



Biblaridion

Christian Zionism: The Lamb that speaks like a serpent

A critical examination of the phenomenon of Christian Zionism

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a serpent" (Rev.13: 11)

The political-religious aims of Christian Zionism

This is what Daniel Pipes has to say:

"To those who wonder why Washington follows policies so different from the European states, a large part of the answer these days has to do with the clout of Christian Zionists, who are especially powerful when a conservative Republican like George W. Bush is president. (In contrast, Christian Zionism has nearly died out in Great Britain.) One anti-Israel writer, Grace Halsell, recognizes this fact and deems Christian Zionists a "more dangerous" influence in Washington than are the Jewish Zionists. Put positively: other than the Israel Defense Forces, America's Christian Zionists may be the Jewish state's ultimate strategic asset. " [\[1\]](#)

Christian Zionists seek to promote the state of Israel and actively encourage the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple – they are aware that these actions are provocative and may lead to confrontation but believe that they are merely fulfilling Biblical prophecy. Many Christian Zionists are "*anxious for Armageddon*" Hal Lindsey, the Christian author and "*Father of Apocalyptic Christian Zionism*" (who has a significant global following) has the following to say:

“So the rebuilding of the Temple is significant not only because of the potential firestorm it will create between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East. It is also a critical development in the entire prophetic scenario.”

[\[2\]](#)

Stephen Sizer commences his article on contemporary Christian Zionism as follows:

“On the 8 January 2001 Carmi Gillion, the former Shin Bet secret service chief, and Assaf Hefetz, the former Israeli police commissioner, together with several leading Israeli academics, delivered a report to the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak entitled “Target Temple Mount.” Examining the threats posed by extreme militant and messianic groups committed to occupying the Temple Mount by force, the report claimed: ‘The Temple Mount is like a smouldering volcano that is bubbling and threatening to erupt- a threat that is liable to endanger Israel’s existence.’ [\[3\]](#)

Examining the theological ground for Christian Zionism

The best way to approach this subject is to ask a number of significant questions:

1. Is a literalistic hermeneutic valid – i.e. does Israel have an independent existence as a nation within the divine purpose or is it replaced by the church?
2. Who are the descendants of Abraham?
3. Are the covenants “unconditionally” valid for the nation of Israel?
4. Was the land covenant fulfilled in the time of Joshua?
5. Is a Zionist state an historical anomaly?
6. What attitude should Christians have towards Israel?

7. Does Romans 11 (or the Apocalypse) speak of a future “national redemption” of Israel?

8. Should Christians support the rebuilding of a Temple?

1. Does the nation of Israel have a future?

Does Israel have an independent future or has it been replaced by the church? It is clear that the first century disciples expected the immediate establishment of an independent nation, under divine sovereignty (Acts 1:6-7), and that all the covenant promises focus on the land, and on God “dwelling among his people.” Theologically speaking the nation of Israel does have a future; in fact it becomes the geographical focal point for worship and the source for a new missionary drive that will heal the nations (Rev. 22:1-3 *cf.* Ezek.47; Zech.13). The church does not replace Israel nor does Israel replace the church; instead both the church and national Israel find their “theological home” in the same tree, and are fed by the same “Holy root” (Rom.11:16); Jesus Christ, “*for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God*” (2 Cor.1:20). The New Testament is not saying that the Old Testament promises have been completed in Christ’s death and resurrection, but rather that their future fulfillment has been made possible through these key events, and thus God’s promises have received confirmation. [4] In the purpose of God, the salvation of the world is bound up with the destiny of the Jews. However, the “kingdom of God” is *not the same as a Zionist state*.

2. Who are the descendants of Abraham?

This may seem a ridiculous question but the answer often determines the theological approach to Israel or underpins a certain kind of revisionism. Some answer that, Biblically, a Jew is someone who is covenanted into the people of the Jews by circumcision. Others answer that, ethnically, a Jew is someone who can trace their physical matriarchal descent; still others answer

that, spiritually, a Jew is someone who displays the faith of Abraham. There is of course, truth in all these answers, depending on whether we want a Biblical, ethnic or spiritual definition.

The reason for the question is because certain quarters claim that we cannot speak of a Jewish race anymore, due to intermarriage during the exile or conversion, for example, of the Gentile Khazars to Judaism during the Middle-ages (therefore the European Ashkenazi Jews are "Gentiles"). [5] However, scientific evidence based on genetic studies of the Y-chromosome, shows a consistency in the priestly descent from Aaron in the male line of those Jews who are today traditionally members of the *Kohanim* – irrespective of Sephardic or Ashkenazi origins.

It is clear that racial purity was maintained, for although proselytes were allowed into the congregation, conversion was highly regulated, with converts being circumcised before entering into the community. The Jews were forbidden to marry foreigners and any intermarriage was very limited. In conclusion, the Jews today have a natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and can be thought of as ethnically differentiated from other races.

3. Are the covenants unconditionally valid for Israel?

According to Lindsey;

"...all the unconditional covenants... were made only with the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as a unique nation." [6]

Is it true that the promises are all "unconditionally" available *only* to Israel and that *despite* the nation's rejection of the messiah? The answer is not a simple yes or no, but is rather more complex. First we need to understand the nature of the "unconditional covenants" [7] and "conditional prophecy."

An example of conditional prophecy is Deut.30:1-5, with a preface of detailed blessing and cursing (in Deut.28) for either compliance or non-compliance. However, the conditional "*returning to God and obeying him with all their heart*" has never been fulfilled, thus demonstrating that it is *humanly impossible to comply*, and yet in Deut.30 the "conditional prophecy" is brought about by God himself – for He is able to make them stand:

"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thine seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live...And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day."
(Deut.30:6-8)

How, then, does God effect this change of heart?

When thou art *in tribulation*, and all these things (curses) are come upon thee, even in *the latter days*, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, *nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them*" (Deut.4:29-31).

God will "remember" the covenants:

"If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers....and have brought them into the land of their enemies....and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: *then will I remember my covenant* with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land" (Lev.26; 40-42).

Tribulation brought by God will cause the purging and repentance of the nation; while it is true that all the covenants are unconditionally available to all Israelites, *it is not true that all Israelites will be unconditionally blessed*- a good example is the generation that perished in the wilderness; only a faithful remnant (Caleb and Joshua) entered the land, together with a *new generation*

that had not rebelled: For *Yahweh* had declared to them that, "*Ye shall know my breach of promise*" (Num.14:34). Although the covenant was "unconditional" that generation would not experience divine mercy – the covenant was "breached" because of their disobedience – but not invalidated for the next generation.

The covenant promises to the patriarchs could all have been fulfilled in the **first century**; initially the apostles expected the second-advent almost immediately, certainly during their lifetime – **but the nation (and the church) once again experienced the breach of promise because of unbelief**. The same is equally valid for Christians who have partaken of the "unconditional" gift of grace that is in Christ and are therefore also fellow heirs of the "unconditional covenants" to the patriarchs:

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them...I have sworn in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest...lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb.4: 1-14).

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom.11:22).

God's covenants towards the nation will surely be fulfilled (Jer.31:35, 36; 33: 25, 26); the nation is to be grafted into the Olive tree again (Rom.11:23); He will do this because of a faithful remnant [8] that has been preserved by His righteousness – but many will perish because of disobedience.

In conclusion to this question; the covenants are "unconditional" in that God will implement them despite the nation's intransigence – they are vouched safe because of HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Nevertheless, the nation *is still under the wrath of God* and will yet endure a terrible purging. Until the Jews display

the faith of Abraham they cannot claim rights over the land under the “unconditional Abrahamic covenant.” In other words the Abrahamic covenant only becomes “unconditional” through faith in the Messiah, for it is only then that sin can be completely exonerated and the heart transformed (Jer.31:33).

4. Was the land covenant fulfilled in the time of Joshua?

The land covenant was not fulfilled in the time of Joshua; even during Solomon’s reign the covenanted territorial boundaries were not achieved and possession was only temporary anyway. Moreover, the land covenant did not just concern Abraham’s descendants, but Abraham himself, *personally*. Hebrews makes it clear that the covenant promise is still in abeyance:

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb.11:39-40).

John F. Walvoord sums it up nicely;

"The amillennarian position is often distinguished for its blindness to facts which would upset its own argument. The present instance is a good illustration. If its promises regarding the land were fulfilled in Joshua's time or in Solomon's, why do the Scriptures which were written later still appeal to the hope of future possession of the land? Practically every one of the Major and Minor Prophets mention in some form the hope of future possession of the land. All of them were written after Solomon's day. This is an obvious rebuttal to the amillennial position and points to the amillennial failure to face the real issues of the millennial debate with a view to all the evidence.

5. Is a Zionist state an historical anomaly?

Is it within the divine prophetic purpose that the Jews returned to the land and establish a state; or is the return after nearly 2,000 years an historical anomaly –merely a quirk of fate? Is the fact that the Jews preserved their identity and survived extermination just a coincidence? The resurrection of a people, a language and a nation from the death camps of Europe is unprecedented – but is it prophetic? Why has God allowed a return in unbelief?

Scripture makes it clear that the restoration of Israel is a process that is accomplished in stages through the medium of the prophetic word: "*son of man prophesy over these bones*" (Ezek.37:4). The vision in Ezekiel was not completed at the return from the Babylonian captivity for it concerned "*the whole house of Israel*" (v.11) and the alleviation of any remaining tribal friction between Ephraim and Judah (v.19). Nor has it been fully accomplished in the founding of the state in 1948 and the subsequent *aliyha*; which, although one cannot speak of tribal friction has often led to factional rivalry and social fragmentation.

Even if a judgment on the present State of Israel for her sins were to involve her complete removal elsewhere, prophetic passages indicate the need to be *returned to the land again* before the cleansing can proceed. Events since the Holocaust have been an opportunity for Israel and the world to see God's hand at work on Israel's behalf following a very bitter period. Unfortunately both have failed to see his hand, and in Israel's case they have ascribed success to their own capability.

In conclusion, God's continued mercy towards his people and the "return in unbelief" has "preserved a seed" and ensured that the Jews have not

become assimilated into Western nations during a period of their loss of belief in the reality of their God; it also acts as a stimulus to Gentile faith and as a sign to the whole world. The great act of divine mercy that will occur, not "*in a corner*" but on the world stage in the full glare of the media – Israel will be punished, ingathered, forgiven and restored –leaving the world without excuse.

6. What attitude should Christians have towards Israel?

Should the Christian attitude towards Israel be uncritical financial, political and moral support? "He who blesses thee, I will bless; he who curses thee, I will curse" (Genesis 12:3.) This seems to be the viewpoint of Christian Zionism:

"To the Christian Zionist, it is a requirement of faith to prefer the blessing of Israel above all passing things. Doing this, he believes, cannot, by definition, ever be incompatible with the will of God." [\[9\]](#)

It is not, however, the viewpoint of the apostle Paul, who says, "As touching the gospel they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom.11: 28). The way to "bless" Israel is to preach the gospel to them, to make them aware of the fact that they will not obtain permanent peace with their neighbors until they make peace with their God. They are still "enemies" concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ – but this must be counterbalanced by our knowledge that God has elected them for a special future because of the faithfulness of the "fathers."

In conclusion, Gentile Christians should not act with supercilious superiority, but with humility, acknowledging their status as a "wild branch" grafted into the "hope of Israel." Nevertheless, they should not be afraid to criticize wrong behavior or to urge repentance – as the prophets of old did. A pro-Israel bias is not a substitute for "blessing Israel" it is in fact, a curse in disguise, for it justifies the hardness of their hearts.

7. Does Romans 11 (or the Apocalypse) speak of a future “national redemption” of Israel?

In dealing with Romans 11, Robertson asserts that, “nothing in this chapter says anything about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom, or of a return to the land of the Bible, or of a restoration of a national state of Israel.” [10] He also states that, “nowhere in this book [the book of Revelation] are the Jewish people described as having a distinctive part in this kingdom” [11]

On both counts he is wrong, for Romans 11 is intimately connected with Revelation 11; his failure stems from a failure to recognise the apocalyptic nature of the apostles teaching. There is increasing emphasis on interpreting Paul’s message in the context of an apocalyptic worldview, wherein the horizons of salvation history are pushed back to creation and forward to a new heaven and earth. [12]

The apostle commences with the example of Elijah, who learnt that Gods justice is always tempered with mercy [13] – the divine will was expressed not only in judgment (wind, earthquake, fire) but also in grace (the still small voice proclaiming the divine attributes *cf.* Ex.33:19; Rom.9:15) by the preserving of a remnant. “By definition, this group (Jewish believers) bears a dual identity as both a remnant within Israel the people and as a particular community within the body of Christ.” [14]

ROMANS 11	REVELATION 11
25. Until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.	2. For it [=court of the gentiles] is given unto the Gentiles...
2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah?	6. These [Moses and Elijah] have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy
3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets	7. Shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
4. I have reserved to myself seven thousand men.	13. And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand:
5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.	13. And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?	12. Come up hither. 18. The time of the dead, that they should be judged.

Elijah is a prototype of the "eschatological witnesses" who will "turn the hearts of the children to the [Covenants of] the fathers."(Mal.4:4-6) Paul's "apocalyptic" approach is both complex and subtle, sometimes contrasting with, and at other times complementing the eschatological vision in Revelation. The mission of the "eschatological prophets" to Israel (Rev.10: 11), is the counterpart to Paul's election as the apostle to the gentiles (Rom.11: 13; Acts 9:15). The hardening of Israel, followed by her subsequent forgiveness and ingrafting is a "mystery" (Rom.11: 25) that would only be "finished" (Rev.10: 7) at the sounding of the last trumpet. [\[15\]](#)

The interpretation of this chapter has encouraged extreme views, on the one side amillennial suppressionism, whereby ethnic Israel is completely replaced by the church and has no further purpose; "All that is related to her covenants and promises are in abeyance...No Jewish Covenants are now being fulfilled." [\[16\]](#)

As a reaction to this reductionism we have uncritical support of national Israel; usually coupled with a historic premillennial approach. Israel is the

chosen medium for displaying God's purpose; the complete destruction and extermination of the Jews as a race and a nation (Mal.3: 6) was understood by Moses as an abrogation of the promises and a failure of the divine will (Deut.9: 27-29). "Yahweh continues to be revealed in Israel, both within and apart from the body of believers...God is still revealed through the existence of the people of Israel, just as in times past." [17] (cf. Rom.11:27; Jer.31-36). However, Pentecost does not believe in a continuing remnant, but rather in complete blindness:

"There is no continuing remnant of Israel with whom God is particularly dealing today...Because that nation is now blinded, God can not have a remnant within the nation." [18]

Tim Warner and Mark Harris observe that, "Paul's point is NOT that God's program for Israel has been suspended. Rather, *"blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."* [vs.25]. consequently, part of Israel was not blinded. It was with this remnant that Jesus established the new covenant. This is not to say that everything related to the new covenant has been completely fulfilled. Jeremiah's prophecy said *"all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."* The universal acceptance of the new covenant by Israel will only occur after the partial blindness is removed." [19] This "removing" will be accomplished by God through the eschatological witnessing of the Elijah mission.

The unconditional promise (Gen.15) is independent of the nation because it is based on the faithfulness of God. The nation, like Paul himself, had been *partially blinded* and persecuted Christ; [20] but neither the conversion of Paul, nor the conversion of ethnic Israel – as a kingdom of priests and collective apostle to the gentile nations, is impossible with God. [21]

8. Should Christians support the rebuilding of a Temple?

Many fundamentalist Christian denominations apply a literalist hermeneutic to Ezekiel's temple, and they suppose that it will be constructed during the millennium and administered as described by the prophet. One questions the theological validity of such interpretations, particularly in the light of the New Testament passages that contradict a literalist approach. Nevertheless, such preoccupations seem harmless enough until we realise that it is only an incremental step from justifying post-millennial to pre-millennial Temple worship. The Christian Zionists have made that step and for whatever reasons promote the reinstatement of Jewish Temple worship.

Such a Temple, built and instituted by an unrepentant nation still under divine wrath for rejecting the covenants of the fathers (concerning the Messiah) would be an abomination to God. Christian support for such a project (and indeed even support for an unrepentant nation) is tantamount to propagating the lie of the serpent – that of self-divinization – that man can achieve salvation through his own efforts.

Conclusion

God's purpose with Israel is not complete; they are a chosen vessel and have been brought back to the land in unbelief in order to prepare them for the return of the Messiah. Israel does not replace the church nor does the church replace Israel, and although there is a national dimension to the covenants, the millennial reach will be to the "uttermost ends of the earth" through the church which will form part of the "commonwealth of Israel" (Eph.2:12,13).

However, currently the nation of Israel does not rely on God; it relies on its own strength and on the U.S.A. In turn, the American president owes his

re-election to fundamentalist Christianity and has shaped his policies around the myth of democracy and freedom but in reality we perceive global imperialism driven not by Christianity, but by materialism and power. A beast is emerging in the middle-east, trailing the smoke of the abyss that was opened on 9/11 – and it has a mouthpiece – a Lamb that speaks like a serpent.

Notes

[1] Daniel Pipes @ <http://christianactionforisrael.org/weapon.html>

[2] Footnote 177 @ <http://www.virginiawater.co.uk/christchurch/articles/hallindsey.HTM>

[3] Stephen Sizer, *Heaven on Earth*, (ed. T. Desmond Alexander & Simon Gathercole: Paternoster, 2004) page 245 quoting the report found at; <http://keshev.org.il/english/reports/harhabayit/index.shtml>

[4] Green S., *God's purpose with Israel*, (2004, The testimony, Norwich ISBN 0 9517992 3 1)

[5] See, Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism by James B. Jordan @ http://www.preteristarchive.com/dEmEnTiA/jordan-james_dd_01.html

[6] Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York, Bantam, 1989),p., 186.

[7] The unconditional covenants are the Abrahamic covenants (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:15, 17; 17:18 cf.26:3; 28: 4, 13; 35:12; 48:4 the unconditional promise of the land is confirmed again by the Land Covenant in Deut.30:1-10). The Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7:14-16 (David's throne is established forever) and the "New covenant" of Jer.31:31-34.

[8] On the importance of "Remnant theology" see:

<http://www.sojournerministries.com/articles/remnants2.html>

<http://www.leaderu.com/theology/remnanttheo.html>

[9] See Paul C. Merkley , Professor Emeritus of History at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, and the author of two published books on historical aspects of Christian attitudes towards Zionism: *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948* (Frank Cass, 1998) and *Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel* (McGill-Queen's U.P., 2001.) @<http://christianactionforisrael.org/attitudes.html> For a history of Christian Zionism download the PDF @ <http://www.pre-trib.org/pdf/Ice-LoversOfZionAHistory.pdf>.

[10] P.O. Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, (2000, P & R Publishing), p.191

[11] *Ibid*, p.165: So also Bray; "Surely no one will say that there is a single solitary verse anywhere in the entire NT which teaches a future restoration of the Jews to Palestine, nor of their conversion to Christ after his second coming." [Bray L.J., *Israel in Prophecy*, (1983, 1995, Lakeland, Fla: J.L. Bray Ministry), pp., 29-30]

[12] Donald Sneen, *The Root, The Remnant, and the Branches*, (1986, Word & World, Luther Seminary), see also: K. Stendhal, *Paul among the Jews and Gentiles*, (1976, Philadelphia, PA); Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, (1980, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) and J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (1980, Philadelphia: Fortress).

[13] "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." (Rom.11: 22)

[14] Zaretsky T., *Israel the Land and the People*. (1998, Ed. H. Wayne House. Grand Rapids: Kregel), p.37

[15] "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished..." (Rev.10: 7). "Having made know unto us the mystery...that in the dispensation of the *fullness of times* he might gather together in one *all things* (cf. all Israel) in Christ" (Eph.1:9, 10 see 3:1-5). Two of the chapters that Paul quotes from (Rom.11:8 = Deut.29:4 & Isa.29:10) make a reference to the vision being like a *sealed book* (Isa.29:11 cf. Rev.5:1) and to the *secret things* belonging to God unless he chooses to reveal them (Deut.29: 29 cf.Rev.10:8). According to Dodd "Something more than human stupidity and stubbornness caused their unbelief; there was something "preternatural and mysterious" about it." [*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 175]

[16] Chafer, Chafer S L., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1-8, (Dallas: Seminary Press, 1983), Vol., 6 p., 83

[17] *Ibid*, Zaretsky, p., 54

[18] Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, pp., 293-94

[19] *In defense of Progressive Dispensationalism*, (2000@<http://www.lasttrumpet.com>)

[20] Paul a persecutor from Benjamin (Rom.11:1; Gen.49: 27) blind (Acts 9: 8 cf. Rom.11:25 see Gen.27:1 contrast Gen.48:10) elected (1 Sam.20:42; Rom.9:11).

[21] Cf. song of witness in Deut.31:21 and 32; 39-43; "I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal...and **will be merciful** unto his land and his people." Compare the rainbow **covenant of mercy** (Rev.10:1) and the correspondence between Deut.32:40 with Rev.10:5.