

Anti-Israel Activism

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

*"May all who hate Zion,
Be put to shame and turned backward."*

Psalm 129:5

*"For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desire it for His habitation."*

Psalm 132:13

The last few years have witnessed the rise of anti-Israel activism within Evangelicalism in the United States. Liberals within Christendom have pretty much always been anti-Israel, choosing instead to support the terrorism of the recently invented people called "Palestinians." Writer Mark Tooley recently wrote about this upsurge in *The American Spectator* in an article entitled, "Countering Anti-Israel Evangelism."¹ This recent rise in anti-Israel activism is what provoked Tim LaHaye to come up with the theme for the 2013 Pre-Trib Study Group Conference this December 2-4 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, a little North of the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.² Our speakers will be demonstrating what the Bible teaches about Israel's future and the role God has in store for His chosen people and their land. We will be adding to the biblical foundation an analysis of important events in history and our banquet speaker will be demonstrating from international law why modern Israel has all the legal rights to Jerusalem and all of the land west of the Jordan River. This will be a seminal event!

HATERS OF ZION

The title of this year's conference is "Lovers of Zion: Why the Modern State of Israel is Biblically Significant." Yet, for those "Evangelicals" who oppose Israel and support the so-called "Palestinian" right to Israel's land, it is puzzling how anyone who claims to know and understand the Bible could in essence become a "hater of Zion". However, this is the net effect of those "Evangelicals" who oppose the modern state of Israel. As Dave Hunt once noted, the Old Testament calls the Lord the God of Israel 103 times; did the Lord somehow cease being the God of Israel in the New Testament?³ These people have come to believe that God is totally finished with the nation of Israel and they should be treated like any other nation in the world. In fact, they actually advocate for policies that in reality treat Israel worse than any other nation in the world. Somehow Israel is the cause of all the problems in the world. Thus, they are haters of Israel or Zion.

Tooley notes, "For the last several years anti-Israel evangelicals have hosted a 'Christ at the Checkpoint' conference in Bethlehem featuring some prominent U. S. evangelicals."⁴ Tooley goes on to cite the increase in similar anti-Israel conferences being held throughout the United States in fairly prominent evangelical churches. "Anti-Israel sentiment among evangelical elites," notes Tooley "is strongest in academia and in international relief and missions groups."⁵ In December, about the same time that our pro-Israel conference will be taking place, Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) will host a large conference "called *Impact Holy Land*, featuring prominent Palestinian clergy and U. S. evangelicals."⁶

In the past, before a movement of anti-Israel activism arose among evangelicals, there were always some who opposed the modern state of Israel, but they were generally pretty low-key and did not have conferences or engage in activism. It appears that with the rise of the postmodern influences upon evangelical churches during the last fifteen years, there has followed a decline in teaching and believing the Bible and a shift to a leftist social and political agenda in their circles. Since the secular left hates Israel, it makes sense that the evangelical left follows their lead on this matter. The anti-Israel “Evangelicals” are more concerned with what the world thinks of them than what the God of Israel teaches in the Bible.

Even though these “Evangelicals” usually despise the literal, normal, or proper reading of the Bible, no one can doubt that since Israel is mentioned over 2,500 times in Scripture, the Old and New Testaments, that there is at least a *prima facie* basis for a future for Israel. Paul writing in the New Testament in Romans 11:1 says of the nation of Israel, “God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” In the next verse he declares, “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew” (Rom. 11:2). Again Paul asserts, “From the standpoint of the gospel they [Israel] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they [Israel] are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28–29). Such reaffirmation of Israel’s election and calling by God in the New Testament should be enough for anyone who has just a slim amount of respect for the Bible. This means that nothing in the Old Testament has changed concerning the nation of Israel, including the dozens of prophecies that predict a future for God’s nation.

In Acts 5 when the Jewish leaders were persecuting the Apostles for preaching the gospel shortly after Jesus’ resurrection, a Pharisee named Gamaliel advised his fellow leaders as follows: “And so in the present case I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God” (Acts 5:38–39). I make the same kind of recommendation to the anti-Israel “Evangelicals”! If the modern state of Israel is of man then it will be overthrown within the providence of God. If it is an act of God, as we certainly believe it to be, then there is nothing you can do to impede His purposes. You will find yourselves one day to have been fighting against God, which is certainly a losing proposition.

LOVERS OF ZION

The Book of Zechariah is one of the last books to be written in the Old Testament canon, about 500 years before the birth of Christ. The book focuses on God’s city of Jerusalem. Zechariah in Hebrew means, “the Lord remembers.” The prophet wonders if God has forgotten about Jerusalem. “Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, ‘O LORD of hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou has been indignant these seventy years?’” (Zech. 1:12). That question was asked 2,500 years ago, so some today must think that the Lord has really forgotten Jerusalem, which is also known in the Bible as Zion. “And the LORD answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words” (Zech. 1:13). That must have been some conversation between the Lord and one of His angels. “So the angel who was speaking with me [Zechariah] said to me, ‘Proclaim, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts”’” (Zech. 1:14a). The Lord conveys seven promises about Jerusalem or Zion to Zechariah.

First, “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion” (Zech. 1:14b). The Lord cares greatly for Jerusalem and Zion, which is a revelation of His motives that will lead to His actions on their behalf. Second, “But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster” (Zech. 1:15). By now the Lord must be spitting mad with the nations treatment of Israel, which is why He is preparing Israel and the nations for the judgment of the tribulation. Third, “Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Jerusalem with compassion” (Zech. 1:16a). Perhaps part of what motivates our Lord in His dealings with Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion is compassion on His part generated by opposition to Israel on the part of the surrounding nations.

Fourth, “‘My house will be built in it,’ declares the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 1:16b). Of course, this refers in this context to the rebuilding of the second temple, which was destroyed by the Romans. However, it shows that the Lord sometimes is moved to act out sympathy for His people as a result of their mistreatment by the nations. Fifth, “and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem” (Zech. 1:16c). Measuring in the Bible often has to do with evaluation. This appears to be similar to the measuring of the third temple during the tribulation according to Revelation 11:1–2. Sixth, “Again, proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “My cities will again overflow with prosperity”” (Zech. 1:17a). Notice these cities, which include Jerusalem and surrounding cities in Judah will once again flourish, which was evident during the time of Christ as town like Bethlehem were once again flourishing Jewish towns and cities. How much more today are these cities flourishing in our own day? Seventh, “the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem” (Zech. 1:17b). This He did before the first coming of Christ and as we have seen in Romans 11, He has never cast away His people Israel. This would apply to today as God’s hand is upon the Jewish nation preparing them for their prophetic destiny which is under way in our own day.

CONCLUSION

In his article, Tooley suggests that pro-Israel evangelicals need to lighten-up on pressing the biblical arguments against anti-Israel “Evangelicals” and use pragmatic arguments instead. While I agree that we should use the full-spectrum of arguments in making the case for the modern state of Israel, I do not agree that we should use primarily pragmatic arguments, especially with those who claim to value the Bible. Our motive for our pro-Israel stance is first and foremost because the Bible teaches that God has a future plan for Israel. If we step away from the Bible then we are only one from becoming anti-Israel. Also, when one steps away from the Bible on any issue then one steps away from the ultimate motive for doing anything, especially when it comes to supporting Israel. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ The article is located on the internet at the following:

<http://spectator.org/archives/2013/09/13/countering-anti-israel-evangel>.

² For more information about the 22nd annual Pre-Trib Study Group Conference go to the following web page: www.pre-trib.org/conference. To register for the conference go to: www.pre-trib.org/registation.

³ Dave Hunt, *Judgment Day! Islam, Israel and the Nations* (Bend, OR: The Beraen Call, 2006).

⁴ Tooley, “Countering Anti-Israel Evangelism.”

⁵ Tooley, “Countering Anti-Israel Evangelism.”

⁶ Tooley, “Countering Anti-Israel Evangelism.”