

Milk & HONEY & BLOOD

For Every Action...

Dispensationalism and the Blessing of Israel

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 27:26-29

Zechariah 2:6-12

In the 1840s, a new method of Bible interpretation, Dispensationalism, began among Plymouth Brethren. The idea was that different sets of rules applied during different eras (or dispensations). Dispensationalism became popular in America with the printing of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). Following the dissemination of these ideas “it is estimated that 40 million Christians in the United States now embrace the idea that the present-day state of Israel created by the United Nations in 1948 is by divine decree and is a sign that we live in ‘the last days.’” (Reed Lessing, “Whose Land Is It?”, *Lutheran Witness*)

THE LAST DAYS

Luke 21:24

Amos 9:9-15

Revelation 16:12-16

Traditionally, the church has understood Revelation to give encouragement to churches under persecution; this is a message relevant for all generations. 20th century American Christians did not generally experience violent persecution for the faith. In the climate of a burgeoning superpower, a new way to read Revelation broke through. Pre-millennialism read Revelation as events mostly in the future. This reading tied a loss of American Christian influence to entrance into “the last days.” The apostles of the New Testament described the “last days” as beginning with the Resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2, 1 John 2:18). The restoration of Israel, prophesied by Amos, was quoted by James at the first council of Jerusalem to describe uncircumcised Gentile belief in Jesus (Acts 15:13-21). Jewish believers sold their property in the holy land to extend the evangelical mission (Acts 4:32-37). In the last days, they understood that the blessings of Israel were in the Son of David, not in the land (Romans 9:1-8).

TWIN TOWERS

Ezekiel 38:3-16 & Revelation 20:7-10

In the first century AD, the Jewish Zealots believed they could force God’s hand by agitating for war with Rome. If they could just light the match, God would have to come and save Jerusalem. Instead, as Jesus prophesied (Matthew 24:2-8), Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were barred from entering the Holy Land for generations. Similar attitudes have grown up among modern Evangelicals, believing war in the Holy Land must happen for Jesus to return. When a miracle is expected, the calculus of what might be too risky changes.

In two party political systems, extremism on one side can beget extremism on the opposing side. While Evangelicals lobbied for unwavering support for the nation of Israel, academics increasingly viewed Israel as the primary cause of injustice in the Holy Land. Academics tend to take the side of Palestinians “occupied” by Israel, justifying a Palestinian war of insurrection.

This week, the US House passed a resolution (HR894) by a vote of 311-14, with Jewish Democrats urging their party to vote “present.” The resolution declared anti-Zionism is antisemitism. Anti-Zionist Jews do not agree, but how could the modern nation of Israel be ended? What does anti-Zionism justify?