

The Middle East Crisis and the Dangers of Dispensationalism

End-times fever holding faith hostage

Pastor in Hawaii:

"If you're unsure concerning the pre-trib rapture, I feel so sorry for you. How are you able to sleep? How are you not freaking out if the rapture is not before the seven-year tribulation?...if I had any uncertainty about that, I'd be digging a tunnel. I'm not trying to be funny. This is not hyperbole. Were it not for the sound doctrine and the biblical truth of the pre-trib rapture, I would literally go out of my mind! I would go insane and I'm serious about that. That is not hyperbole...were it not for that, I'd be curled up in the fetal position!"

From a correspondent:

"I spoke with one of the guys in my Bible study group today. He is the most mature of the bunch, with a solid understanding of the Word, and a great Bible teacher. But bottom line, he told me that if Israel loses the war he's done. (Meaning God's promises to Israel did not come true. If that's false, then it's all false. That people's understanding of prophecy, eschatology could blow their faith out of the water is scary stuff.) This is not the first time I've had someone tell me this. But now, things are getting crazy in the middle east."

Dr. Michael Brown:

"Somehow, we forget that this is not about ethnic superiority. It's not about the Jewish people being better than anyone else. It's not about the Jewish people being superior. It's about God's faithfulness. This is a matter of the integrity of God. If God cannot keep his promises to Israel, you have no confidence he can keep his promises to you, the Church."

Jack Hibbs:

"You might be thinking, 'Well, this is just another Middle East skirmish. They've gone on for millennia now, since 1948, they come and go...' No, no, no, this is all different, Everybody. It's all different... The existence of Israel and the Jew... if they ever cease to exist, then God's word has failed, He is not the God He said He was, and we have no eternal life." (In sermon immediately after Gaza terrorists attacks, Oct.15, 2023—"Israel: What's Next?"

- If Jesus doesn't come back May 21st, 2011, the Bible is not true. —Harold Camping
- "I didn't ask to be a hero, but I guess I have become one in the Christian community. So I accept it. But if I'm wrong about this, I guess I'll become a bum." —Hal Lindsay (1977, *Christianity Today* interview)
- 88 Reasons the Rapture will come Sept.11-13, 1988. —Edgar Whisenant

What does the Bible say about the future of Israel?

- ***Unconditional promises?***

"God had given these promises, these unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before that. And Paul reiterates in Galatians 4 that the law which came 430 years after the promise, Galatians the 3rd chapter, that the law which came 430 years after the promise, cannot annul the promise." —Michael Brown.

(Gen.18:18-19; Lev.26; Deut.28; Jer.18:7-10)

- ***Eternal land promise?*** (Ps.105:9-11)

He remembers His covenant forever, The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, The covenant which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac, And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute To Israel as an everlasting covenant, Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan As the allotment of your inheritance."

(Deut.4:40; Lev.18:25-28; 25:23; Deut.28:46, 63-67)

- Constant conflict between Isaac and Ishmael? (Gen.16:12)

[Ishmael] shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

- Restoration from exile (Ezek.36:24; 37:11-13)

- Gathered in unbelief? (Ezek.20:34-38; 22:17-21; Zeph.2:1-2; Ezra 1:5; Deut.4:29-30; 30:1-10; Neh.1:8-9; Isaiah 10:21-22)

- Conversion to God/Christ? (Matt.23:37-39; Romans 11:26)

- War and opposition in the end times? (Zech.12:1-3)

- Battle of Gog? (Ezek.38-39)

If this is not a fulfillment of prophecy, how is it explained?

Jew hatred—Must one be Dispensational to not be anti-Semitic?

Conflict over land—"There was no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state?" —Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister. *The Sunday Times* June 15, 1969

History of the region

Zionism

"God Is a Zionist" —Dr. Thomas Ice, Pre-Trib Research Center.

"God is a Zionist!" —Jack Hibbs

"God is a Zionist!" —Dr. Michael Brown

My response to Dr. Brown (pp.223-224)

When we ask, "Is God a Zionist?" we need to take various factors into consideration, and not answer glibly. It's complicated. Consider the following:

- The land was already occupied before significant Jewish migration. Many Europeans were sold on the idea of Zionism by the false claim that it was merely providing of “*A land without a people for a people without a land.*” The Arabs who were born there, and whose ancestors had lived there for 1300 years (and who, naturally, thought of it as their own homeland) might think this a strange characterization of their homeland.
- The transfer was not justly negotiated. The decision was not made by an agreement being reached between the residents and the returning Israelis. It was decreed by a foreign power (the United Nations) residing on another continent.
- In the wake of the returning Jews, Palestinians had their homes and farms seized by force, and were driven out of their territories by war. When the war ended, thousands of Palestinians were not permitted to return to their homes and lands.
- Today there are more Christians among the Palestinians, *per capita*, than there are among the Israelis. Of the Israeli population, less than 2% are Christian. Of those Israeli Christians, more than 75% are ethnic Arabs. Among Palestinian Arabs, between 6% and 7% are Christians. This means, if you meet a Christian man in the land of Israel, there is more than ten times the probability of that person being a Palestinian than of his being a Jew. While Christians are to be concerned for justice to all peoples, whether Christian or not, we are commanded to have special concern for those of the household of God (Gal.6:10).
- Dr. Brown said, “God said that he would exile his people from their homeland if they sinned and bring them back only if they repented.” So, why would we say God is bringing them back today? They have not repented. They were driven from the Land, in A.D. 70, because they rejected Christ. They reject Him to this day to the same degree as they did then. Not only have they not come to Christ, but they also are apostate even from the religion of their ancestors—the percentage of atheists among them (20%) being triple that found among the world population. They have formed a secular, anti-Christian State. How is this God’s doing?

Even Dispensationalist, J. Vernon McGee, denied that Israel was to return to the land in unbelief: “Israel is just like any other nation...They’re not back in the land in fulfillment of prophecy. They have returned to the land, but they have not returned to the Lord...They have returned to the land today, and it’s remarkable what has happened over there, but it’s not the fulfillment of prophecy, because the prophecy says when they return they’ll return to God.” (“Thru-The-Bible” broadcast, comments on Hosea 2:19-23 and 3:4).

- If Jews were to justly return to the Land prior to becoming Christians, they might at least be expected to obey the Torah, in terms which the Land was originally promised to them. Yet the nation of Israel is not Torah-observant. The Torah forbade the shedding of innocent blood, the moving of ancient landmarks to seize another’s land, and the oppression of the foreigners among them in the Land. Where, exactly, are we seeing any correlation between scripture and facts on the ground in Israel?
- Even if there remained a promise of God to restore Israel in the “last days,” on what basis can we conclude that we are presently living in that time? We have no knowledge whether Christ is coming tomorrow or two centuries from now. The return of the Jews in the 20th century did not resemble any of the biblical descriptions of how this would happen. If God were restoring a righteous nation, would He not do it in a righteous manner, without oppressing

and stealing land from innocent peasants and dirt-farmers? That sounds more like the way Ahab and Jezebel seized Naboth's vineyard. Elijah decried them for this act of oppression (1 Kings 21).

Appendix: Facts usually overlooked by Christian Zionists—

“For the entire day of April 9, 1948, Irgun and LEHI soldiers [members of Israeli terrorist bands] carried out the slaughter in a cold and premeditated fashion... The attackers ‘lined men, women and children up against the walls and shot them’... The ruthlessness of the attack on Deir Yassin shocked Jewish and world opinion alike, drove fear and panic into the Arab population, and led to the flight of unarmed civilians from their homes all over the country.”
—Israeli author, Simha Flapan, *“The Birth of Israel.”*

“That Ben-Gurion’s ultimate aim was to evacuate as much of the Arab population as possible from the Jewish state can hardly be doubted, if only from the variety of means he employed to achieve his purpose... most decisively, the destruction of whole villages and the eviction of their inhabitants... even [if] they had not participated in the war and had stayed in Israel hoping to live in peace and equality, as promised in the Declaration of Independence.”
—Israeli author, Simha Flapan, *“The Birth of Israel.”*

“By 1948, the Jew was not only able to defend himself but to commit massive atrocities as well. Indeed, according to the former director of the Israeli army archives, ‘in almost every village occupied by us during the War of Independence, acts were committed which are defined as war crimes, such as murders, massacres, and rapes’... Uri Milstein, the authoritative Israeli military historian of the 1948 war, goes one step further, maintaining that ‘every skirmish ended in a massacre of Arabs.’”
—Norman Finkelstein, *“Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict”*

“Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess... Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor’s boundary stone.”
—Moses (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17)

“This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?” Then say to him, “This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood – yes, yours!”
—Elijah (see 1 Kings 21:1-19)

“[After the slaughter at Deir Yassin] A few men were left alive and driven around to other villages to tell the story; then those men were killed too. The result was a panic. That’s why so many Palestinians fled. Entire villages were emptied, which is exactly what the Israelis wanted. They just took over those people’s homes.”
—Brother Andrew [“God’s Smuggler”] and Al Janssen, *Light Force: A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004), p.110.

“The winter of 1949, the first winter of exile for more than seven hundred fifty thousand Palestinians, was cold and hard... Families huddled in caves, abandoned huts, or makeshift tents... Many of the starving were only miles away from their own vegetable gardens and orchards in occupied Palestine—the new state of Israel.”
—*“Our Roots Are Still Alive”* by The Peoples Press Palestine Book Project

“In violation of international law, Israel has confiscated over 52 percent of the land in the West Bank and 30 percent of the Gaza Strip for military use or for settlement by Jewish civilians... From 1967 to 1982, Israel’s military government demolished 1,338 Palestinian homes on the West Bank. Over this period, more than 300,000 Palestinians were detained without trial for various periods by Israeli security forces.”
—*“Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation,”* ed. Lockman and Beinun.

Richard Falk, the former UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has called Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories “a crime against humanity.” Falk also has compared Israel’s

treatment of the Palestinians to the Nazi treatment of the Jews. Falk has said, "I think the Palestinians stand out as the most victimised people in the world."

"Israel has crossed the threshold from 'the only democracy in the Middle East' to the only apartheid regime in the Western world."
—Henry Siegman, Rabbi and director of the U.S./Middle East Project

"If Israel's reactions to probing along its borders seem out of proportion to the provocations suffered—admittedly a two-eyes-for-an-eye policy of retaliation—the Christian is duty-bound to apply the measuring stick of moral values as he knows them."

—Paul S. Allen, "*Arab or Israeli*," Alliance Witness 92 (8 May 1957), p. 2.

"Likewise, the state of Israel is not relieved of its obligation to act responsibly in the community of nations even though the secret purpose of God may be brought to fruition through its actions."

—Dispensationalist, Charles Ryrie, "Perspective on Palestine," *Christianity Today* 13 (23 May 1969), p. 8

"Elizabeth Elliot, widow of the missionary Jim Elliot, and author of well-known books about the murder of her husband by Auca Indians and their subsequent conversion, had already proved herself one of the great Christians of the twentieth century. In 1967, after the Six Day War, she visited Jerusalem. She had no background knowledge of the Middle East and arrived with a slight bias to the dispensationalist view. However, she examined the situation with an open mind. Her book [*Furnace of the Lord*] has been called impartial and is indeed very fair to the Jews, but it has a slight but very definite inclination to the Arab point of view. Moreover she takes a completely different approach from that of the dispensationalists... Mrs. Elliot had great difficulty in getting the book published because it was considered much too pro-Arab. Apparently no Christian publisher would publish it and she ended up having to get a secular publisher, Doubleday, to publish it... Mrs. Elliot also discovered the Palestine problem, and this discovery evidently turned her sympathies towards the Arab cause..."

—Graham Hoskins, cited by Colin Chapman in *Whose Promised Land?* (pp.163f)

Common Myths and Misunderstandings

1. "A land without a people for a people without a land."

"Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, [is] rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."

—Lord James Balfour, writing in 1922 (cited by Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*) 19-20

"We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish, state here...Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages...There is not a single community in the country that did not have a former Arab population."

—Israeli leader, Moshe Dayan, quoted in Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi's "*Original Sins*."

2. "Much of the land was legally purchased by Jews before the establishment of the state of Israel."

"[The Ottoman Land Code of 1858] required the registration in the name of individual owners of agricultural land, most of which had never previously been registered and which had formerly been treated according to traditional forms of land tenure...The new law meant that for the first time a peasant could be deprived not of title to his land, which he had rarely held before, but rather of the right to live on it, cultivate it and pass it on to his heirs, which had formerly been inalienable...Under the provisions of the 1858 law, communal rights of tenure were often ignored...Instead, members of the upper classes, adept at manipulating or circumventing the legal process, registered large areas of land as theirs...The fellahin

[peasants] naturally considered the land to be theirs, and often discovered that they had ceased to be the legal owners only when the land was sold to Jewish settlers by an absentee landlord...Not only was the land being purchased; its Arab cultivators were being dispossessed and replaced by foreigners who had overt political objectives in Palestine.” —Rashid Khalidi, *“Blaming the Victims,”* ed., Said and Hitchens

“In 1948, at the moment that Israel declared itself a state, it legally owned a little more than 6 percent of the land of Palestine.” —Edward Said, *“The Question of Palestine.”*

3. **“Palestine was a barren desert before Israel reclaimed and cultivated it.”**

[In Ottoman-controlled Palestine] “Farming in the plains and valleys produced a variety of products hungrily consumed in Europe—wheat, barley, and maize, for I example—but the choice export item in Palestine was the juicy, thick-skinned, and easy to transport Jaffa orange.” —Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 6, 9

“The Holy Land, since the Crusader genocide, has been renowned for its olive groves and olive oil industry; and long before Zionist immigration began in 1920, Palestine was known as a citrus exporting country...records show that in 1912-13, the Arabs had exported 1,608,570 cases of oranges to Europe. As regards the hill regions, the country is covered with olive orchards, vineyards and other deciduous fruit trees; while the lands in the South were used for the cultivation of grain, and those in the Jordan Valley for the production of vegetables and fruits. Every inch of fertile soil was used to full capacity.”

—Refaat M. Loubani, “Palestine Before 1947” posted 11/7/01

“We abroad are used to believe the Eretz Yisrael is now almost totally desolate, a desert that is not sowed...But in truth that is not the case. Throughout the country it is difficult to find fields that are not sowed.” (Ahad Ha'Am, a leading European Jewish essayist who visited Palestine in 1891 for three months, in *Righteous Victims*, p. 42)

“I saw things which the Ministry of Tourism would just as soon I hadn't seen: hillsides which for centuries had been cultivated and terraced by Arabs, turned into desert since 1948. The Israelis had neither knowledge nor inclination to preserve the olive trees and I saw hundreds of acres of crumbling terraces, dried vines, dying trees. It would be impossible to cultivate these terraces by machine, and in modern Israel economically unsound to cultivate them in the ancient way.” —Elisabeth Elliott in *“Furnace of the Lord”*

4. **“Israel just wants to be left alone; it is the Palestinians who are the aggressors.”**

“The Arab League hastily called for its member countries to send regular army troops into Palestine. They were ordered to secure only the sections of Palestine given to the Arabs under the partition plan. But these regular armies were ill equipped and lacked any central command to coordinate their efforts...[Jordan's King Abdullah] promised [the Israelis and the British] that his troops, the Arab Legion, the only real fighting force among the Arab armies, would avoid fighting with Jewish settlements...Yet Western historians record this as the moment when the young state of Israel fought off “the overwhelming hordes” of five Arab countries. In reality, the Israeli offensive against the Palestinians intensified.”

—*“Our Roots Are Still Alive,”* by the Peoples Press Palestine Book Project.

“Before the end of the mandate and, therefore before any possible intervention by Arab states, the Jews, taking advantage of their superior military preparation and organization, had occupied...most of the Arab cities in Palestine before May 15,1948. Tiberias was occupied on April 19,1948, Haifa on April 22, Jaffa on April 28, the Arab quarters in the New City of Jerusalem on April 30, Beisan on May 8, Safad on May 10 and

Acre on May 14, 1948... In contrast, the Palestine Arabs did not seize any of the territories reserved for the Jewish state under the partition resolution."

—British author, Henry Cattan, "*Palestine, The Arabs and Israel.*"

"Menahem Begin, the Leader of the Irgun, tells how 'in Jerusalem, as elsewhere, we were the first to pass from the defensive to the offensive... Arabs began to flee in terror... Hagana was carrying out successful attacks on other fronts, while all the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter'. The Israelis now allege that the Palestine war began with the entry of the Arab armies into Palestine after 15 May 1948. But that was the second phase of the war; they overlook the massacres, expulsions and dispossessions which took place prior to that date and which necessitated Arab states' intervention."

—Sami Hadawi, "*Bitter Harvest.*"

"In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."

— Menahem Begin, cited by Noam Chomsky, "*The Fateful Triangle.*"

"[in taking farmland in the Golan Heights] We would send a tractor to plow some area... in the demilitarized area, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance further, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then we would use artillery and later the air force also, and that's how it was... The Syrians, on the fourth day of the war, were not a threat to us."

—Moshe Dayan, quoted in *The New York Times*, May 11, 1997

"The main danger which Israel, as a 'Jewish state', poses to its own people, to other Jews and to its neighbors, is its ideologically motivated pursuit of territorial expansion and the inevitable series of wars resulting from this aim..."

—Israeli professor, Israel Shahak, "*Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of 3000 Years.*"

"[Israel] must see the sword as the main, if not the only, instrument with which to keep its morale high and to retain its moral tension. Toward this end it may, no—it must—invent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation and- revenge... And above all—let us hope for a new war with the Arab countries, so that we may finally get rid of our troubles and acquire our space."

—Moshe Dayan, quoted in Livia Rokach, "*Israel's Sacred Terrorism.*"

5. "Israel's survival and military conquests against hostile Arabs is nothing short of miraculous."

"[In 1948] these regular [Arab] armies were ill equipped and lacked any central command to coordinate their efforts... [Jordan's] troops... [were] the only real fighting force among the Arab armies."

—"Our Roots Are Still Alive"

6. "Modern Israel is a modern democratic nation amid Arab totalitarian monarchies"

"Even if nobody lost their land, the [Zionist] program was unjust in principle because it denied majority political rights... Zionism, in principle, could not allow the natives to exercise their political rights because it would mean the end of the Zionist enterprise."

—Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, "*Original Sins.*"

"The abstention from formulating a constitution was no accident. The massive expropriation of lands and other properties from those Arabs who fled the country as a result of the War of Independence and of those who remained but were declared absent, as well as the confiscation of large tracts of land from Arab villages who did not flee, and the laws passed to legalize those acts—all this would have necessarily been declared

unconstitutional, null and void, by the Supreme Court, being expressly discriminatory against one part of the citizenry, whereas a democratic constitution obliges the state to treat all of its citizens equally."

—Israeli author, Boas Evron, "*Jewish State or Israeli Nation?*"

"The 1989 Israel High Court decision that any political party advocating full equality between Arab and Jew can be barred from fielding candidates in an election...[means] that the Israeli state is the state of the Jews...not their [the Arabs'] state."

—Professor Norman Finkelstein, "*Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict.*"

"Israel has crossed the threshold from 'the only democracy in the Middle East' to the only apartheid regime in the Western world."

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