

The Present State of Israel vs. the Israel of the Bible: Understanding the Difference.: “The Present State of Israel Is Not the Israel of God”

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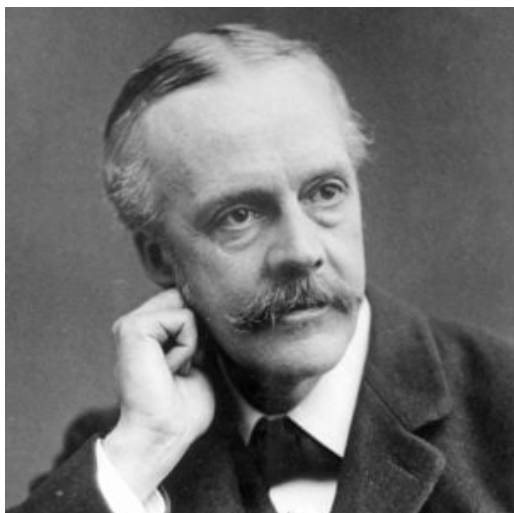
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The modern State of Israel, established in 1948 in the land of Palestine, is often erroneously equated with the Israel of the Bible, to whom God made significant promises. Many Christians, due to a misinterpretation of biblical prophecy and misunderstanding of historical facts, continue to view the current State of Israel as a continuation of biblical Israel, believing it to be the fulfillment of divine promises. However, this perspective is based on a flawed exegesis and a misunderstanding of the political motivations behind the establishment of the modern Israeli state. It is crucial to differentiate between the biblical Israel, a covenant people of God, and the modern state, which was created through political maneuvers and carries a Zionist agenda that is largely secular.

The Creation of Modern Israel: A Political Project

Image: Arthur Balfour (From the Public Domain)



The modern State of Israel was established through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a document that signaled British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This was not an act of divine fulfillment, but a political deal made between the British government and influential figures like Baron Rothschild. The Balfour Declaration was part of a broader strategy during World War I, when Britain sought support from the Zionist movement—a political movement that aimed to establish a national homeland for Jews. Zionism, however, was not a religious movement. It was driven primarily by political and nationalist motives.

Zionism sought to gather Jews from around the world to form a state in Palestine, but it was not a movement grounded in the religious or moral mandates of the Bible. In fact, many leading Zionists were secular or even atheists. They envisioned a Jewish state not as the fulfillment of God's covenant with the Israelites, but as a solution to the Jewish diaspora's challenges, particularly after centuries of persecution and, most devastatingly, the Holocaust.

Zionism vs. Judaism: A Fundamental Difference

A critical point often overlooked is the distinction between Zionism and Judaism. Judaism is a religion with ancient roots, based on the Torah and the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Zionism, on the other hand, is a modern political ideology that seeks to establish and maintain a Jewish state, irrespective of religious beliefs.

Many Jews, both inside and outside Israel, oppose Zionism and the state of Israel, particularly due to the injustices committed against the Palestinians. Groups like Neturei Karta, an Orthodox Jewish movement, have long argued that the creation of a Jewish state before the coming of the Messiah is a violation of Jewish law. Additionally, many Jews around the world have expressed solidarity with Palestinians, recognizing the ongoing suffering inflicted upon them since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. Therefore, equating Zionism with Judaism is not only inaccurate but also unjust to the many Jews who oppose the state of Israel on both religious and moral grounds.

The Israel of the Bible: A Covenant People, Not a Political State

In the Bible, the term "Israel" refers to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God chose as His covenant people. This choice was not based on their inherent worth but on God's grace and His desire to use them to reveal His nature and will to the world. The biblical Israel was called to uphold God's laws, promote justice, and embody holiness as a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6). Central to this covenant was a relationship based on obedience to God's commandments, justice, and mercy.

The promises made to Israel in the Bible were always conditional on their faithfulness to God. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel faced judgment and exile whenever they strayed from God's commandments and engaged in injustice, idolatry, and immorality. For example, the prophet Amos condemned Israel's failure to uphold justice, warning of God's coming judgment: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).

Given this biblical context, it is clear that the modern state of Israel, which operates as a secular nation-state with no overarching commitment to biblical principles, cannot be equated with the Israel of the Bible. The fact that a significant portion of Israeli citizens—around 60%—identify as atheists or secular further undermines the claim that the modern state represents the fulfillment of God's covenant with His people.

The Misinterpretation of Biblical Prophecy

Many Christians who support the modern state of Israel do so under the belief that the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. They point to passages like Genesis 12:3, where God tells Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse," as evidence that Christians must unconditionally

support the state of Israel.

However, this interpretation overlooks key aspects of biblical hermeneutics. First, the promises made to Abraham and his descendants were never solely about physical land but about their role in the spiritual redemption of humanity, culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:16 clarifies that these promises find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.”

Secondly, the physical land of Israel was always tied to the covenant relationship with God, which included moral and ethical responsibilities. The Israel of the Bible was to uphold justice, care for the poor, and live in obedience to God’s commandments. The modern state of Israel, by contrast, has been involved in an ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, many of whom have been displaced, oppressed, and subjected to what many call systemic injustice and violence. The ongoing conflict in Gaza, where the Israeli military has been accused of war crimes and the killing of innocent civilians, starkly contrasts with the biblical mandate for justice and mercy.

The Moral Failure of Christian Zionism

Christians who uncritically support the actions of the modern state of Israel, often citing biblical prophecy, have lost their moral compass. By turning a blind eye to the suffering of Palestinians, including Christians living in Gaza and the West Bank, these Christians betray the very message of the Gospel. Jesus Christ taught love, justice, and mercy—values that cannot be reconciled with the violent oppression of any people.



Palestinian families walk through destroyed neighbourhoods in Gaza City on 24 November 2023 as the temporary truce between Hamas and the Israeli army takes effect (MEE/Mohammed al-Hajjar)

Furthermore, Christians who support the political state of Israel based on their reading of the Bible have, in effect, created a distorted image of God—one that aligns more with nationalism and political power than with the God revealed in Jesus Christ. This is a dangerous misstep, as it replaces the God of justice and compassion with a strange god, one that blesses injustice and oppression.

Conclusion: The Present State of Israel Is Not the Israel of God

It is a profound error to equate the modern state of Israel with the Israel of the Bible. The current Israeli state is a political entity created through secular, Zionist aims, not the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. It operates without regard for the biblical principles of justice, mercy, and righteousness that God commanded His people to follow.

Christians must recognize that the true Israel of God is not defined by nationality or land but by faithfulness to God's will, as revealed in Jesus Christ. To continue supporting the state of Israel unconditionally, in the face of its moral failings and the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people, is to abandon the teachings of Christ and to misinterpret the promises of Scripture. Let us, therefore, pursue peace, justice, and truth, remembering that God's kingdom transcends earthly politics and boundaries.

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