

Appendix 1: Implications of the Bible Overview study for our understanding of the political state of modern day Israel.

This is a hot button issue politically and religiously. Should our national government support Israel unreservedly or with reservation? Israel is described as God's chosen people in the Old Testament - how does this influence our thinking? Can we be "Pro-Jesus, Pro-Israel, Pro-Palestine" or do we need to take sides? This debate affects our country and our church.

- **The overarching question is:**
 - Who inherits the Old Testament promises God made to Abraham and the nation of Israel?

- **Two perspectives are as follows:**
 1. Ethnic Jews (physical descendants of Abraham).
 2. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus.

1. Ethnic Jews inherit the OT promises God made to Abraham and the nation of Israel. This perspective is held by those who hold to an idea called Zionism.

a. What is Zionism?

- 1896 : an international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and later for the support of modern Israel.¹

b. What are the basic ideas and affiliations of Zionism?²

- The creation of the political state of Israel in 1948 marks the beginning of the end times.³
- God is orchestrating events and politics in the middle east, and "peril awaits those who presume to say that God is finished with his chosen people".
- God promised this land to Israel (Genesis 15:8) and God does not change.
- Specific Biblical Prophecy is being fulfilled in our lifetime.
- All of the modern nations will be judged for their response to Israel. Those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed (as per God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:3).
- War in the Middle East will lead to the Second Coming of Christ.
- Versions of "Dispensational" End Times Theology with an emphasis on tribulation, the rapture, and a millennial kingdom. The nation of Israel plays a prominent role.
 - **Summary: In order to be in line with God's plans for the world, nations should always support national ethnic Israel against their enemies.**

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

² Gary M. Burge, Wheaton College - notes from "Challenging Christian Zionism" seminar hosted at UFV on October 24, 2014.

³ In AD 70 (less than 40 years after Jesus' ministry), a Jewish revolt led to Roman clampdown & destruction of the temple. A second Jewish revolt in 135 AD resulted in Jerusalem being destroyed. After this the "nation" of Israel didn't exist until after WWII. World leaders rallied to create a political state for Israel after the Holocaust.

2. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus inherit the OT promises God made to Abraham and the nation of Israel. This perspective is argued using the following rationale:

#1 We need to understand who the "true" Israel is.

- In the Old Testament God identified the descendants of Abraham as his chosen people (Exodus 19:4-6) but they were required to obey in order to obtain the benefits He promised them. Those who didn't obey, didn't enter his "rest" (Hebrews 3:16-19).
- When John the Baptist began preaching and teaching he warned that being descended from Abraham didn't give people special status - they needed to bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:8, Matthew 3:9, John 8:39-47).
- Paul argues that, throughout history, the true children of Abraham are those who respond to God with faith (Romans 4:11-17, 9:1-8, Galatians 3:7-9, 3:29).

#2 We need to understand how Jesus relates to the OT promises made to Abraham & Israel.

- Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of the Law & the Prophets. All the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in his ministry (Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:44, 2 Corinthians 1:20).
- The promise made to Abraham (I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, all the nations on earth will be blessed by you) is fulfilled in Christ. He is the blessing promised for all nations on earth, and now all who bless Him will be blessed and all who curse Him will be cursed (Gal 3:14).
- Jesus is the Davidic King promised to the nation of Israel, and is the only one who could fulfill the requirements of their law (the Mosaic covenant).
 - "the Israel that inherited these promises comprises of one person only, Jesus himself (Gal. 3:16). Because he alone is obedient, he alone is the true Israel (Luke 3:21-4:13) who inherits all that God promised..." Now it is possible for people to inherit God's promises by being in Christ and everyone who accepts Jesus is "in him" (Ga. 3:27-29)⁴

#3 We need to understand how Jesus and the apostles talked about Jesus' relationship to Israel

- During His ministry, Jesus was reconstructing the nation of Israel around himself. He chose 12 disciples as a parallel to the 12 tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:9-14). He is the cornerstone of this new chosen people which consists of Jew and Gentile (1 Peter 2:4-10).
- Gentiles have been grafted into Israel's story. Judaism is the root supporting both Jewish and Gentile Christians (Romans 11:11-24). This position is often labelled *fulfillment theology*, which is different from *replacement theology*.⁵

⁴ Bible Overview Part 2, Briefing #8, Page 57

⁵ <https://rts.edu/resources/what-are-some-misconceptions-about-covenant-theology/>

- This interpretation does not give Christians a right to disregard the “root” and treat ethnic Jews carelessly (Romans 11:18-20). God has the power to grant repentance and belief to ethnic Jews (Romans 11:23-24), and scripture indicates that He has a plan for them yet (Romans 11:25-26).
 - **Summary: Israel is a legitimate nation and Judaism is a legitimate religion, but we need to be discerning, and not one-sided in our political and religious support for the various people groups who live in modern day Palestine, because the Old Testament promises to God are inherited by Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus.**

Inter-Christian discussion analyzing Zionism argues the following:⁶

- Anti-semitism is a real issue, and should be rejected by Christians, but that doesn't mean that nations must unquestioningly support Israel in order to please God.

Why? Because of the following:

- In the Biblical Narrative, the Land was promised to Israel via God's covenant with Abraham, but they were warned that they needed to remain faithful to God to stay in the land.
 - Leviticus 25:23 - Israel has the right to use the land, but the land is God's.
 - Leviticus 18:25, 28 - God would allow them to be expelled if they were disobedient
- When God was giving the original nation of Israel guidelines for building their nation, he required that they treat non-Israelites the same as Israelites.
 - Leviticus 19:33-34, Numbers 35:15, Deuteronomy 24:14, Leviticus 19:33, Deuteronomy 1:16, Deuteronomy 24:17, Leviticus 24:22
- Most the content of Biblical Prophecy concerning the return from exile points to a rescue far beyond a mere return to the land
 - Isaiah 9 & 11: the coming of the Prince of Peace and new creation is not merely a return to the literal land.
 - Ezekiel 36-37: the true problem is not being exiled to Babylon, but sin. God's promised rescue is a reversal of the fall: cleansing from sin, new hearts, blessings of fruitfulness and multiplication.
 - Isaiah 40 is more than a rescue Babylon: it's a rescue from sin
 - Isaiah 53-54 describes the work of the suffering servant redeeming God's people so that they can live in relationship with God in a glorified city: something beyond the return from Babylonian exile.
- Just as the prophets used language from the Exodus in their prophecies, pointing to a rescue from slavery, the NT writers pick up this language of a rescue from exile and apply it to rescue from slavery to sin.

⁶ Ibid.

- The New Testament transforms Old Testament Ideas about the land promise. No apostle preaches or teaches about it.
 - Acts 1:6-8 - Jesus tells them not to concern themselves with a political kingdom but tells disciples to go into all the world
 - Romans 4:13 - the language around the land of Israel is changed to - 'Abraham inheriting the world'.
 - We need to be cautious about saying that an Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled by a specific situation which happens in our lifetime. People have been wrong about this countless times over the centuries.

Where does Northview land on this topic?

- Most pastors and elders would argue the second position: Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus inherit the OT promises made to Abraham and the nation of Israel. Our conviction would be, therefore, that:
 - Israel is a legitimate nation and Judaism is a legitimate religion, but we need to be discerning, and not one-sided in our political and religious support for the various people groups who live in modern day Palestine.
 - All people in “political Israel” need to believe in Jesus to be saved eternally. They are not automatic recipients of God’s blessing now and eternally because of their ethnicity.⁷
- This is a non-confessional issue.⁸ People in our congregation hold a variety of perspectives.
- Some materials from our Canadian Conference of MB Churches are available here:
 - [Article 6: The Nature of the Church & FAQ 16](#)
 - [Q & R Corner in MB Herald: Israel and the Church](#)

Describing Implications of Fulfillment Theology, the Explanatory Notes to our MB Confession of Faith state: *As part of this, [there will be times when] Christians will need to stand in opposition to those who attack national Israel, and also times when, like the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Isa 1, 5, 10, 58, 59), Christians will need to stand in opposition to national Israel when it promotes policies and actions that encourage injustice and violence. In all cases, Christians are not anti-Muslim or anti-Semitic but pro-peace, pro-reconciliation, and pro-invitation to Jesus.*⁹

⁷ There has been recent scholarly debate on this topic under an umbrella ideology called “the new Perspective on Paul.” If you want to read a comprehensive book on this perspective, we would recommend reading the book [Paul and the Gift](#) by John M. G. Barclay.

⁸ A non-confessional debate is one in which a person’s position on this topic does not place them inside or outside of our church membership structure. We welcome people who hold both positions to join Northview and to serve in a variety of roles at Northview.

⁹ [CCMBC Confession of Faith](#), Article 6, FAQ 16, (page 160-161)

Appendix 2: Relation Between Old & New Testaments:

- **God's nature does not change.**
 - His character and priorities are consistent throughout scripture. The "God of the Old Testament" is the same as the "God of the New"
 - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - coexistent, coequal, coeternal,
 - Hebrews 13:8

- **God's plan does not change (Ephesians 1:3-10),**
 - but it was revealed to people in progressive stages. Covenant promises build on each other until they are fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.

- **The nature of salvation does not change.**
 - In both the Old and New Testaments people are saved by God's grace, through faith, not by works (Exodus, Galatians, Hebrews).
 - But, in both the Old and New Testaments "true faith" is authenticated by works. Our lives must be in alignment with our profession, or our profession of faith is false.

- **God's Moral Law does not change.¹⁰**
 - The 10 Commandments, and other laws which communicate ethics do not change. (eg. Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbour as yourself).
 - Jesus teaches God's moral law and increases (rather than decreases) ethical standards, emphasizing that this isn't an outward show. Hearts must be right before God.
 - NT Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
 - 1 Peter 1:15 - You shall be holy for I am holy
 - Moral laws define sin.

- **God's Ceremonial Law / Levitical Law is fulfilled in the New Testament**
 - OT Laws which highlight our need for purification, cleansing and atonement are fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.
 - "[In the old covenant] ... gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation." (Heb 9:9-10)
 - "Israel was to observe various ceremonial laws - for example those pertaining to clean and unclean food. To be ceremonially clean was symbolic of being morally holy. This explains why the text on clean and unclean food is bracketed by references to Israel being "a people holy to the LORD" (vv 2,21).

¹⁰ The following threefold divisions of law is one model used to understand this topic. Its usefulness is debated, but we think it is a helpful starting point! For more info see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/ceremonial-law.html>
Some questions debated are: which category applies to Sabbath (Day of Rest / Lord's Day) / Tithing etc?

- In the new covenant the requirement to observe these ceremonial laws has been abrogated (*repealed, revoked, rescinded*), because they have served their purpose of pointing to the perfect holiness of Christ (Col 2:16-23, Heb 9:1 - 10:26)¹¹
- The requirements of God's moral and ceremonial Law is fulfilled in the work and person of Jesus.
 - Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God's moral law
 - Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice
 - Jesus is now our prophet, our priest and our king

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Luke 22:19-20

Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31

- **God's civil law was designed for the Old Testament nation of Israel and, while we can draw principles from this law, it is not directly applicable to all Christians today.**
 - For example, the laws in Exodus 21-23 are given to help Israel know how to govern themselves now that they are no longer slaves in Egypt. There are rules about how to treat slaves, how much to reimburse someone if their livestock is hurt or injured etc. As Christians, we can learn about God's priorities and his desire for people by reading these laws, and we can think through how these principles might apply in our political context but we don't live in the same time period as Israel, so there is some work we need to do to figure out how to apply the civil law.
- **The “mediator” changes under the new covenant.**
 - In the OT, Moses “mediated” between God and the people (Deut 9:25-29). Through the Mosaic Law, God showed them how to live. **The law stood between God and the people. To please God, one had to follow the law.**
 - In the NT, Jesus “mediates” between God and us (Hebrews 9:15, 12:24). Jesus has fulfilled the requirements of the ceremonial law. **Jesus now stands between God and us. To please God, we have to follow Jesus:** relying on the sufficiency of His sacrifice for our salvation, and by living in obedience to His teaching - the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), (1 John 2:3-6).

¹¹ Gospel Transformation Bible Footnotes: Deuteronomy 14:1-21, (Crossway: 2013), p 237.