul instructs Gentiles to learn from the nation of Israel. Sadly, some Church leaders led our heritage out of the illuminating Hebrew olive grove down the tunnel of Greek philosophy, Roman polity and Western conformity. The Church has suffered for this—Israel has suffered even more. The gap between us grew so cavernous that a “Christian” Europe hosted a Holocaust, and today, antisemitism is again at an all-time high.

A remnant of the Church, not unlike the remnant of Israel, has persisted, prayed and brought forth leaders who have helped the Church return to a place of learning alongside Israel. Bridges for Peace founder, Dr. G. Douglas Young, dared to study the Hebrew Scriptures with Jewish colleagues and saw that Christians would benefit from the rabbis’ wealth of biblical understanding. This led him to Zion—literally—where he founded the Institute of Holy Land Studies on Mt. Zion. The advent of Bridges for Peace followed as a means to carry Hebraic-rooted education out of Zion and to the nations.

Bridge-building

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Eph. 2:13–14).

Perhaps the plural “bridges” in Bridges for Peace was chosen to convey the two bridges referenced in this passage: first, the bridge between God and man; second, the bridge between



Jew and Gentile. Seeing both of these wounds healed was important enough to the Jewish apostles that they devoted much of their writings to the matter. They preached the Gospel of reconciliation between God and man while wrestling with the reality that Jews and Gentiles are destined for true fellowship.

Christian Zionists engage in closing both chasms through bridge-building efforts. Through a labor of love, Bridges for Peace volunteers focus on bridge two, the Jew–Gentile part. For those of us called to Zion, “building relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world” goes beyond our mission statement—it’s our passion.

All Israel, All Nations

“And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: ...Judah...Reuben...Gad...Asher...Naphtali...Manasseh...Simeon...Levi...Issachar...Zebulun...Joseph...Benjamin. After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Rev. 7:4–9).

It doesn’t take a Zionist to figure out that the twelve tribes mentioned in this Scripture are not the Church. While Replacement Theology teaches that Christians are the promised Israel instead of the Jews, Revelations 7 makes it clear that *“the children of Israel”* (4) have the *“seal of the living God”* (2). John sees all Israel represented in the Kingdom of Heaven! This is cause for praise to the living God, the God of Israel, for His covenantal keeping power.

After the apostle beholds the redeemed sons and daughters of Zion, he turns his gaze to the overwhelming spectacle of gathered nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. How great is God’s salvation, brought in through the Jews (John 4:22), to the Jew first and also to the Gentile! (Rom. 1:16).



Biblical Zionist

I first heard the term Christian Zionist at seminary from a lady who had served as a Bridges for Peace volunteer. Initially, I was put off by her claim because it seemed contradictory for a Zionist to have anything to do with peace. I had simply assumed a Zionist to be a radical Jew who hates Arabs.

I couldn't reconcile a Christian being a Zionist until I made the effort to get to know the real Israel, the real Jewish people and to study what God says on the matter. That's when I found that the key to being an authentic Christian Zionist is being a *biblical* one. Alongside our Jewish friends and colleagues, may we endeavor to live and serve worthy of God's call to Zion.

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Scripture from the New King James Version

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God's chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT)—*Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Nevi'im* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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