

23. CURRENT POLITICS

In 2007, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches approved a resolution for further study which stated that the "theological stance of Christian Zionism" adversely affects:

- Justice and peace in the Middle East, delaying the day when Israelis and Palestinians can live within secure borders
- relationships with Middle Eastern Christians (see the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism)
- relationships with Jews, since Jews are seen as mere pawns in an eschatological scheme
- relationships with Muslims, since it treats the rights of Muslims as subordinate to the rights of Jews
- interfaith dialogue, since it views the world in starkly dichotomous terms

The statement above is at loggerheads with the OT prophecies discussed in this book, meaning that the opposition of the churches involved is unscriptural. Many other churches have made similar statements.

The conversion of the Jews to Christianity en masse is not something that the Bible teaches will happen before the Messiah arrives.

Jewish expectation of the Messianic kingdom

The coming of the Messiah and his subsequent reign were eagerly awaited by early first-century faithful Jewish believers. The following people are mentioned in the Gospels:

Simeon was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's anointed one, the Messiah (Lk 2:25-26). The consolation he was waiting for was the messianic salvation as predicted by Isaiah, which would result in light for the Gentiles and glory for God's people Israel, because "salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22)

Anna was a very old prophetess who spent her time at the temple, praying and fasting and worshipping night and day. At Jesus' presentation at the temple, she came forward and thanked God and spoke about Jesus to everyone who was waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk 2:38). The implication was that this prophetess recognized Jesus to be the Messiah through whom God's plan for Israel and Jerusalem would be fulfilled.

Joseph of Arimathea was a leading Jew and a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a good and righteous man and didn't consent to the council's decision to condemn Jesus. He is described as waiting expectantly for the Kingdom of God (Lk 23:51). He was a wealthy and influential man whom Matthew calls a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked him for Jesus' body, which was given to him. He placed Jesus' body in his own tomb, which was cut out of rock. He wasn't waiting for the Kingdom of God that was in heaven or people's hearts or anything like the church; he was waiting for a Messiah who would come and liberate Israel and rule the world.

The crowd at Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem were also expecting the coming kingdom and believed that Jesus was the coming king. They shouted: Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David (Mk 11:10). Many of the prophets had said that the Messiah would be a powerful king over Israel and even over the whole world and Israel would dwell safely in the land that God gave to Jacob and his temple would be there among them (Ezek 37:24-28). That is what they were looking forward to.

One day, Jesus was dining at the house of a leading Pharisee. **One of those eating with Jesus** at the banquet said: How blessed is the person who will eat in the Kingdom of God (Lk 14:15). That meant eating with the Messiah and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the prophets in the kingdom hierarchy. Jesus told him a parable, warning him that many leading Jews would not be there, but many poor would be there, together with Gentiles from the East and West, North and South (Lk 13:28-29).

As Jesus was walking to Jerusalem, he told the crowd a parable because they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately (Lk 19:11). This is what they believed, based on what they heard from the OT prophets. In the parable of the minas, Jesus did not deter them in their belief, he depicted himself as the Messiah who was

going to a far country to be appointed king and then return. Those who rejected his kingship would be slaughtered in his presence (a reference to Armageddon).

One of the criminals who was crucified with Jesus asked him to remember him when he came into his kingdom (returned as king) (Lk 23:42). Jesus promised him that he would be with him in paradise that very day; life in the kingdom would come later.

His disciples on the Mount of Olives at his ascension said: Lord, is this the time when you will restore *the kingdom* to Israel? (Acts 1:6). The most prominent of the many prophecies that the coming Jewish Messiah would be a king is Dan 7:14, with the associated teaching that the saints of the Most High would rule with him.

The Jews of Jesus' day, at least the pious among them, including Jesus' disciples, believed that their Messiah would come in person. They believed in the literal restoration of the Davidic throne and kingdom, with their Messiah on the throne. They believed that the Jewish nation would again control the promised land and that Jerusalem would be exalted on the world stage. They believed that their Messiah would rule the world from Jerusalem. The way Jesus preached about the kingdom makes it clear that the Jews of his day believed in a literal fulfillment of these prophecies. These prophecies continue to sustain the hopes and expectations of pious Jews. God cannot and will not let them down. Not when he has sworn by his holiness!

Many of Jesus' references to the Kingdom of God are references to his messianic reign which is still future:

May *your kingdom* come. May your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10).

Nowhere are we told that this prayer was answered at Jesus' resurrection. God's will cannot be done on Earth until the Messiah returns; the rule of man always falls short.

In the same way, when you see these things taking place, you will know that the *Kingdom of God* is near (Lk 21:31).

“These things” refer to the events preceding the second coming of Christ. Jesus is saying that the kingdom will begin when he returns to reign on Earth.

I will not eat it (the Passover) until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God (Lk 22:16).

The Passover meal is replaced in the messianic kingdom by the king's table (Lk 22:30). See 1 Kings 4:22, 27 for details of King Solomon's table. We don't know what eating and drinking at Jesus' table might mean in the millennium, but Lk 13:29 also speaks about people coming from East and West, and from North and South, and feasting at the table in the Messianic kingdom.

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well refined (Isa 25:6).

From now on I will never drink the product of the vine until *the Kingdom of God* comes (Lk 22:18).

The Kingdom of God won't come to heaven, it is only when the Messianic kingdom is established on Earth that Jesus will drink wine with his disciples.

I confer *kingship* on you, just as my Father conferred it on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in *my kingdom* and *sit down on thrones to govern* the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:29-30).

The disciples (all Christians) will have kingship conferred on them as their appointment to rule in the Messianic government. Their thrones are their seats in the legislature, and eating at the king's table can be compared to the way King Arthur shared his rule with the knights of the round table. The saints are sons of God and co-heirs with Christ; they are the monarchy in the Messianic kingdom.

John tells us six times that the length of the messianic reign will be a thousand years (Rev 20:2-7).

Many verses in the NT assure us that Jesus is seated with the Father on his throne in the heavenly realm. He has disarmed the demonic rulers and authorities and put them to shame, by triumphing over them in the cross. He is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, whether in this age or the age to come. God has put all things under his feet. He is Lord. He is God. This is his permanent position and expresses well his permanent authority.

However, the Earth is a rebellious outpost of God's kingdom. Jesus came 2000 years ago and they killed him. The world of our present day is just as evil as it was 2000 years ago. Jesus has gained victory through his crucifixion and resurrection but he has not returned to claim his crown. His not exerting his authority over evil in the world at present. He is not fighting against and defeating evil rulers, evil spirits, or Satan. Nor is the church successful in defeating evil. What is the problem? According to God's program, the time for victory has not come yet. Otherwise, evil would have been judged and done away with at the resurrection. The present age is a time of sowing and growing, but not of reaping. Jesus hasn't come to rule the world yet; that will necessitate his presence. Sitting on his Father's universal throne is one thing, sitting on David's earthly throne is another. Having all authority in heaven and on Earth is one thing, reigning on Earth and exerting that authority with an iron scepter is another.

Jesus told the parable of the minas (Lk 19:11-27) when he was nearing Jerusalem because people thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately. He was teaching them that his rule was not imminent; it was still far off.

When the seventh trumpet is blown, loud voices in heaven will cry out: The world's kingdom *has become* (aorist) the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah and he will rule forever and ever. At that moment, at the return of Jesus, the twenty-four elders will worship God saying: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and *have begun to reign* (*inceptive aorist*). The nations were angry, but the time for your wrath has come. It is time for the dead to be judged, to reward your servants, the prophets, the saints, and all who fear your name, both unimportant and important, and to destroy those who destroy the Earth (Rev 11:15-18).

Similarly, in Revelation 19:6, after the judgment of Babylon, a great multitude will cry out: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty is reigning has begun to reign or has become king (*inceptive aorist*).

Proponents of Christian Zionism

This term began to be used in the mid-20th century, superseding the term, Christian Restorationism. Christian support for the restoration of the Jews grew after the Protestant Reformation. Many Christians believe

that the return of the Jews to the holy land and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 accord with Bible prophecy and are a prerequisite for the second coming of Jesus. Some Christians believe they should actively support the Jewish return to the land of Israel as a means of fulfilling Biblical prophecy, while at the same time encouraging them to become Christians.

The following people are, or were in their lifetimes, notable proponents of Christian Zionism:

John Adams	Bishop Michael Alexander
Edmund Allenby 1st Viscount Allenby	Herbert W. Armstrong
Simeon Ashe	
Anthony Ashley-Cooper	7th Earl of Shaftesbury
Arthur Balfour	Glenn Beck
Bickersteth	William Eugene Blackstone
Horatius Bonar	William Marrion Branham
Michael L. Brown	E. W. Bullinger
John Cennick	Winston Churchill
John Cotton	Oliver Cromwell
John Nelson Darby	Tom DeLay
Mike Evans	Jerry Falwell
Joseph Frey	John Gill
Charles George Gordon	
John Hagee	Robert Haldane
Malcolm Hedding	Mike Huckabee
David Lloyd George	Martin Luther King Jr.
Robert Murray M'Cheyne	
Menahem Macina	James David Manning
Chuck Missler	Isaac Newton
John Owen	Lt Col John Henry Patterson
David Pawson	E. J. Poole-Connor
John Rippon	Denis Michael Rohan
J C Ryle	Tim Salazar
Roy Schoeman	Charles Simeon
Ezra Stiles	Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston
Jack Van Impe	John Walvoord
John Wesley	William Wilberforce
Orde Wingate.	Charles Wesley
	Harold Wilson

Who is responsible for the slaughter and catastrophes of the Great Tribulation?

The seven years of tribulation before Jesus returns is described in Revelation in three series of judgments; the opening of the seven seals (revelation), the blowing of the seven trumpets (announcement), and the pouring out of the seven bowls (enactment) of God's wrath. There is a lot of parallelism between these judgments, suggesting that they are all describing parts of the tribulation events. Together they describe what is known as the Great Tribulation, a period of suffering predicted in the OT (Jer 30:5-7, Dan 12:1) and terminating in the Day of the Lord, which is predicted by many more prophets. The Great Tribulation is a time of trouble, firstly for Israel, but also for the whole world. Daniel describes it as "a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then." Some of the trumpet events are called woes, while the bowls are said to be full of God's wrath and are described as calamities. The extent of these disastrous events is catastrophic. The first four seals describe conquest, warfare, famine, and pestilence, by which God allows one-quarter of the world's population to be killed. This appears to be the result of a worldwide war, including nuclear war, which occurs during the first three and a half years of the tribulation period when the final world empire is consolidating, and the Antichrist takes control.

The first four seals cryptically describe the conquest, war, famine, and pestilence as four horsemen, white, red, pale, and black. The first four trumpets describe the same events, but in terms of hail, fire, blood, a mountain falling into the sea, a blazing star falling on the rivers, and darkness obliterating the light of the sun, moon, and stars. The emptying of the first four bowls results in painful sores on those who submit to the Antichrist, the seas and rivers turning to blood, and unbelievers being scorched with the fierce heat of the sun.

After the sixth trumpet is sounded, an army of 200 million is released from the Euphrates River in Iraq to kill a further third of mankind. This third is killed by fire, smoke, and sulfur coming from the mouths of the warriors' horses, which symbolize modern tanks and artillery. When Jesus returns to defeat the armies gathered at Armageddon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are captured and thrown alive into hell and the rest

of the armies are slain. Isaiah prophesied that God would make mankind rarer than pure gold (Isa 13:12).

The fifth seal refers to Christian martyrs in heaven asking for God to judge “the inhabitants of the Earth,” an expression which consistently refers to their unbelieving enemies, as the world’s population has become polarised into godly and ungodly camps. They are told to wait a little longer until their number is complete. The sixth seal describes the climactic Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns and a worldwide earthquake occurs when he sets foot on the Mount of Olives. The sky becomes black, islands are submerged, mountains crumble, and every wall collapses. People hide in caves trying to escape from the wrath of God and his Messiah.

After the fifth trumpet, a star (a destroying angel) falls from heaven and opens the abyss to release smoke, and out of the smoke come locusts that sting like scorpions. At this point, we need to remember that in Revelation 12:7 John predicts that there will be war in heaven when Michael and his angels defeat Satan and throw him down to Earth with his angels (demons). This resembles the event described after the fifth trumpet. When Satan is thrown down, he pursues the woman (Israel) to destroy her, but the Earth comes to her rescue, so he goes off to make war against the rest of her offspring (Christians), by inspiring the Antichrist and the false prophet to slaughter those who refuse to take the mark of the beast. However, the scorpion-like torment is for the followers of Antichrist. The vision of the opening of the shaft to the bottomless pit may be describing the mushroom of an atomic explosion and its accompanying radiation. “The smoke rose like the smoke of a great furnace” and from the smoke came a painful torment that lasted five months.” People will long to die because of their pain, but the pain does not kill.

The sixth trumpet results in the final war which involves an army of 200 million coming from beyond the Euphrates, from the east and the north. This can be identified with God’s army described in Ezekiel 38-39, led by Gog, and which has many parallels with the sixth seal and the seventh bowl.

The *four* apocalyptic horsemen are based on a vision of *four* chariots pulled by different colored horses that Zechariah saw (Zech 6:1-3). They go out to the *four* winds of heaven. In Revelation 7:1 *four* angels stand

at the *four* corners of the Earth to hold back the *four* winds (destructive forces) of the Earth so that they won't harm the Earth, sea, and trees until the saints are sealed. When the sixth trumpet is blown, the *four* angels (demons) who have been bound at the Euphrates River are released (Rev 9:15). They have been prepared for this very moment to kill a third of mankind with an immense army.

The nations raged, but God's wrath came ... to destroy the destroyers of the Earth (Rev 11:18). The nations that rage are the kings of the Earth (Ps 2:2) who set themselves against the Lord and his Messiah. The Antichrist and the False Prophet inspired and empowered by Satan, assemble the kings of the whole world for battle on the great day of God Almighty (Rev 16:12-14). The troops number 200 million and they kill a third of mankind by warfare (fire, smoke, and sulfur) (Rev 9:16-18). This battle was prophesied in Joel 2:2-3, where a large and mighty army as never seen before, nor will ever be seen again, march out to destroy. Before them, fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them a desert waste – nothing escapes them. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. The destroyers of the Earth will be destroyed by the Lord when he comes at the battle of Armageddon. Isaiah 13 describes the day of the Lord. He said the nations would gather from a distant land to destroy the whole Earth. It will be a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the Earth a desolation. It attributes this destruction to the Lord, but it is carried out by the wicked as they carry out their own plans. The Lord will make people rarer than pure gold.

There will also be much destruction after the pouring out of the final bowl of God's wrath, which will bring about the most powerful earthquake that has occurred since man was on Earth, destroying all the cities of the nations. Islands will vanish and mountains will crumble. The face of the Earth will be changed, beginning with the destruction of cities, roads, and bridges. This earthquake is mentioned by six of the OT prophets (Isa 29:6, Jer 4:23-26, Eze 38:19-20, Zep 1:2-3, Hag 2:6, 21, Zech 14:4), and is mentioned six times in the NT (Heb 12:26-27, Rev 6:12, 8:5, 11:13, 19, 16:18). The context of all these verses is the Day of the Lord at the end of this age, when Jesus returns. The seas and rivers turning to blood may symbolize the horrific bloodshed.

Islam

The fertility rate in Western countries is insufficient to maintain western culture. Immigration is filling the population gap. Since 1990, 90% of EU immigrants are Muslim. The European is quickly moving from Christianity to Islam. There will be 59 million Muslims in Europe by 2030.

A challenge for amillennialists

The opposition of amillennialism to premillennial teaching is formidable. From Augustine in the fifth century until today, amillennialism has been the most popular position of those who take an interest in eschatology. It is embraced by Roman Catholics, liberals, and those in the Reformed tradition. However historical evidence shows that the premillennial view was predominant in the early centuries of the church before Augustine.

The following topics are spoken about frequently by the OT prophets. Amillennialists are reluctant to debate the details and often regard the literal interpretation as impossible or absurd. Conservative amillennialists accept supernatural events like miracles, the visible second coming of Christ, and the resurrection, so why they see a need to reject a literal interpretation of the following OT teachings is a mystery:

- The regathering of Israel
- Armageddon
- The worldwide earthquake
- The Messiah's descent to the Mount of Olives
- Israel's conversion as a nation
- Jesus' earthly reign on the throne of David
- The reign of the saints over the Earth
- The thousand-year messianic reign
- The messianic temple
- A glorified earthly Jerusalem
- A renewal of creation on this planet