

The Churches Relationship to Israel

By Dr. Marvin Jones

Introduction

I want to welcome you to the *Center for the Christ, Faith, and Culture* presentation. Our mission of this Center seeks to equip the believer and the church with a biblical worldview while engaging the culture.

This evening, we will review *The Church's Relationship to Israel*. During the past year and a half, the world has witnessed a worldwide surge in antisemitism ostensibly due to the Oct 7, 2023, invasion of the Gaza Strip. Shortly thereafter, college campuses in the US exploded with protest against Jewish students and synagogues in major cities were burned. Hatred toward Jewish people and the State of Israel reverberates globally while violence escalates in the streets and on public transportation.

Antisemitism Today

Listen to the events that happened in our country and the world.

- On January 28, 2025 CNN reported that “At least 10 Jewish homes and business around Paris and a synagogue in the northern French city of Rouen have been defaced...”¹
- The *American Jewish Committee* reports that “with roughly three quarters (77%) of American Jews saying they feel **less** safe as a Jewish person in the US because of the October 7 attacks, it is no surprise that nearly six in ten (56%) of American Jews report changing their behavior over the past 12 months out of concern for their own safety.”²
- On the *national education* scene, the rise of antisemitism can be directly attributed to an ideology known as *Critical Race Theory* or CRT. The goal of CRT was to have minority students, through the offices of *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (DEI) represented on college campuses. I am going to quote an article from the Institute of National Security Studies entitled, *Heightened Antisemitism and Hatred of Israel: A Reflection of Ideological Shifts in American Society and Education*.
 - Following the Oct 7 massacre, DEI offices were notably **inactive** in addressing antisemitic incidents on campuses, because they do not recognize antisemitism as a form of oppression or discrimination. In other words, harassing a Jewish student is not discriminatory. To deface a synagogue is not antisemitic per the current college campus mindset.³
 - Where do these students go when they graduate from college with this ideological viewpoint? They become your teachers, your businesspeople, your government officials, and work their way into the American life with the mindset that Israel should not be supported by the American society or American government. We are just witnessing only the first wave of the issue.

¹ CNN Article “Jewish homes and business defaced with antisemitic graffiti in France.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/08/europe/antisemitic-graffiti-france-homes-businesses-intl-latam/index.html>. Accessed Feb. 5, 2025.

² American Jewish Committee, “For the First Time, American Jews Changing Behavior Due to Fear of Antisemitism.”

<https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-report-majority-of-american-jews-changing-behavior-due-to-fear-of-antisemitism> Accessed Feb 5, 2025

³ *Heightened Antisemitism and Hatred of Israel: A Reflection of Ideological Shifts in American Society and Education*.

Page 3. <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/new-antisemitism-us-campuses/> Accessed on Feb 7th, 2025.

- A Harvard/CAPS poll taken two weeks after Oct 7, 2023, revealed that 51% of Gen Z (born between 1997-2012 so they are 13-25 years old today) agreed that “the killing of 1200 Israeli civilians and kidnapping of another 250 civilians can be justified by the grievances of Palestinians.” By December, that figure had risen to 60%.⁴
- On the National Political Scene: in 2023 The United Nations General Assembly adopted 21 condemnations. Two were against Russia. The USA, North Korea, Iran, Syria, and Myanmar all received 1 condemnation. Israel received **14 condemnations** for occupation of the Golan Heights to an oil spill that happened 18 year earlier.⁵
- Since 2015, the United Nations has passed 140 resolutions against Israel and only 68 against all other countries combined in that same period.⁶

Conclusion: Antisemitism is a world phenomenon that has only gained momentum throughout the world in the latter 20th and early 21st centuries.

Palestine or Bust (early 20th Century)

Now consider the attitude of the United Nations and the American Government in the early 20th century up to the creation of Israel in 1948. The British Empire occupied Palestine after WWI and gave it up to the vote of the United Nations in 1948 (previously, the British controlled the land it was under Muslim rule through the Ottoman Empire for nearly 400 years). During the phase of the British Colonial Empire era, their government recognized the right of Israel to exist.

The Road to Palestine begins at The Balfour Declaration of 1917. This Declaration was signed by the British Government to adopt the policy of *Zionism*.⁷ This led to creating a policy that recognized a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This also allowed all Jewish people to migrate to Palestine. The US government also adopted this policy, and it became a part of the United States political platform when President Woodrow Wilson recognized the Balfour Declaration. The League of Nations (later known as the United Nations) adopted the Balfour Declaration in 1922.

What this means is that two powerful nations recognized Israel’s right to exist (1918 and early 1922). The result of Britain and America’s recognition is that, “A large-scale Jewish migration to Palestine began, accelerated by Jewish people fleeing Nazism in Europe. Between 1918 and 1947, the Jewish population in Palestine increased from 6 percent to 33 percent.”⁸

Twenty-three years after the League of Nations adopted the Balfour Declaration, President Harry S. Truman made it his personal policy and eventual political policy to accept the Balfour Declaration as adopted by former President Woodrow Wilson. However, Truman also recognized that a Soviet-Arab coalition could control and restrict the oil supply to the US. Consequently, there was no direct US intervention to create a Jewish state. For that matter, Truman led a joint committee of British

⁴ Mark Penn, Dritan Nesho, and Stephen Ansolabehere, Harvard/CAPS/Harris Poll (United State: Harvard/CAPS/Harris December 13-14), https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HHP_Dec23_KeyResults.pdf. See also, Jeff Myers, *Should Christians Support Israel?* (Summitt Ministries, 2023), 16.

⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷ Zionism is the word for the immigration policy of Jewish people returning to Palestine (now Israel). An interesting side note here: It is often claimed that Zionism arose out of the Dispensational theology so attractive in the early 20th century in America. That claim is inaccurate as the movement arose from Theodore Herzl and his successor Chaim Weizmann who was British and Jewish and not a Christian. He petitioned the British government to issue a statement in support of Israel having a homeland. His work produced the Balfour Declaration.

⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/27/palestine-and-israel-brief-history-maps-and-charts>. Accessed Feb, 14, 2025.

and Americans in creating the Anglo-American Committee. This committee recommended to the United Nations that a “trusteeship agreement aimed at bringing the two people together be established...that two autonomous states be established...”⁹ This committee moved the focus away from the US to more of a political world focus upon Palestine.

Just an interesting tidbit about President Truman. He was an evangelical Christian who believed that God was bringing the nation of Israel back into existence. He was also a Democrat. Here are two items on the Democratic Platform of 1944 that Truman embraced.

- World peace is of transcendent importance. Our gallant sons are dying on the land, on sea, and in the air. They do not die as Republicans. They do not die as Democrats. They die as Americans. We pledge that their blood shall not have been shed in vain. America has the opportunity to lead the world in this great service to mankind. The United States must meet the challenge. ***Under Divine Providence***, she must move forward to her destiny (my assessment- this moved America away from isolationism to become a leader in world affairs).
- We favor the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization, and such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth (in other words, the Democratic Party wanted to help create a new Jewish nation).¹⁰

So, in 1944-47, the political world stage is set for the United Nations creation of a Partition Plan.¹¹ This plan put in motion to have the land occupied by two distinct people with two differing provinces but not nations. The UN resolution opened the door for two nations but they did not create them. The Jewish population embraced the plan, but the Arab/Palestinians opposed the plan. The Jewish consult took it one step further and declared independence as a nation. The result is that today, as in 1948, we are living with the Palestinian problem in the Middle East.

America, Soviet Union, and Israel

At midnight on May 14, 1948, the provisional government of Israel declared itself a new nation. They named their new state “Israel” and adopted the 50-year-old flag known as the *Star of David*. This new nation recognized that war with the Arabs was impending because of their independence. They did not know if any nation or world leader would recognize the new Israeli government as a new and independent nation. Even after their Independence, the Jewish people did not have “access to the Old City of Jerusalem for 19 years.”¹² They have been fighting for access to their land continuously since 1948.

“On the same date, the United States, in the person of President Harry Truman, recognized the provisional Jewish government as *de facto* of the Jewish state.”¹³ This happened 11 minutes after Israel declared themselves a new nation and Truman became known as the first world leader to

⁹ National Archives, Press Release Announcing U.S. Recognition of Israel (1948), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/press-release-announcing-us-recognition-of-israel>. Accessed, Feb 13, 2025

¹⁰ Democratic Party Platforms, 1944. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1944-democratic-party-platform>. Accessed Feb 13, 2025.

¹¹ Partition Plan was the name for two provinces to exist, one Jewish and the other Arab.

¹² Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel*, (Broadman and Holman, Nashville, TN., 2023), 107. Israel gained access to the Old City of Jerusalem after their victory in the 1967 Six-Day War.

¹³ Press Release 1948, Accessed, Feb 13, 2025.

recognize Israel's sovereignty.¹⁴ Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union followed American recognition of Israel on May 17, 1948.

Back to the Beginning (OT Overview)

This section of the paper will consider the founding of the nation through the Abrahamic Covenant to determine if the promises to Abraham reveal a perpetual Jewish national existence. In other words, is there a connection with modern Israel to ancient biblical Israel?

Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis chapters 12, Gen 15, and Gen 17. In Abraham's life and in the life of human history, God initiated the plan of salvation on a covenantal level. The focus of redemption is now found in the person of Abraham and his offspring. Stanley D. Toussaint stated, "This is the grandfather of all of Israel's subsequent covenants and the hope of the world."¹⁵

The meaning of Toussaint's statement is that all following Covenants made with and to Israel actually enlarge some aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Basically, the Abrahamic Covenant is foundational to the national and spiritual life of Israel. This is where the nation of Israel begins! Think of it this way, the nation of Israel is bound to God's plan of salvation. This concept is stated emphatically throughout the Old and New Testaments.

God's Promise to Abraham began as a personal promise but was foundational to the nation. Abraham was promised an heir or the Seed of his own body. In Gen 12-50 those chapters reveal the Lord's work through Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and Joseph. Those are the Patriarchs of the nation. Those men constitute the founding Fathers of Israel.

Israel's National Development

The nation progressed and developed through the lineage of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham's seed and immediate offspring was his son Issac. The national promises of the Abrahamic Covenant flowed generationally to each subsequent offspring that God had chosen to be the recipient of the Covenant blessing. However, the personal promise concerning the Seed is that it would be innumerable as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16), or the stars of the sky (Gen 22:17, Gen 15:15). In other words, the Seed was not only personal but national. Let it be noted that the seed would constitute a "Great Nation," (Gen 12:2). "The concept of 'nation' in the Old Testament involved race, government, and territory."¹⁶ This means that the physical offspring are not only God's promise to Abraham, but the promise includes that the seed, his offspring, will develop into a nation.

The Territory or Land is also included in the promise of God to Abraham. Gen 12 depicts that Abraham is called upon to journey to a land that God will show him. The land is connected to the promise of Abraham's seed becoming a great nation. In other words, the land was not only for

¹⁴ The actual telegraph states, "This Government was informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine and that recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the *de facto* authority of the State of Israel." Signed by Harry Truman. See <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/press-release-announcing-us-recognition-of-israel>. Accessed, Feb 13, 2025.

¹⁵ Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Doctrine of the Future and the Concept of Hope," in *Eschatology: Biblical Historical and Practical Approaches*, eds., Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R Kreider (Kregel Academic, Grand Rapids, MI., 2016), pg. 56.

¹⁶ R.E. Clement, "אֶרֶץ" (Hebrew word for land) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:428, in Robert Saucy's, *The Case for Progressive Dispensation*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 1993), 43.

Abraham but for the nation of Israel. Two issues about the land: 1) it was given to Abraham as an everlasting possession (Gen 13:15; 17:8), 2) the land is connected as God's sign of the Covenant (Gen 15:18).

The reason this is important is that some bible experts make the attempt to say that all the covenants are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Thus, the land, in their view, now is a "heavenly" or "spiritual" possession. This actually means the promises are no longer to Israel but have been transferred to the Church. In this scheme, Israel is not the same people promised to Abraham and the land is not part of God's plan of redemption.

It stretches the imagination to think anyone can make the promise of God to make Israel a great nation and to give them a territory can be singled out as now fulfilled without doing an injustice to the meaning of "a possession" forever. If this view is correct, the promise could not include "everlasting" but it would have to indicate the land is a temporary blessing. That is not the meaning of the biblical text in Genesis. That kind of interpretation just does not work.

Now here is the counter reply: "But Dr. Jones, Israel forfeited the Land in 587 BC and never again possessed it until 1948. For 2500 years there was not a people group designated as Israel and there was no nation. So how can you say that the seed promise is still intact, and the land promise will be fulfilled to them? In other words, there are people who do not think the modern-day nation is God's work of regathering his people back to the land."

Two passages in the OT that confirm that even while in exile and under God's judgment, God will remember his promise to Abraham; 1) Amos 9: 14-15 states that *God will restore the fortunes of Israel and...that I will plant them in their land and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land* that I have given them, 2) Jeremiah 30:3 (31:17, 37-40) reveals that future action of God to Israel. The Lord says, *For behold the days are coming when I restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.*

Since the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, God in Christ is the only person who can bring about its promises. Therefore, it is appropriate to say Jesus will fulfill all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to His people, Israel. Please notice that even in Israel's rebellion and ultimate rejection (Neh 9:7-9), God has never or will ever abandoned His people. God remembers and fulfills His promises.

Jesus and The Abrahamic Covenant (Continuation in the NT)

Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and have a son. This newborn would be the promise fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant¹⁷ (the promise of a King) which is based upon the Abrahamic Covenant. Luke 1: 54-55 says that Mary's praise is connected back to the Abrahamic Covenant. In other words, she understood Gabriel's announcement as the Messiah being the beginning of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant's fulfillment. The subject matter of Mary's praise is God the Father.

Gabriel relayed the message in terms of the Davidic Covenant which was an outflow of the Abrahamic Covenant. Gabriel states in Luke 1: 32-33, *He will be great and will be called the Son of*

¹⁷ The Davidic Covenant was made to King David by the Lord promising him that his lineage would be the Royal Line and the rightful heir to sit as King in Israel. The center of the Kingdom was Jerusalem.

the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Mary's response in her song is to praise God for his promises to Abraham. Luke 1:54-55, *He has helped his Servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and to his offspring forever.* The seed promise now not only includes Israel but those who follow the Lord, like Abraham did, by faith. This is the aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant of "seed" and the Davidic Covenant of "King." Jesus is our King!

In Mary's praise she sings the covenant concept that the beginning of the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant "was the means by which the Abrahamic Covenant would be accomplished."¹⁸ Therefore, Luke finds the connection between the Davidic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant.

What about the Land Promise?

The fact that both Jew and Gentile constitute the true seed does not rule out God's promise to Israel. In the Abrahamic Covenant the fact is that the promise of the Seed is not tied to promise of a great nation. The two are separate. Israel, as the seed, will be a great nation but that Seed promise includes the Gentiles without respect to the national promise.¹⁹ Let me clarify this statement, I do not have to live in Israel to be saved. The land promise was made to ethnic Israel but not to Gentiles. We are part of the Seed promise but not a part of the land promise.

Does that leave the question of national Israel open ended? Is the Land forfeited by a heavenly kingdom? In other words, did the land promise go away in favor of a new Kingdom without the land? The idea of Israel as a national entity did not die out with Jesus and the apostles.

In Acts 1:6 one of the apostles asked, *Lord will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* The question assumes that national ethnic Israel will be restored to the Davidic/Solomon empire status. The Lord's answer is quite revealing concerning the Kingdom question. In Acts 1:7 *He said to them, It is not for you to know the seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.*"

The Lord did not deny the existence or even the future existence of a Kingdom. Nor does the question presuppose that a spiritual kingdom existed. Whoever asked the question is thinking in terms of an earthly Kingdom as the word "restore" implies.

Since the anticipation was that the Messiah would have a kingdom then what happened to the throne of David, that resided in Jerusalem, over Israel in their land? In other words, what happened to the promise to Abraham that his offspring would have a land forever? What happened to the promise that God would give Israel a new heart? That His people would have a heart for God? Did all that go away because of the Lord's predominate work in the church and through the Gentiles.

¹⁸ Craig A. Blasing and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, (Bridgepoint Book, Wheaton, IL, 1993), 188.

¹⁹ This was the "argument" of Acts 15. Do Gentiles have to become Jewish to be saved? The Jerusalem Council concluded that Gentiles do not need to embrace the Jewish Laws in order to be saved.

Thy Kingdom Come

Every time the Lord's prayer is recited it is always prayed, as the Lord did, in future tense.²⁰ Meaning: We are praying that the Kingdom will come to earth. Earlier in the paper, I tried to make the case that the Land promise was connected to Israel and still in view throughout the Old and New Testaments (see section, *Israel's National Development* on page 4). The paper argues that the Abrahamic promise of the land was unconditional (regardless of their sin) and eternal (it is Israel's land forever).

How does this work with the seed expansion of the Abrahamic Covenant? The Abrahamic Covenant also promises that Abraham's offspring, Israel, would be a blessing to all nations. If we take the word "nation" as being representative of all the people from Gentile nations, then we still have a geographical issue involved. This does away with any thoughts of making the land a heavenly home as the primary promise to Abraham.

It is true that King Jesus reigns from heaven. Does that mean that our Lord is fulfilling all the promises from Heaven? Not at all. The presentation of Peter in Acts 3:21 states that *heaven must receive (Jesus) until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago*. The Lord reigns in Heaven now but there is a timetable that governs the reign in heaven. That timetable is based upon when God decides to restore all things on earth.

Question: *When does God restore all things?* Answer: *At the Second Coming!* In Acts 3:20 the restoration is at the time when the Father sends the Son back to earth. In Matthew 24:29-30 Jesus said that he will come back with great glory. In Matt 25:1 the Lord speaks of his coming glory and will sit on the throne? **What throne?**

Is Jesus coming back to Tuscaloosa? Dallas? Nashville at the SBC Headquarters? No, not at all. He is coming back to Mt Olive in Jerusalem, where the throne will be, where the Kingdom will be, located in Israel. The second coming fulfills the Land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant! The Second Coming also answers the Lord's Prayer. The Kingdom will come to earth!

Therefore, if the Land promise is fulfilled at the Second Coming, and the Seed promise is being realized in the present by the cross, what about ethnic Israel? Why is the Kingdom located in Jerusalem instead of Auburn, Alabama?

Jesus Weeps for Jerusalem

The Lord looked out at the lostness of Jerusalem, and he wept over the people who rejected him. The Lord's heart was broken over their decision to remain in spiritual blindness. Romans 11:25 says a "partial hardening" (ESV) or spiritual blindness (KJV) has happened to the Jewish nation corporately and, I think, individually. Yet, in the same book of Romans, Paul's desire is for his Kinsmen, his brethren, to be saved (Romans 9:3). He even goes on to say that God has not rejected His people (Romans 11:1) but has a remnant that will be saved in the future (Romans 11:25-27). Those passages are also in future tense language. Paul makes that case that Israel is lost but there will come a corporate salvation to the remnant of Israel. Think of it this way: the gospel was successful among the Gentiles, and in the future, it will successfully save Jewish people.²¹

²⁰ In Matthew 6:10 the word "come" is an Aorist Active Imperative 3rd Singular. Per David Allan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* (Broadman and Holman; Nashville, TN., 2009), 185, "All imperatives refer to future time, since a command by its very nature refers to a time subsequent to that of the command itself."

²¹ Fred G. Zaspel and James M. Hamilton, "A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View," in *Three Views of Israel and the Church*, eds., Jared Compton and Andrew David Naselli (Kregel Academic, Grand Rapids, MI., 2018), 114.

Currently, though, Israel, as a corporate nation, is still in disbelief. They do not accept Jesus as Messiah. Their rejection of God means that the Seed component of the Abrahamic Covenant includes the Gentiles (as it always did). The inclusion of the Gentiles, as stated earlier, does not nullify the Land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Again, currently, the Kingdom is here in the hearts of people but not actualized in its totality until the Lord returns to Jerusalem. The reign of Jesus, on the throne of King David, proves he is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel (Davidic Covenant) and the Savior of the world (Abrahamic Covenant - all families of the earth will be blessed). There will be no more weeping over lost Jerusalem or Israel because at the second coming the remnant of Israel will embrace the Lord Jesus as Messiah (Romans 11: 26-27). The Lord will restore the Kingdom in Israel which is the answer to the Acts 1:6-7 question.

Israel and the Church

The relationship of Israel to the Church has been a long and primarily successful. Unfortunately, there have been occasions and periods of time when the Church also wanted Jewish people to die out but that is not the norm. The Church, in the mid-twentieth century to the present, has encouraged national Israel in times when no one else would. Here are a few commands about Jerusalem and Israel from the Old and New Testaments that are still relevant for the Church.

- Romans 11:26 Pray that the spiritual blindness be removed
- Romans 10:1 Pray for their Salvation
- Psalm 122:6 Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem
- Psalm 122:7 Seek the good of Jerusalem and Israel
- Romans 11:11-15 realize that our salvation is connected to their rejection of God and learn the lesson they leave to us (never say “no” to the Lord).

Please understand that the Christian Church should support God’s work to the Jewish nation but that we do not condone all that Israel does in its political and military life. Specifically, Christians are never to condone violent actions if they are unnecessary. In other words, if there is no justification for a war then we should not support any country, including Israel, to engage in terrorism or war. Lost people will act like lost people and that is the current state of Israel.

The Church should support Israel as God is still working through them. God will use the remnant to minister to each nation in the Kingdom. As such, the Church must recognize that the Amos 9 passage (and many other OT Scriptures) will be fulfilled in that God will bring His ethnic people back to the land. For that matter, all nations will be blessed includes nations worshipping King Jesus in the Millennium. Rev 21:24 makes the case that even Kings will lead the nations to the New Jerusalem on this earth.

Even though Israel is spiritually blinded in their temporary state of being, there will come a day when the current state of spiritual blindness will be replaced by spiritual life. Thus, the current state of spiritual blindness may be the national entity that God uses to “usher in” the new spiritual people known as ethnic Israel and the corporate salvation of that remnant.

As always, Pray for the peace of Israel.

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Movies about the Modern Founding of Israel

Cast a Giant Shadow (1966). Kirk Douglas plays the first General of the New, Modern Israeli Army, David “Micky” Marcus. This movie is semi-biographical. Also stars Yul Brenner and Frank Sinatra.

The Exodus (1960). Starring Paul Newman. This is about the ship that the British would not allow to port. The ship contained Jewish refugees from Auschwitz. The Movie is also semi-biographical.

Both are older movies but very insightful for the founding of the modern nation of Israel.