

## *Biblical and Theological Factors Affecting the Middle East Crisis*

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

### INTRODUCTION

- A. This outline I've provided is an expanded version of the one I distributed the last time I spoke on this subject. Here at the outset, I would like to highlight some of what I covered at that time to review key Bible texts that are necessary for us to remember and to understand regarding this matter, and to provide an important foundation for those who were not here at that previous class.
- B. We must be aware of, and develop the ability to distinguish between, truth and error in this issue. As A. C. Forrest, editor of the Canadian magazine, *The Observer*, has well-written, "Too many of us have been victimized by false propaganda, and suffered from imbalanced information... We have been victimized by faulty Biblical exposition and naïve understanding of prophecy."<sup>1</sup>
1. While explaining some of this false propaganda, the misunderstanding of many Christians, and referring to the fact that a considerable number of Palestinians are Christians, Rev. Rodney Koopmans observes, "[t]he irony here is that a family of people in this country [the United States] provide uncritical support for our country's provision of billions of dollars of aid for distant cousins, the Jews in Israel, while giving no regard for closer family members and their children, a family which for almost two thousand years has claimed the name of Christ as their own, but has been unrecognized and disregarded by others who later have also claimed the name of Christ. Their safety is left in the hands of God, while in the name of God, others plot their removal from their homeland and their destruction as a family. Ironic, not at all Christlike."<sup>2</sup>
  2. Thus, it is important for Christians, largely in the West—but in the rest of the world as well where an errant view of prophecy is held—to know that this view is very harmful to our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ and also to many others. One of the main purposes of this paper, and its class discussion, is to identify some of this harm, its extensiveness, and why it is wrong.
  3. Christians who are not from the Near and Middle East should also know that it is mystifying and highly disappointing to Palestinian and other Arab Christians, that this unbiblical and errant view of prophecy (*op cit.* below), which is so harmful, is even considered much less promoted, by fellow believers elsewhere in the world. This disappointment is devastatingly impactful to Arab Christian young people.

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<sup>1</sup> A. C. Forrest, "Myths about the Middle East," *The Middle East Newsletter*, April 1969, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney J. Koopmans, "Tears for Jerusalem," *The City Gate*, Spring 1992, p. 11.

They are so deeply disturbed by this claim made by many Western Christians, that the current state of Israel and its policies fulfill Biblical prophecy, that they have difficulty accepting the credibility of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> That is very serious, and it also shows how important are the study of Christian theology and Biblical hermeneutics, the practice of Scripture interpretation!

Further, these young Arab Christians feel that what “Christian nations have done against Arabs’ makes the Christian faith seem [to them as] irrelevant. And they ‘doubt both the ability and readiness of Christian forces in the world to contribute significantly toward the achievement of justice and peace.’”<sup>4</sup> This is especially mystifying to them in the light of Deuteronomy 16:20 (“justice, and only justice, you shall pursue” [NRSV]) and the many related Bible passages, to say nothing about the egregious personal suffering that such errant interpretation and theology have inflicted upon them and hinder our Lord’s Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19)

Not just young people but church leaders observe the same developments. The NCCC report states that “Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant church representatives with whom we spoke were courteous and forbearing, but also utterly frank in voicing their disappointment and disillusionment that Christians of the West, especially those in the United States, have not been (according to their understanding of the matter) more vigorous in pursuit of justice.”<sup>5</sup>

C. Since the pro-Israeli literature makes a big point, if not their major one, of basing their claim to the land on the prophetic promises of God in the Bible, it is absolutely essential that we examine the promises God made in his Word to see if he is being quoted correctly.

- In fact, that is necessary for us to do **anytime anyone** uses the Bible to support a claim. People often do that and make the Bible say something just the opposite of what God wills and what his Word says!

D. I want you also to know that no one is more aware than I of the fact that much more could be said than we will cover in this document and in this class and the one next week.

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<sup>3</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” *The Presbyterian Outlook*, September 30, 1968, p. 5. This article is a report of, and with extensive quotes from, a detailed report by a deputation team authorized by the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC) to investigate the Arab-Israeli conflict and how it has impacted and been affected by the churches in the region and elsewhere in the world. In their investigation, “they conferred with officials and citizenry of every stripe” (p. 5) in order to ascertain the truth. For those of us who are concerned with the considerable errors that have been made by the NCCC, we need to keep in mind that they are not wrong about everything. Here is one issue on which we need to appreciate their important contribution.

<sup>4</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 5.

- That is true just of the Biblical and theological material alone, but there are other important related subjects for us to study. We will consider some of those subjects in what follows.
- E. Furthermore, I am not unrealistic. Indeed, any student of the Bible and Reformation theology’s understanding of the effect of sin on the unregenerate mind (i.e., those who have not received the new nature from the Holy Spirit) is most realistic.
- The suggestions for action that I’m recommending are not given with the expectation of providing a heaven on earth. Neither they nor any others will stop the fighting permanently. They are offered as a means of bringing a measure of justice and a degree of peace—for brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering greatly (read what follows) and for the others involved, who also bear God’s image and whom he wants to be in his kingdom (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:4)—as much as possible in a world in which our Lord himself told us that before he returns there will be “wars and rumors of wars.” (Matthew 24:6)
- F. I also want in this session and next week to provide much opportunity for discussion. So we will only attempt to go partway through this document today; we’ll take up the rest next week. This is one of those profound subjects that defy the preferences of many who have what I call a “bumper sticker mentality in the sound bite age.” It is a complex subject, and we need to dialogue about it in order to integrate its many facets into a helpful understanding.
- G. Let us now begin with the Biblical teaching on who God’s people are and his purposes for them, which constitute key Biblical and theological factors affecting the Middle East crisis that are often not known or misunderstood.
- I. The Bible reveals God establishing a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17), in and through whose descendants, i.e., believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, he will accomplish his purposes. (Galatians 3:29)
- A. This covenant is what scholars in the field of Biblical literature call a major motif, or theme, that is observed throughout the whole Bible. The covenant is the key to understanding the main teaching of the Bible.
  - B. The purpose of the covenant is for function not status. This fundamental distinction was forgotten by most of Old Testament Israel.
    - 1. God called his covenant people to communicate to the whole world in word and in deed his plan of salvation for everyone, whereby those from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9; cf. Genesis 12:1-3), that is, from every race, could be made fit for fellowship

with God, who, while graciously being all love (1 John 4:8), is also just (Deuteronomy 32:4) and not only holy but holy, holy, holy. (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8)

2. Though the church sometimes has members and attendees who are spiritual infants in elementary stages of sanctification,<sup>6</sup> not yet mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-24), and not treating all others of every race in a loving Christlike manner, it is clear in this passage and throughout the whole Bible, that such behavior does not please God and is not in accord with his will.
  - *Thus, the church can never rightly be accused of “systemic racism” or of being inherently racist. Clearly, God has called the church to lovingly reach out to all people and invite them into his kingdom.*
  - a. That reality is also true individually as well as corporately. I know and have worked with many Christians of every color who are not at all racist. Christian missionaries of every color are called by God to live in lands as far as half the world away from where they were born and raised and where their parents, other family members, and beloved friends continue to live. If they were racists, what would explain their leaving these loved ones to live with another race? It certainly is not for money. Believe them when they explain they are responding to their call, which is part of the great commission of the Lord to “go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19) One of the nicest compliments I’ve ever received, occurred after teaching a course for Chinese students on an extended trip to Asia. Having packed the luggage in the car, a considerable number of those in the class and I were exchanging warm farewell wishes when one of the students said, “Dr. Seely, we observe that though you are white on the outside, you are yellow on the inside.” That loving comment still makes my eyes water. Would any of those scholars say, “All white people are racist?” Or, would they say that about all Christians? Of course not.
  - b. Those who are members of a church congregation and in good standing, i.e., who are faithful in worship and in other ways living according to God’s Word and will, know that the church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27-28 *et al.*) and has been called to reach out to the whole world. The original Old (e.g., Deuteronomy 9:10

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<sup>6</sup> Sanctification is the term in the Bible and Christian theology that means growth in holiness, maturing in Christ. For more on the meaning of this important word and the covenant, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

[LXX<sup>7</sup>]) and New Testament Greek word for church is ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) > ἐκ (*ek*), out of + καλέω (*kaleō*), to call, i.e., those who have been called out to serve God, who throughout the Bible reveals that he wants all people to be in his kingdom and has called the church to bring the good news of God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ (John 14:6, who himself was a man of color as well as divine), who lived, suffered, died, and was resurrected for the sake of everyone in the world who will believe in and follow him. (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15; Galatians 3:26-29; Revelation 21:22-27)

- C. An essential continuity exists between the covenant begun with Abraham in the Old Testament and the new covenant in and through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
1. The purpose of Abraham’s calling (vocation) and mission, which is still that of his descendants in the new covenant, is stated in rudimentary form in Genesis 12:1-4.
  2. Read Genesis 17:1-8 in the light of Galatians 3:26-29. In Genesis 17:4-7 we see a glimpse of God’s plan and why the church is New Testament Israel. (Cf. also Galatians 6:16)
  3. God fulfilled his original intention to bless all nations (Genesis 12:3), and to include persons of “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9) when Jesus instituted the new covenant at his Last Supper, as he said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)
    - a. Jesus here instituted the new covenant, i.e., the new form of the ancient covenant made with Abraham, which God revealed to the Prophet Jeremiah. (31:31-33)
    - b. Notice that this passage from Jeremiah is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-13. The context indicates that the “house of Israel and...the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31), referring to the faithful remnant (Isaiah 10:20-21; 37:32; Jeremiah 23:3; 31:7; 50:20; Joel 2:32; Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18; Zephaniah 3:13; Acts 15:17; Romans 9:27; 11:5), are included now the church in and of Jesus Christ.

<sup>31</sup> “The time is coming,” declares the LORD,  
 “when I will make a new covenant

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<sup>7</sup> The Old Testament (OT) was originally written in Hebrew. About 250 B. C., when the Greek empire was dominating the Near and Middle East, and the lingua franca was Greek, the OT was translated into Greek; it is called the Septuagint, abbreviated LXX. It was the translation used by Jesus and the early church.

with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah.  
<sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their forefathers  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to them,”

declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel  
after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

<sup>34</sup> No longer will a man teach his neighbor,  
or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,”

declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more.”

- 1) The essential unity of the covenant throughout the Old and the New Testaments is seen clearly in the Greek of both the Old and the New. In the references to the new covenant in the New Testament, the Greek word for new, is usually *καίνος* (*kainos*). The word *kainos* means new in nature or quality, that is, renewed, not new in time or origin, i.e., brand new, which is designated by another Greek word *νέος* (*neos*). See also these passages: Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8 (quoting Jeremiah 31:31 [38:31 in the Septuagint]); 8:13; 9:15. The word *neos* signifies something that was not there before in contrast to *kainos*, which means “different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attraction.”<sup>8</sup> That which is *kainos* is new in its essence, not in its chronology; or, one can say, it is essentially new, not chronologically new.
- 2) What this means, explains the author of Hebrews in verse 8:13 is that “[b]y calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.”

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<sup>8</sup> See Johannes Behm, “Kainos” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 447 ff.

- 3) Yet the two covenants have continuity in the person of Jesus Christ, through the identification with whom by faith his followers are Abraham's descendants. As the Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (3:29)
4. Compare Deuteronomy 7:6 with 1 Peter 2:9. God's original mission continues but now in, through, and with the promised Messiah who has come, Christ Jesus.
  - "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deuteronomy 7:6)
  - "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)
5. The covenant promise is through Isaac; therefore, [Islam is not an Abrahamic religion](#), but Ishmael, one of the ancestors, indeed the primogenitor, of the Arabs, is also cared for by God. (Genesis 21:12-21; Romans 9:7; Hebrews 11:17-20) Nevertheless, they, as all other people on earth, must come to God through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6)
6. Galatians 3:26-29 and 6:16 are just two passages which clearly indicate the essential unity of the old and the new covenant.
  - "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

Thus, all people who believe in and follow Jesus Christ, both those with a Jewish background and those with a non-Jewish background, are now one in Christ and together form his church, the visible manifestation of the new covenant.

- "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. <sup>16</sup>Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:15-16)

- After reviewing the information above, guess which Greek word for new in the term “new creation” the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write in verse 15. Yes, *kainos*!

CONTEMPLATE AND TALK WITH OTHERS about the implications of that profound word choice.

7. Not flesh, blood, and genes but faith, and maturing obedience that demonstrates the genuineness of that saving faith, indicate who are Abraham’s descendants and heirs of the promise. (Romans 4; 9:6-8) What is that faith? Faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord (John 14:6; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-10) is what saves us, but the Lord expects true faith to issue forth in concomitant and confirming deeds. (Matthew 7:15-23; 25:31-46; James 2:14-26)
8. God has not abandoned the Jews, and we must never disrespect them or become arrogant (Romans 11:20). They are the first people to whom he chose to reveal himself, his plan of redemption for all his creation, and through whom he would bring into his covenant those of us from “every nation, tribe, people and language.” (Revelation 7:9; cf. Genesis 12:3) Yet they, as all others, must come to God the Father through Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son. (John 14:6; 3:16; Romans 10-11) While it is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings all people to faith in Christ, solely humanly speaking, Jewish people will respond more to speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) than to arrogance, disrespect, and rejection. Who doesn’t?
  - a. But neither are the Jews who reject Christ Jesus still the covenant community or heirs of God’s promise to Abraham. As Jesus told the Jewish leaders, “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” (Matthew 21:43. See the context in 21:33-46; cf. Deuteronomy 28; 1 Kings 9:1-9; Acts 3:18-23. Notice v. 23, ““Anyone who does not listen to him [Jesus] will be completely cut off from his people.””) The people of God now are the church of Jesus Christ, the new covenant community, prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-33; cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10; Titus 2:14).
- 1) But be very careful: Not everyone who calls him or herself a Christian and claims to believe in Jesus, is so necessarily. Many are false prophets. Consider for now just these passages:
  - Jesus said, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup>By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad

fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

<sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:15-23)

- “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup>nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
- “But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. <sup>19</sup>You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:18-19)

2) However, note well that these passages do not teach the unbiblical concept of works righteousness. Our works, good deeds, while necessary, by themselves do not save us. The above passages indicate clearly that those who have the true faith in Jesus, whereby God credits to them Jesus’ righteousness due to their faith (Romans 4), demonstrate the genuineness of that faith in concomitant deeds. The context of these Scripture passages, indeed the whole Bible, indicates that in this age true believers also will sin, and those who repent (meaning not only regretting but resolving to not repeat the sin) will receive God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Thus, the sins Paul lists in the 1 Corinthians 6:9ff. passage, are forgivable IF they are repented and not repeated. People who profess faith and continue to regularly repeat evil are the ones who are being referred to in these passages. The Holy Spirit’s inspiration guiding what Paul wrote was addressing a sinful and evil lifestyle of continual behavior in the regular practice of these sins.

- 3) Similarly, believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, who are truly trying to obey and repent when they do sin, redoubling their efforts to obey, need not fear their salvation. See the entirety of 1 John and the rest of God's Word for assurance.
- b. In the words of medical missionary Dr. Donald Bosch, who lived in the Middle East for 17 years as a surgeon in the American Mission Hospitals of the Arabian Gulf, and Dr. Eugene Osterhaven, Western Theological Seminary professor of systematic theology, the Jewish people as such "are no more the covenant community than any other group unless and until they accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Then they, like other believers, become a part of the fellowship of the people of God."<sup>9</sup>
- D. In the Old Testament, the beginning government of Israel was a theocracy and distinct from government in the age of the New Covenant. (Judges 8:22-23; 1 Samuel 8:1-9; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4)
1. It was God's desire to be Israel's king, and he was at first through the time of the judges to the time of the judge and prophet, Samuel, but God accommodated his desire to his people's request for a human king.
    - a. God promised David (2 Samuel 7:16) and Solomon (1 Kings 9:4-5) that their throne would be established forever. But that promise was conditioned on obedience. (1 Kings 9:4,6; Deuteronomy 28)
    - b. Nevertheless, God fulfilled his promise, in spite of Israel's disobedience, through the New Covenant in David's and Solomon's descendant, Jesus the Christ, whose kingship is forever. (Matthew 1:6-16; Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:33; 2 Peter 1:11)
  2. Some people point mistakenly to the conquest of the land under Joshua as a justification for the current state of Israel taking Palestinian land.
    - a. First, God can do according to his will with his land; it's all his—as is the whole heavens and the earth—He created them all and is thus the owner. A human analogy clarifies. If you make something you not only own it, but with ownership comes privilege; you can decide what to do with it, including loaning or giving it to someone else, for a period of time or permanently, and with stipulations—all of which are part of the covenant.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *The Church Herald*, 4/11/69, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> For further very important information on the covenant God made with Abraham, see the PowerPoint, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology](#), the [Bible Digest Notebook](#), and other documents on my free and secure [WordPress Website](#). On the homepage, use the Search bar to enter any word or term you want to access, e.g., covenant, and the relevant documents will immediately appear. Copyright © 1999, 2001, 2011, 2017, 2022, 2023 by Edward D. Seely. Permission is granted to use this paper, without charge and without changing the text, for Christian education and other Christian ministries worldwide. 10

- b. Second, God had a plan, always good for he is all good, a good plan for giving the land of the Canaanites to his chosen people, the Israelites.
3. In addition to other Bible texts cited below, key differences between Old Testament Israel and the current state of Israel involve the former being a theocracy where God revealed his will to leaders he raised up, wherein he directed them in certain ways to accomplish his purposes for that period of time. Joshua's conquering of the land God promised to Abraham was to accomplish spiritual objectives for that time, namely the spiritual nurture of his covenant people (Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 7:16) and his judgment on the evil of the pagan peoples inhabiting the land. (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-28) Doing so was to accomplish his plan of redeeming his creation, including all people (1 Timothy 2:4), the plan he explained in an elementary form throughout the Old Testament, beginning all the way back in Genesis 3:15, immediately after Satan-inspired human sin corrupted God's perfect creation, which the message of the Bible reveals, he is in the process of restoring. The most important part of that restoration has been done in Christ Jesus' first coming, and it will be completed in his second coming.
  4. The Israeli (not the Biblical term, Israelite) government today is secular and makes no claim to be a theocracy. In fact, freedom of religion in the current state of Israel includes the freedom even to not believe,<sup>11</sup> not at all what Abraham and his descendants covenanted with God. (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4)

II. God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants was conditional on Israel's obedience.

- A. This key point is omitted in and contradicted by pro-Zionist (*op cit.*) literature. Since they appeal to the Bible to support their conclusions, it is essential that we understand what the Bible actually says on this and related matters.
- B. The promise in Genesis 17:8 is conditional on the Israelites' obeying the LORD their God and observing the commands and decrees he gave them. (See also Leviticus 18:24-28, Deuteronomy 28:25, 58, 63-68; 30:16-18; Joshua 23:14-16; 1 Kings 9:1-9; Jeremiah 18:1-9.)
  1. When Israel disobeyed and God cut off Israel from the land temporarily (for 70 years), he brought Israel back as he had promised (Jeremiah

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<sup>11</sup> Shimon Shetreet, "[Human Rights in Israel: Freedom of Religion](#)," Jewish Virtual Library. (Accessed 12/12/2022)

16:10-15; 29:10-14), literally fulfilling the prophecy in the return from Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel and Joshua (536 BC) and under Ezra (458 BC),<sup>12</sup> even though many Jews chose not to return and whose descendants still live in these same parts of the world, e.g., Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, though many in recent times have been leaving if they can, due to the Muslims' harsh treatment of the Jews in those lands since the 1948 establishment of the current state of Israel.<sup>13</sup>

2. Ultimately, however, God has revealed that the final restoration of the land will take place when Jesus returns in his second coming. Here we must make note of the unique features of prophetic writing in the Bible.
  - a. In the scholarly literature in the field of Biblical interpretation (called hermeneutics, from the Greek, ἐρμηνεύω [hermēneuō], to interpret), we learn of a very important principle that helps us understand passages written by the prophets. This hermeneutical principle is called the principle of prophetic foreshortening, or the prophetic perspective. More commonly, it is called the principle of near and far fulfillment.

Using this principle, we observe the prophets writing about coming events that fulfill God's prophetic Word in the near and far future without distinguishing between them, i.e., without indicating which events will occur in the short term and which will take place much later. For example, prophets revealing the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian captivity (cf. Isaiah 48:20-53:12) use terms that pertain in a limited way to what will be occurring before very long, but those terms also pertain to what will take place in the complete fulfillment of Israel's restoration, which will occur in the Messianic age, the inauguration of which is already here, beginning at Jesus' first coming, but which will be completed in the latter part of the Messianic age yet to come when Jesus returns in his second coming.

We see in Isaiah 11 another example of prophetic foreshortening. Verses 1-3a refer to the first coming of the Messiah and are fulfilled in Jesus' first advent. Verses 3b-9 refer to Jesus' second advent/coming that will occur at the end of the age, and include the resurrection of the dead and those still living, all of whom will receive resurrection bodies. All this will be followed by the final judgment and the new heaven and the new earth. In this passage, the prophet Isaiah doesn't indicate that there are two distinct though related periods of time in this prophecy, and he does not make a differentiation between the

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Ezra 1-2, 8; Nehemiah 2, 5-13.

<sup>13</sup> "The Jews in the Arab World," *Time*, February 7, 1969. Jews have entirely left Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Messiah's first and second coming. God revealed to his prophets only what the people could understand and what he wanted them to focus on at that point of time in their spiritual development in order to equip them for their mission in his plan of redemption.<sup>14</sup>

- b. While the prophets wrote in terms the people could understand, in the light of later revelation we understand much more. Notice the expansion of our understanding of the land the meek inherit as described in Psalm 37:11 in what Jesus says in Matthew 5:5.
  - c. The Bible does not teach that Christ will reign in Israel during a literal 1,000 year period, which some call the Millennium. Another hermeneutical principle helps us understand this passage: literary genre or style. The book of Revelation is written in the literary genre called apocalyptic, which is highly symbolic. In the one chapter of the Bible, Revelation 20, which speaks of a 1,000 year reign of Christ and his believers, the number 1,000 is properly to be interpreted symbolically and is seen as referring to the Lord's reign in heaven that is going on now.<sup>15</sup>
  - d. Another outstanding theologian, the late Albertus Pieters, states, "Since the Christian church is now the seed of Abraham, under the New Covenant all the promises of God to his people must be understood as her heritage, and all the prophecies concerning Israel not yet fulfilled and still to be fulfilled must be fulfilled in her; leaving nothing at all of either promise or prophecy for those who are merely descendants of Abraham after the flesh."<sup>16</sup>
3. Therefore, in the light of Genesis 17:8-9, 1 Kings 9, and many related Bible passages, we see that Israel ignored God's Word, thus (with the exception of a small remnant) abandoning their high and holy calling to bring the good news of God's plan of redemption designed for people of every nation, resulting in God doing what he had promised.
- "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, <sup>7</sup>then I will cut off Israel from the land I have

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<sup>14</sup> For more on hermeneutics and the end times, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#). Use the Find feature to locate specific topics, such as hermeneutics and eschatology (the Biblical teaching pertaining to the end times).

<sup>15</sup> For an excellent interpretation and explanation of the relevant Biblical texts, see Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 235. See also my paper, "[Dispensationalists and Dispensational Premillennialism](#)," on the meaning of the 1000 years.

<sup>16</sup> Albertus Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), p. 121.

given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples....” (1 Kings 9:6-7)

- Quite significantly, contemporary ultra-Orthodox Jews such as Mea Shearim (*op cit.* below) readily admit that reality, and its application, that the current state of Israel is not a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

Here we see that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of land or of political rule in this era. It is the Lord’s rule in his people’s hearts and minds. (Luke 17:21; John 4:21-26) Jesus clearly said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” (18:36)

- C. As we have just seen, the continued existence of the temple was also contingent on Israel’s obedience. (1 Kings 9:1-9, esp. vss. 6-9)
    - 1. In John 2:19, Jesus teaches that in the new covenant his followers meet God in a new place, and that new place will be neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria. (John 4:21-24)
    - 2. The new temple is in the Body of Christ, the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16 [corporately] and 1 Corinthians 6:19 [individually]).<sup>17</sup>
    - 3. A physical temple is no longer needed and will not be in the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:22), for sacrifices are no longer needed. Jesus has performed the once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26) that enables all who believe to be credited with his righteousness (Romans 4), which alone permits access into the very presence of God.
  - D. Even many modern Jewish interpreters of the Bible reject the claim that the contemporary state of Israel is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, e.g., Elmer Berger, *Israel: Covenant Community or National State* (The Netherlands: University of Leiden Press).
- III. With regard to the Bible, we must acknowledge the following about the current state of Israel.
- A. The Israel of today is not an extension of or connected with Old Testament Israel; neither is it a fulfillment of prophecies in the Bible. There is no Biblical support for the current state of Israel.

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<sup>17</sup> For further information and inspiration on these two words, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

- B. We should lament the injustices done in its institution. See the sections in this paper which follow.
- C. Justification for its existence has to come from sources other than the Bible.
- D. The current state of Israel is the result of actions motivated by the pain of persecution, a sense of guilt on the part of some (including those involved directly or indirectly with the Jewish Holocaust), and political expediency on the part of people who were ignorant of the Bible and others who interpreted it contrary to the above Scripture texts.
  1. Christian millenarianism, with its peculiar view of prophecy,<sup>18</sup> grew in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at the same time as European powers, especially Great Britain and France, were grappling with a decision as to how to resolve the fallout of the breakup of the Turkish empire.
  2. Zionism is the movement largely responsible for the modern state of Israel. The name is based on the mountain, or high hill, called Zion, which is in Jerusalem and on which was the site of the temple. By the literary figure of metonymy, the term Zion came to refer to Jerusalem, and by further extension to the international movement that began in order to establish a place to live for Jewish people, which soon developed into an organized effort to build a modern state of Israel on the land of Old Testament Israel that would be a homeland for Jewish people. It gained special impetus following the Jewish Holocaust during World War II in order to prevent a recurrence of that egregiously unjust persecution of Jewish people.

The Jewish Holocaust, during which 6,000,000 Jewish people were put to death unjustly, should never be minimized. Nevertheless, the adjective, Jewish, should always be used with the term Holocaust; the term Holocaust should never be used without an adjective, which would be to indicate, especially with the definite article, that only one Holocaust has occurred. In fact, Christians have been in ongoing holocausts, including at the same time the Jews were in their Holocaust. Depending on which study one reads, Stalin alone killed 40,000,000 to 60,000,000 Christians, thus as many as 10 times as many Christians as Jews were killed at that time, just in the USSR. That is an egregious Christian Holocaust! Moreover, more Christians have been martyred in the last 100 years than in all the previous 20 centuries combined. Over 100 Christians per week are killed worldwide; 16 Christians are killed per day.<sup>19</sup> Open Doors, a

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<sup>18</sup> See the paper, "[Dispensationalists and Dispensational Premillennialism](#)" and the related sections in [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

<sup>19</sup> Jay Sekulow, American Center for Law and Justice update, February 23, 2022.

global organization that serves persecuted Christians, publishes a World Watch List. There are now fifty countries on the current watch list that have been identified as being especially dangerous for Christians.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we must also never forget the Christian Holocaust—which continues—nor forget to pray for our many, many brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing horrible and very grim suffering!

- a. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an Austrian Jewish writer and the father of modern Zionism, experienced persecution himself and saw others persecuted because of their Jewish faith. He longed for and wrote about the establishment of a homeland for Jews.
- b. One of Hertzl’s followers, Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Jewish chemist, attained high office in the British government. He influenced the passing of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which “viewed with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” but never specified precisely what would constitute that “national home.” In subsequent policy statements the British tried to appease Arabs and Jews while at the same time advancing their own political ends.
- c. The British occupied Palestine in Post World War I times, and beginning in 1918, there were 56,000 Jews living there.
  - 1) When they left in 1948 the Jewish population had grown significantly to 650,000 (33% of the total population).
  - 2) By 1939 the British Government realized the contradictions and injustices inherent in the Balfour Declaration; by then they believed it was too late to turn back.
- d. Post World War II Western leaders saw the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as a good way to provide restitution to the Jews for their horrific suffering in the Hitler years. As the NCCC investigation concluded in its report, “Western nations, out of a sense of guilt for the persecution of Jews in Europe, created the State of Israel, requiring the eviction of Arabs from their homes. Israel, permitted to ignore U.N. resolutions for justice to the dispossessed, has enlarged and consolidated its position. Westerners backed Israel in the Six-Day War. Since then, as since 1948, the U.S. has virtually paralyzed U.N. remedial action by its non-support.”<sup>21</sup> Here we see another of the

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<sup>20</sup> John Stonestreet and Roberto Rivera, *Breakpoint Daily* from the Colson Center, January 26, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 5.

many reasons why Biblical theology is so vitally important and another of the many serious effects of unbiblical theology.<sup>22</sup>

3. However, considerable opposition to the Zionist movement developed. Significantly, not all Jewish people signed on to the movement, and some, in particular ultra-Orthodox Jews such as Mea Shearim, an enclave/neighborhood in Jerusalem, are strongly opposed to Zionism, viewing it as “the scourge of God. They believe the Jews were exiled from Israel for violating God’s laws but with the stipulation that if they honored God’s will and commandments, the Holy Land would be returned to them. We sinned and we are exiled not because we lack tanks and aircraft. We must remain exiled until the era of the Messiah.”<sup>23</sup>
  - a. While correct about why God exiled them, they fail to see that the Messiah, Christ Jesus, has already come, and that the prophecies of his (first) coming were never to rout the Romans and establish a political rule here on earth in this age, a point Christian dispensationalists also need to take into account.
  - b. Furthermore, when those in opposition to Jewish Zionism say they must remain exiled until the era of the Messiah, they are not referring to Jesus’ Second Coming.<sup>24</sup>
4. Arab relations with Jews in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East were remarkably good prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many Jewish ultra-Orthodox, such as the late leader, Rabbi Moshe Hirsch, advocate union with an independent Palestine. Hirsch said, “Orthodox Jews had lived with Palestinians in peace long before the Zionist state” made them enemies “in the Zionist lust for power.”<sup>25</sup>
5. Arabs perceived the establishment of the current state of Israel as another effort in the long history of foreigners attempting to control them. Arabs reasoned that if restitution were needed for the Jews, why should Arab land be given them? Why should that restitution not more justly come from Germany and other countries which engaged in injustices to the Jews?

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<sup>22</sup> For more of these reasons and effects, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

<sup>23</sup> Uli Schmetzer, “Jewish sect envisages new state,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 6, 1988, Sec.1, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> For more on Jesus’ First Coming and his Second Coming, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

<sup>25</sup> Uli Schmetzer, “Jewish sect envisages new state,” p. 5.

6. The establishment of the modern state of Israel initiated many injustices. To cite just a few:
  - a. The Partition Resolution of the United Nations, to which the British turned over the whole matter in 1947, gave the new State of Israel 56.47 percent of the total area of Palestine, even though Jews only owned ten percent of the land at that time. The Arabs were given 42.88 percent of the land, and the International Zone of Jerusalem 0.65 percent. The UN gave away land it was not theirs to give.
  - b. All the above was done without Arab approval. Whole villages, including Emmaus, Beit Nuba, and Yalu, were bulldozed out of existence.<sup>26</sup>

How would you feel, if people came to your home and property right now, evicted you, took what was yours without considering you and your family at all, and moved you to a crowded location like the Gaza Strip which is crime ridden; exceedingly dangerous, especially for women; has high unemployment, resulting in the majority living below the poverty line; severe lack of sanitation; unjust rates for Palestinians who do have access to some utilities; rationing; harsh curfews; limited access to routine medical care; unjust treatment by the Israeli military; and other inhuman conditions?<sup>27</sup> Unsurprisingly, violence is rising in the occupied territories.<sup>28</sup>

- c. The Arabs were deprived of their homes and farms, forced into unpleasant refugee camps, and denied the capital to start a new life in a strange land.
- d. The placement of over one million Jewish refugees in Palestine resulted in the uprooting of over one million Arabs—not only Muslims but also Christians—without adequate compensation and often by force including terrorism as psychological warfare. We must keep in mind that many of the Palestinians who are being treated unjustly are Christians.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Rod Koopmans, “A Land of Broken Promises,” *The Church Herald*, June 1992, pp. 17-19.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Lee, “Biden faces quandary with new Netanyahu government,” *The Associated Press, Reporter-Herald*, January 8, 2023, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Yohanna Katanacho, “Christian Palestinian Arabs: Spreading Hope in the Middle East,” *In the Gap: John Stott Ministries Newsletter*, Fall 2004. Katanacho explains, “These Christians are shaped by...diverse histories, beliefs and traditions, but generally they can be placed into four classifications: Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, [Roman] Catholic and Protestant.”

Ironically, and hypocritically, the Israelis are committing against the Arabs punishments against civilians, some even worse, than they themselves experienced in the Jewish Holocaust. “The Geneva Convention outlaws collective punishment against civilians—a favorite Nazi trick in occupied Europe—and the destruction of civilian property even in wartime.”<sup>30</sup>

- e. Following Israel’s takeover of Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967, it annexed the city and attached to it 44 square miles of Arab land. This land was taken from 28 Arab villages. Katanacho adds, “As a result of the establishment of the modern Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees and lost their precious olive trees, vine gardens and ancestral homes. More than 400 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed and more than 50,000 Christians became refugees.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the enmity from this war determines the relationship between these two peoples to the present day. Israeli Jews are still looking for security and Palestinians are still seeking justice. Neither is having peace.”<sup>32</sup>
- f. Consider some of the many ongoing illustrations of injustice to the Palestinians as a result of the land issue, which we looked at closely last time, but recall these key points:
  - 1) A major concern of Israel since 1967 has been to keep a Jewish majority in Jerusalem. To do so, housing quotas have been set up to work toward encouraging, and in many cases forcing, Arabs to leave with no possibility of returning. This policy leads to massive overcrowding in Arab neighborhoods.
  - 2) A policy of racial quotas has been implemented, which places Arabs in extremely difficult circumstances. If they live outside the city limits, they lose their “residency card” necessary for employment, and they cannot return to live and/or work in Jerusalem. If they want to build on land their family has owned, in many cases for many generations, they cannot obtain building permits.

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<sup>30</sup> A. C. Forrest, “Harsh Life Under The Israeli Boot,” *The Church Herald*, January 31, 1969, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Yet, the number of Christians in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory is declining significantly, largely due to unjust and oppressive Israeli political and economic policies and practices. “According to the *Afro-Palestine Newswire Service*, indigenous Christian Palestinians once constituted over 19 per cent of the population of historic Palestine, but number less than two per cent today, as the Arab-Israeli conflict has caused the majority of Palestinian Christians to leave their homeland.” [“Christian population in Palestine declining due to Israeli occupation,”](#) MEMO (Middle East Monitor), October 21, 2019. ““We were subjected to such pressures we couldn’t stand it any longer,” I was told by Syrian Presbyterians who had recently come to Damascus as refugees.” A. C. Forrest, “Harsh Life Under The Israeli Boot,” p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Katanacho, “Christian Palestinian Arabs: Spreading Hope in the Middle East.”

- 3) Gary Burge, of the Wheaton College Graduate School, Chairman of the Board of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding (EMEU), wrote, “Today in Arab E. Jerusalem, 43,000 Jewish homes are standing entirely on expropriated land...By some estimates 35% of E. Jerusalem has been confiscated for Jewish development (and 90% of this land was privately owned by Palestinians).”<sup>33</sup> And that land has been handed down to them by their ancestors for many generations.

Pro-Israeli argumentation tries to establish Israeli ownership due to God’s much earlier covenant with Abraham. However, as we’ve seen above that argument cannot be sustained Biblically.<sup>34</sup>

- 4) Even land for embassy property has come from confiscation of Arab land, including land targeted for the U.S Embassy if it moves to Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> Those plans are now in place.
- 5) The Jerusalem Municipal Budget is heavily skewed toward Jewish neighborhoods regarding “town beautification,” public transportation, parks and facilities, libraries, hospitals, roads, and other government services, even though Arabs pay taxes as do others. This is one reason why Jewish tour guides don’t want to take tourists to Arab neighborhoods; they don’t want visitors to see the deteriorating conditions of Arab homes and communities, due to the unfair and unjust lack of government investment in those areas. Another reason is that more tourist money stays in Jewish sectors, and less if any is spent in Arab areas, and thus does not contribute to the Palestinian economy.
- 6) The Israeli government continues to put in place more adversarial anti-Arab moves. The government has approved “a series of punitive steps against the Palestinian leadership in retaliation for the Palestinians pushing the U.N.’s highest judicial body to give an opinion of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.”<sup>36</sup>

Further, the government is withholding “millions of dollars from the Palestinian Authority and transferring those funds to a

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<sup>33</sup> Gary Burge, *EMEU Journal*, September 2000. This article contains much more documentation of egregiously unjust, thus unbiblical (e.g., Micah 6:8), Israeli policies that negatively affect Palestinians. Gary is now Professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.

<sup>34</sup> Recall, e.g., Deuteronomy 28; 1 Kings 9:1-9. See also “[Dispensationalists and Dispensational Premillennialism](#)” and the related resources in the section below, “Selected Sources for Further Reading.”

<sup>35</sup> Gary Burge, *EMEU Journal*.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Lee, “Biden faces quandary with new Netanyahu government,” p. 7.

compensation program for the families of Israeli victims of Palestinian militant attacks. And it will deny benefits, including travel permits, to Palestinian officials who ‘are leading the *political and legal war against Israel.*’”<sup>37</sup>



<sup>37</sup> Matthew Lee, “Biden faces quandary with new Netanyahu government,” p. 7. *Emphasis in the quote is mine.*

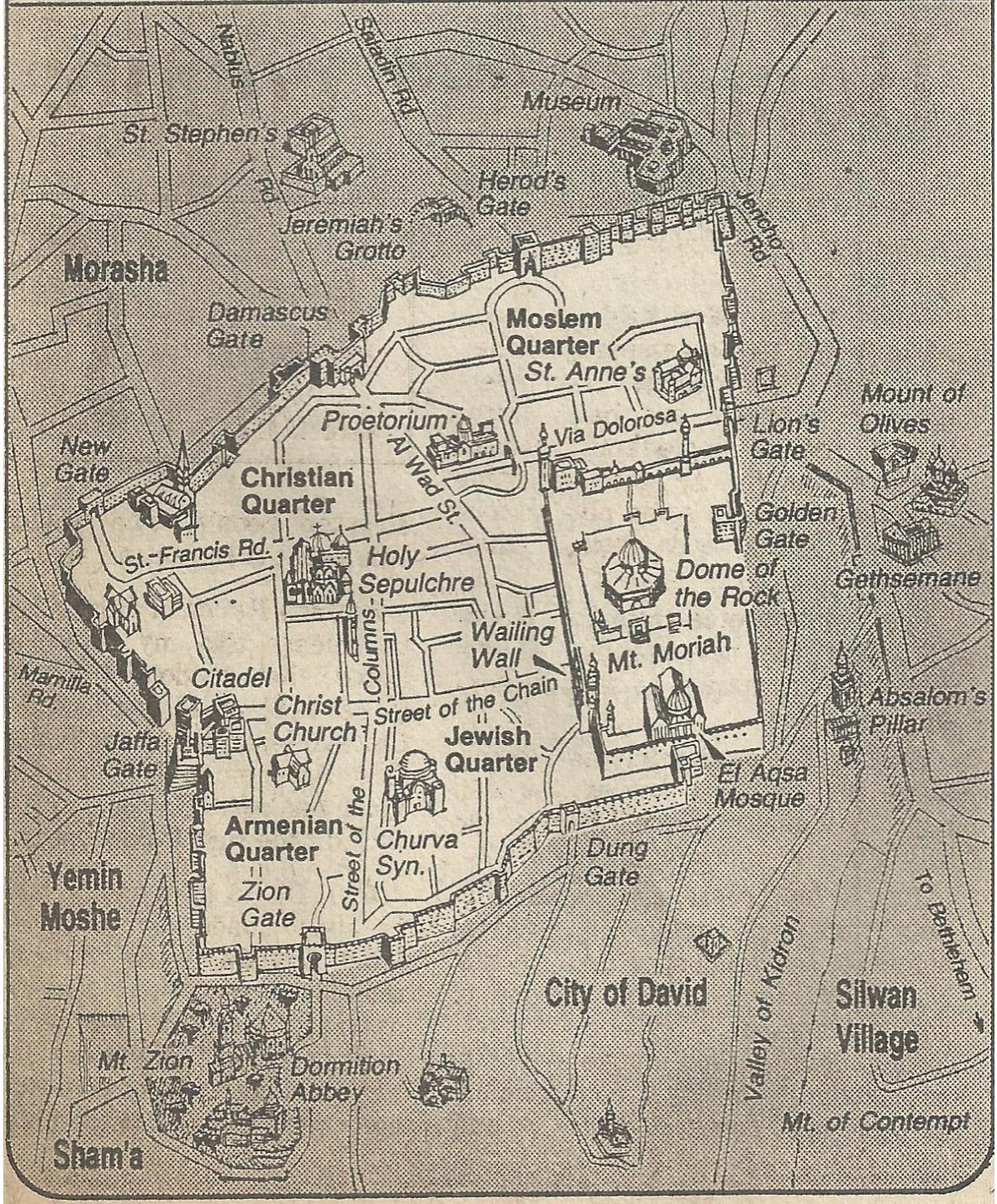
<sup>38</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1980, Sec. 3, p. 6.



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<sup>39</sup> *Time*, March 18, 1996, p. 72.

# Jerusalem: The Old City



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<sup>40</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1980, Sec. 3, p. 6.

While not acceptable, it is understandable, how Palestinian frustration leads to aggression, including to the point of violence. Other countries individually, and the U.N. corporately, must speak and act in ways that draw the Israeli government's attention to this reality. The uncooperative and excessive Israeli oppression, even when the Palestinians are trying to employ *political and legal* means to achieve justice, is counterproductive to a peaceful resolution of the Middle East crisis.

Questions to ask Israel:

- a) Pertaining to the Palestinians in their midst, is the Israeli government more interested in peace or power? If the former, on what basis can the government reasonably expect to accomplish that objective by constraining human freedom with so many exceedingly inhuman injustices?
  - b) Where is there a legitimate use of Israeli power? It's for defense to protect against attack by other countries, e.g., Iran, not for offense to unjustly constrain those within their own midst. See below for more on this matter.
- g. The confiscation of Arab lands in Palestine continues in direct violation of UN Resolution 242, the Geneva Convention, and the Camp David Accords, all of which Israel signed, as well as other international agreements.
- An Israeli watchdog organization, called Peace Now, has documented the construction of new Jewish communities in Palestinian territory. The Peace Now report is not disputed by either the Israeli government or the Yesha Council, a settler movement, which “confirmed that new Jewish homes are being built on West Bank land, which it refers to as Judea and Samaria and believes was given to Jews by God.”<sup>41</sup> The U. S. has repeatedly called the settlements illegal.<sup>42</sup>
- **DISCUSS (OR FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION):** In the light of God's Word cited above and below, how would you

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Bourdreaux, “Israel Flouts Pledge to Curb Settlements,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 2007. See also Matt Rees, et al., “Who Wants to Settle Here?” *Time*, December 4, 2000, pp. 56-57. “Despite the danger to their small children and themselves, the Jewish settlers here stay largely out of religious conviction, a belief that the land they occupy was dedeed to the Jews by God.”... “Noam, 28, ‘This is a God-given land. God wills that we fight for this land.’ He says, pointing to a map of Solomon’s biblical kingdom which shows the border of Israel extending south of the Gaza Strip into Sinai,...”

<sup>42</sup> “Whose Land Is This?” *Time*, March 31, 1980. Matt Rees, “Who Wants to Settle Here?” pp. 56-57.

respond to this statement by the Yesha Council and others who hold to this misunderstanding of Scripture?

- h. Israel has ignored repeated UN resolutions calling for the correcting of injustices, including a yearly one that Israel permit refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace to do so at the earliest possible date and that compensation should be paid for those choosing not to return and for loss or damage to property.
  - Palestinians do not want to accept offers of compensation, even if they were close to fair value, because they know that to do so would prohibit them from ever recovering their generations-owned homes and properties if a truly just restoration of their land is ever forthcoming.
- i. For those Palestinians who have been able to retain their land, they face intimidation, beatings and stealing. James Hider reports,

In an olive grove on the edge of Nablus, Fuad Amr and his sons keep one eye on the branches they are stripping and the other warily on the Jewish settlement that overlooks their land from a hilltop.

The settlers could descend at any time to intimidate them or even beat them and steal the fruit of their labour, as happens every year across the West Bank in the olive season.

The Palestinian farmers, however, have found unlikely allies—Jewish activists, some of them Orthodox rabbis, who risk violence to protect them.

“I am afraid,” Mr Amr said, as he flung black olives on to a plastic sheet, from which his wife gathered them into a sack. “I’m picking the olives and all the time I’m looking out for settlers. They come in buses, sometimes 20 or 30 of them.”

...Every year, however, Israeli and foreign peace activists come to protect the Palestinians during the harvest and help them to pick their crops. Some of them have also been beaten by settlers, but they say that their presence prevents the Palestinians from being driven off their fields.

One of the Jewish groups is Rabbis for Human Rights, which aims to promote religion as a point of harmony and justice between Jews and Arabs.

“For us it’s a never-ending task to do the right thing,” David Nir, an Israeli physicist, said. He added that the bitter, low-level struggle fought in the olive groves and fields on the West Bank was wearing down many activists, with fewer showing up these days. “In the last two years I’ve seen people express despair,” he said.

...Mr Nir, the peace activist, said that Israel was complicit in the violence that haunted the Palestinian olive pickers every year: “It’s the Government. They want to humiliate the Palestinians...The hidden agenda of Israel is to take as much as possible of the land.”<sup>43</sup>

- j. All the above is surely contrary to God’s will for Biblical Israel. See such passages as the following:
  - 1) “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.” (Exodus 22:21)
  - 2) “The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice.” (Ezekiel 22:29)
- k. It must also be recognized that injustices have been done on both sides. It is not only Israel that has acted unjustly.
  - 1) We must note, lament, and oppose the unwillingness of the Islamic nations to recognize non-Muslims as having equal rights to those of Muslims.<sup>44</sup> In order to survive, solely humanly speaking (since Israel is a secular state), Israel must demonstrate power to resist and defend itself. From a human perspective, Islamic nations are only deterred by the power of opposing force with superior weaponry and military expertise. What Israel needs to realize is that their power should only be directed, and appropriately so, toward other countries that want to destroy them, not to people within their borders with whom they need and want peace.
  - 2) We must denounce in the strongest terms the terrorist activities, such as the bombing of buses and places where many people who are trying to live peaceably are horribly injured and killed, and other Arab injustices toward the Israelis that are well documented in the media and in the footnotes herein.

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<sup>43</sup> James Hider, “Olive Branch Blossoms Amid Harvest of Fear,” *The Times*, November 9, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> This Muslim belief is taught in their literature, including the Qur’an, that is authoritative to them. See the writings below by Bassam Madany in the Selected Sources for Further Reading section of this paper.

Such terrorist activity is also counterproductive to the cause of peace. The attempt is to externally control human behavior by force, which is unrealistic. Both sides need to understand this reality of human nature. God has built into us a real and genuine but limited aspect of his image; we are made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26-30)

One of the aspects of his image, that he has in macrocosm and is unlimited, that he has given us in microcosm and is finite, is freedom, a true, real, and genuine, but limited, freedom. When we sense someone is trying to constrain, and even take away, our freedom that is so much a part of who we are, we tend to resist, and resist strongly.

Human freedom can be restrained with external motivation through power (e.g., in prisons), but it is done with great effort at great cost, especially when done unjustly. One of the costs is loss of peace. It is much more effective to strive for internal motivation (as much as possible) to have peace; in order to do so, justice must be evident and prevail. Due to the presence of sin in everyone (Romans 3:23) and the evil in the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20), complete peace will not occur in this age, but the above information will be much more effective at producing the peace that is possible.<sup>45</sup>

- 3) As Christians committed to righteousness/justice (Micah 6:8 and Deuteronomy 16:20) we must speak out and say that while all the above injustices to the Arabs, and their continuance with no real attempts to fairly resolve them, are understandably enormously frustrating, that does not justify violence against the Jews and other Israelis. Furthermore, such violence is counterproductive and only results in retaliation that exacerbates and escalates the hostility.

While never justifying such terrorism and other belligerence, we must understand its roots which include, among other factors the following:

- a) the unjust UN expropriation of Arab land from those who've lived there for generations;
- b) bleak economic conditions as a result of repressive Israeli laws, policies, and practices;

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<sup>45</sup> For more on this subject, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

- c) all combined with Islamic teachings that to kill unbelievers means bliss and reward in the next life. Such thoughts, becoming dreams embedded in the fabric of their being, explain why there are sufficient candidates for suicide bombing.
- d) Thus, our message to both Israel and the Palestinians must include the above observations for both sides.
  - 1- For Israel we must affirm their need under present conditions to be ready with superior power but that that power should be only used defensively against other countries that want to destroy Israel, not against its own citizens and neighbors who want to live in peace with Israel. We should also urge Israel to remember and turn to the Messiah who already has come and is the only one who can bring true peace. (John 16:33) See also the following section.
  - 2- For the Palestinians we need to emphasize the importance of not losing hope and do all we can to find just solutions, beginning with God’s help. See the following section.
    - 1. Since the current state of Israel is a secular state, the justice implications of the Bible texts are as much and even more for us as Christians: Micah 6:8—contrasted with such current events as the preceding. God’s Word is to his people for our action.<sup>46</sup>

#### IV. What should we do?

- A. Humphrey Walz concludes his article on the NCCC report with these words that all thoughtful and caring Christians, especially those progressing in the sanctification process, consider in such matters: “‘Don’t just stand there; *do* something!’...What *can* we do? The American Ambassador to Jordan...challenged the churches to spread a knowledge and understanding of the facts...”<sup>47</sup> Walz concludes with a related quote from the report:

The deputation returns...with the conviction that the American people, and particularly the American churches, must be better informed about *all* the factors involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and their effect on the Middle East, and ultimately the

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<sup>46</sup> See also *Time*, October 16, 2000, pp. 72-73.

<sup>47</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 5-6.

entire world. The deplorable conditions of refugees, the deep chasm of bitterness between Arabs and the people of Israel demand from Christians an understanding concern and a commitment to justice which are indispensable to the discovery of a permanent solution of the problems, and toward the achievement of a just peace in the Middle East.”<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, when we have the opportunity to do so, we should speak up. Do not wait until you feel like an expert; tell people what you do know. Let your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and others know these facts.

We can also do more. Here are some other steps we can take:

- B. Most importantly, pray for peace with a just resolution of the issues. Pray for the only sure and lasting hope for a just peace, the extension and nurture of God’s Kingdom throughout the whole world and in the Middle East in particular.
  - Pray for, and consider supporting, Salim Munayer in Bethlehem and the [Musalaha](#) (Arabic for reconciliation) Christian ministry that brings together people from Palestinian and Israeli backgrounds where they work together to learn the Way to true and lasting peace. This is a helpful ministry for effective reconciliation.
- C. Read the Bible each day to know God’s will and develop the mind of Christ, and use well-established hermeneutical (interpretation) principles to understand the original intent of the authors (e.g., avoid generalizing from any one text and to take into account all the teachings of the Bible regarding any one subject). Urge others to do so as well.
- D. Always be encouraged and try, relying on God’s help, to uplift others with the assurance of God’s sovereignty, presence, and love. As Yohanna Katanacho concludes, “even if the tasks are huge and the political situation is gloomy we will continue to trust in the Lord, anticipating the resurrection of the church of the Arabs and the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the Middle East. Only his kingship can bring true justice and impeccable peace.”<sup>49</sup>
- E. Eliminate any anti-Jewish and anti-Arab sentiment in our hearts and minds. Speak the truth in love concerning both sides. (Ephesians 4:15)
- F. Remember that Arabs and the rest of the world look at us in the United States as a Christian nation (since most nations are linked with a particular religion).

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<sup>48</sup> Humphrey Walz, “A Link with the Holy Land’s Christians,” p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Katanacho, “Christian Palestinian Arabs: Spreading Hope in the Middle East.”

Missionaries have told me that every time the U. S. sells another shipment of arms to Israel, their mission to the Arabs takes two giant steps backward.

- G. Contact the appropriate government official in your country. Americans, contact your Representatives and Senators in Congress, the President, and any others who can help. In addition to any other requests you want to make, include these:
1. Our government should significantly reduce or discontinue all economic and military aid to Israel until the Israelis do the following:
    - a. Stop the settlements; no more illegal building on Arab land.
    - b. Adhere to U.N. Resolution 242, the Geneva Convention, the Camp David Accords, and other international agreements it has already made but not kept.
    - c. Fairly compensate the Palestinians for, or return to them, what has been taken from them.
    - d. Increase the government budget for just allocation of tax funds for all Arab communities, including in Jerusalem.
    - e. Preserve for the Palestinian refugees their right to return.
    - f. Grant the Palestinians full rights of citizenship.
    - g. Expand the boundaries of Jerusalem, dividing it so each nation can have its capital in its jurisdiction and so Palestinians can access their workplaces and not lose many days and sometimes weeks and months of work due to curfews.
    - h. Eliminate unjust curfews. Make any curfews that are necessary, due to terrorist attacks, as short as possible.
    - i. Pursue the peace process leading to the Israelis' recognition of statehood for the Palestinians.
  2. Include also requests to use economic and other leverage to bear upon the Palestinian leadership to stop the terrorism.
  3. Attach this paper or its [Weblink](#) in order to document your position.

- H. Avoid supporting well-meaning but ill-informed and mistaken Christian efforts to aid Zionist purposes, such as expropriating Arab land and properties and rebuilding the temple.
- I. By Israeli law, tour groups must hire a state-approved guide. When planning a tour to Israel, or linking up with a tour group when you arrive, keep in mind that Jewish tour guides typically want to steer you away from the Palestinian Territory, e.g., one told me “It’s too dangerous.” For more than one reason, that is not likely for tour groups.

If you don’t go into Palestinian places, you won’t be able to see where some important Biblical events occurred, so ask for a non-Jewish tour guide, especially a Christian guide. As part of my work as Pastor of Education at Christ Church of Oak Brook, I led trips to the lands of the Bible and church history. I’ve had experience with tour guides who are Jewish, Muslim, and Christian; the Christian will offer you much more than the Jewish and Muslim tour guides.

In the Palestinian areas, be sure to ask to see, e.g., Shechem and Sychar, now Nablus, [the site of Jacob’s well](#) and the very place of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman as told in John 4:1-42. Note v. 11, “the well is deep.” See in this video link all the rope needed to lower the bucket. The time it took water poured from a cup to reach the water in the well was four seconds! (Hear the splash.)

- J. Explain to others that it was an injustice to establish the current state of Israel, especially the way it was done. Especially after this amount of time, there may be some way to resolve the injustices and justify the existence of modern Israel, but Biblical prophecy cannot be used as a basis for such a justification.

Selected Sources for Further Reading  
Available in Christ Church Library and Bookstore

1. O. T. Allis, [\*Prophecy and the Church\*](#)
2. Anthony Hoekema, [\*The Bible and the Future\*](#) In particular, see Hoekema's interpretation of Romans 11:26a, pp. 143-145.
3. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Christian and the Millennium* (booklet, 236 HOE in Christ Church Library)
4. John Gerstner, [\*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism\*](#)
5. Graham Keith, *Hated Without A Cause? A Survey of Anti-Semitism* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1997), pp. vii, 301. Reviewed by Rev. Bassam M. Madany, Calvin Theological Journal, Vol. 33, No. 2, November 1998
6. Bassam Madany, [\*The Bible and Islam\*](#) (269.2 MAD in the Library)
7. \_\_\_\_\_, [\*A Review Arabs in the Shadow of Israel 1 \(1\)\*](#)
8. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Christian Mission to Islam and Judaism Today* (C140 in the Library)
9. \_\_\_\_\_, *Facing the Challenge of Islam in the '90's* (VC 390 in the Library)
10. \_\_\_\_\_, *Fourteen Centuries of Islam* (C136 in the Library)
11. \_\_\_\_\_, *History of the Middle East: A Christian Perspective* (VC385 in the Library)
12. Edward Seely, "[Dispensationalists and Dispensational Premillennialism](#)" on the [Christian Theology](#) page of the free and secure Website, [From Acorn to Oak 12.com](#).

For Use in a Presentation

1. Use a lecture/discussion format.
2. Distribute this paper as a note-taking guide in a lecture/discussion presentation.
  - a. When this subject will be presented in a special session of an ongoing class, if time does not permit the lecturing of the entire content herein, distribute the paper a week earlier, and ask the attendees to read it at home, especially the Bible passages, and come prepared to discuss it. The day of the presentation, begin by highlighting key points and other matters you want to emphasize, and then ask for discussion. Encourage those who plan to attend to also read the related links in the paper for further information and discussion.
  - b. If this presentation is offered in a Special Focus format, and time is limited, have copies of the paper available for attendees when they arrive. In the beginning of the session, lecture the key points and other matters you want to emphasize, and then ask for discussion.
3. Always warmly invite and provide time for discussion. Doing so can be accomplished, while at the same time providing all the content, by reproducing this paper and distributing it at the beginning of the class session.