

THE EVANGELICAL DEFECTION FROM MODERN ISRAEL

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Thesis: That the modern restoration of Israel is the beginning of the fulfillment of the Dry Bones prophecy of Ezekiel; that God has orchestrated this restoration for over 100 years through Zionism, premillennial Christianity and cooperative governments; that Satan has vigorously opposed this restoration through the Nazi Holocaust, International Communism, fanatical Islam, and amillennial Christianity, along with cooperative governments; that evangelical Christians formerly supported Israel's right to the Land; that many evangelicals have defected from support of Israel; and that evangelical Christians should remain firm in their support of Israel's Biblical ownership of and right to possess the Promised Land.

I. Evangelical Pro-Israel Attitude from 1948-1973

A. Viewed as fulfillment of prophecy

1. Popular works

- a. Billy Graham - HIS LAND
- b. Hal Lindsey - LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH

2. Scholarly works - Books by Pentecost, Walvoord, Ryrie, Feinberg

3. Six-Day War viewed as a Miracle War (1967)

B. Converged with Liberal support for Israel

1. Sympathy for Holocaust survivors

2. Socialist ideals of the Israeli Kibbutzim

3. Book and Film – EXODUS

II. Non-Evangelical Anti-Israel Attitude

A. World Council of Churches - sympathetic with concerns of Palestinian and Arab world

B. Roman Catholicism

1. Pro Arab sympathies
2. Concern about Jewish control over holy sites

C. Amillennialism - Israel has been judged, and any restoration of Israel would be tantamount to a denial of Christianity.

III. Evangelical Defection from pro-Israel Attitude from 1973-1994

A. Yom Kippur War (1973) - a turning point

1. Attack surprised Israel and the world
2. Israel almost defeated in five days - disrupted the image of the invincible Israelis
3. American difficulties in resupplying Israel
 - a. European resistance
 - b. Preoccupation with Watergate
4. Israel gained upper hand in three weeks, and threatened Egyptian army and Cairo
5. Russian intervention
6. Oil War - high price for supporting Israel
7. Israel seen as more of a liability than an asset

B. The Palestinian Issue

1. Terrorism - danger for those supporting Israel
2. Perception of Israel changes from victorious victim to inhumane oppressor of the helpless Palestinians

C. Biblical Arguments of Defectors

1. Began to question if Modern Israel is the fulfillment of prophecy
 - a. What if this is not the prophesied restoration, but merely a human effort?
 - b. What if the Arabs succeeded in their goal to remove the Jews from Israel? Would prophetic teachers be embarrassed?
 - c. Is there a contradiction between the Pre-Trib position and seeing modern Israel as the fulfillment of prophecy?
2. Began to question Israel's right to the Land
 - a. Palestinian Covenant requires obedience to possess the Land
 - b. Israel is in disobedience, has not received Christ, and therefore does not deserve possession of the Land - Ellisen, WHO OWNS THE LAND?
 - c. Israel cannot possess the Land until Christ returns and Israel receives Him.
3. Evangelicals should not support Israel because the Jews have not earned the right to possess the Land, and have less claim to it than the Palestinians

D. Development of Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Blurs the distinctions between Israel and the Church

2. Attempts to accommodate with and find large areas of escatological agreement with amillennialists

3. Adopts above Biblical arguments against Jewish ownership of the Land and against Israel as the beginning of the fulfillment of prophecy

4. Rejection of prior attitude of dispensationalism

IV. Dispensational Response to this Defection

A. Biblical Arguments of Traditional Dispensationalists

1. No contradiction between Pre-Tribulationism (imminent Rapture) and Israel as fulfillment of prophecy

a. No fulfillment needed before Rapture

b. Certain fulfillments needed before Tribulation begins with Signing of Treaty

(1) Israel must be in unbelief and capable of signing the Treaty with the Antichrist

(2) Antichrist must have an established power base

c. These fulfillments can be accomplished either before the Rapture or in a gap between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation

d. Some of these fulfillments (Israel revived as a nation in unbelief, etc.) are being accomplished before the Rapture

2. Distinction between ownership and possession of the Land

a. Jewish ownership of the Land is unconditional

b. Jewish possession of the Land is conditional

3. Actual possession has been by God's grace and by God's decision

a. Was Moses good enough to enter the Land? God said no, but would we be willing to judge Moses?

b. Was Israel totally obedient under Joshua? No (Achan, etc.), but God allowed them to possess the Land anyway

c. After the Babylonian Captivity, God allowed the restoration because the prophesied 70 years were over, not because Israel was obedient.

d. It is only by God's grace that Israel possessed the Land in the two previous occupations, so it is now with the 3rd occupation

e. Only God can determine whether Israel can or should possess the Land at any given time, and we are not in a position to determine this ourselves

4. Present restoration fits the Biblical pattern prophesied in Ezekiel 37

a. Dry bones returning from graveyard of the nations

b. Return is to a long deserted wasteland

c. Majority are in unbelief, but a faithful remnant remains

d. New state of Israel moving in a direction toward the Tribulation and the 2nd Coming of Christ

5. God's Response to Gentile Attitudes about Israel

- a. "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." (Gen. 12:3)
- b. Curse of Sihon & Og - Numbers 21:23, 33; Deut. 1:4
- c. Curse of Sanballat - Neh. 4:1, 7, 8,15
- d. Blessing of Rahab - Joshua 2:9, 17
- e. Blessing of Cyrus - Ezra 1: 1, 2; Isa. 44:28- -45:3
- f. Blessing of Capernaum Centurion - Luke 7:1-10
- g. Blessing of Cornelius - Acts 10:1-4; 22, 44-45

6. What if this is not the prophetic fulfillment? In the unlikely event that this is not the final restoration, we should support Israel's possession of the Land, because God has given them ownership of the Land, and only He has the right to determine if they should possess it at any given time. Who are we to question it?

7. Churches throughout the Gentile nations have a special obligation to support the churches among the Jews in Israel, as was the case in Paul's time Romans 15:25-27; I Cor. 16:1-3

B. Historical Arguments

1. The Dispensational movement in America and England was born in conjunction with the birth of Zionism in the Nine- tenth Century. Both movements were convinced that the Jews must return to the Land, and that Israel has a future Messianic destiny.

2. Lord Balfour, the Foreign Minister during WWI who produced the Balfour Declaration, was a strong Dispensational Christian. At his death, he was convinced his most important accomplishment was to provide for the return of the Jews to their homeland.

3. With the Balfour Declaration, the trickle of immigration that had already begun in the Zionist movement, became a veritable stream, as Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe flowed back to the Land, which was now a British Protectorate.

4. As God was moving throughout the nations to begin the long process of gradually restoring the Jews to the Land in preparation for the 2nd Coming of Christ, Satan realized that his time of incarceration and doom was drawing ever closer. He was prepared to try to stop this process at all costs.

5. The Holocaust must be seen, among other things, as an overwhelming attempt by Satan with his willing Nazi accomplices, to terminate the return of the Jews to the Land and nip the re-creation of Israel in the bud. How better to do that than to destroy all the Jews in a brutal systematic methodology. This is the only explanation

that makes any sense as to how the highly educated and cultured German nation could almost overnight become a monstrous death camp for Jews. The Devil made them do it, and they willingly cooperated with his scheme.

6. Satan's plan backfired. Instead of stopping the restoration of Israel, the Holocaust made the return of the Jews to the Land even more imperative. The stream now became a flood as hundreds of thousands of Jews sought refuge from an unfriendly world by returning to their own ancient Land.

7. Once again, the evangelical Christians, especially those of the dispensational persuasion, came to the moral support of Israel, and joined those of the liberal viewpoint in encouraging the creation of the new Jewish state.

8. Though Satan was thwarted in his attempt to stop the re-creation of Israel, he has continued in his efforts to destroy the young country in every way possible. He recruited the Soviet Union and others supply the Moslem Arabs with enough armaments to wage four full fledged wars against Israel (1947, 1956, 1967 and 1973), and has organized numerous fanatical terrorist groups with the destruction of Israel as their primary goal.

9. However, God's purposes will not be defeated, no matter what Satan and his accomplices do. With or without the help of evangelical Christians, the Lord will fulfill His goals of restoring Israel. He will furthermore complete His agenda of the Time of Jacob's Trouble and the glorious 2nd Coming of Christ.

10. I believe it is the will of God, however, for those of us in the Church of the Lord Jesus, as we wait for His imminent Rapture, to cooperate with and encourage God's separate but parallel plan for Israel, and especially to encourage the "Israel of God," the faithful believing remnant in Israel who are fellow heirs in the church. We must therefore forcefully resist the efforts of some evangelicals to withdraw moral and other support for Israel.