

Are You a Christian Zionist?

By [Gary Stearman](#)

Around the world, the mantra is heard with increasing volume. "Down with the Zionist Satan!" "Zionism is illegal ... and racist and imperialist!" Within intellectual circles, books, articles and tracts are carrying the same message. And it's not only the Israeli settlers who are targeted. Those who support modern Israel are equally blamed by the same groups. A growing number of churches believe that Christian support for Israel as a divinely ordained nation is naïve and destructive.

At the close of 2008, the National Council of Churches joined the din, declaring that "Christian Zionism is dangerous!"

It is the intent of this article to bring a fresh reminder of how passionately the Lord views the Holy Land. The history of Zion is the history of the House of David, past, present and future. Zionism is simply the fulfillment of His foreordained plan for the Land and for Israel.

Many Christians have been led to deep and heartfelt commitment to latter-day Israel, and its prophesied destiny. They believe that the Lord has promised His people both a Land and a throne ... the Throne of David.

The depth of the Lord's love for the Land and its people is expressed in one of the most important statements in all Scripture. It flows forth in profoundly beautiful language, penned by the Sons of Korah. Couched in the language of love, the words of Psalm 87 utter a truth that the world simply cannot accept:

"A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.

"His foundation is in the holy mountains.

"The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there.

"And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

"The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

"As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee" (Ps. 87:1-7).

Here, we find that plain and emphatic statement that the "gates of Zion ..." the historical Mount Moriah, where Israel's Temples were built ... has a special place in the heart of the Lord. In fact, it is an ode to the "holy mountains," which would include the Mount of Olives and other mountains surrounding Jerusalem.

His foundation – that is Abraham, Melchizedek, Isaac and the patriarchs – established the Jewish faith at that very spot. There, it will stand in the age of the Kingdom. Its gates are the famed gates that surround the Temple Mount. And here, it is associated with that great metaphor of salvation, the Book of Life, in which the names of the redeemed are written.

The name of the mount is Zion, not the Harem al-Sharif, or "Noble Sanctuary" as Arab Muslims call it.

The name Zion appears twice in Psalm 87, once to identify the geographic location with its gates, and again, to enunciate the fact that Zion is associated with the calling of God's elect. To be born in Zion is to be born through its King, the Lord God of the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus of the New.

Zion is associated with being written in the Book of Life, a concept dear to both Jews and Christians. In this Psalm, Zion is a metaphor for redemption. Once, when Jesus visited this place, He declared Himself as the One whose name would forever be identified with it:

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

"Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

"But he spake of the temple of his body" (Jn. 2:19-21).

Jesus knew that Herod's Temple would soon be razed, and He also knew that his own body would be devastated. But in three days, his body was resurrected. And in His Millennial reign, He knew that the Temple would also be rebuilt.

The prophet Hosea, referring to millennia as "days," described the same elapsed time between Christ's first and second comings:

"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (Hos. 6:2).

Thus, the ideas associated with the person of Jesus, redemption and the mountain called Zion are forever intertwined. The Temple of His body, and the

Temple on the mountaintop represent the same historical principle: redemption.

How Zion Got Its Name

In the days of Abraham, the Mountain was called "Moriah," meaning either "seen of the Lord," or "chosen of the Lord." Its name is most appropriate. This was the place where Abraham met Melchizedek and later, took Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice: "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. 22:2).

Upon this mountain, the Lord spoke to Abraham, staying his hand, as he prepared to lower the sacrificial knife upon Isaac. He then provided a ram as an acceptable sacrifice.

A thousand years later, in the days of David and Solomon, this sacred location was still known by its ancient name:

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite" (II Chr. 3:1).

Before King David took Moriah in a military conquest, it was actually the property of Ornan. As described by the prophet Samuel, David's victory resulted in a major change of name for this historic location:

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

"Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

"And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

"So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

"And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him" (II Sam. 5:7-10).

In this passage, we find the first Scriptural reference to Mount Moriah as "Zion." The origin of this name is shrouded in mystery. Some have suggested that it originates in a Semitic word root that means, "to fortify" or "defend," as in "a fortress." Others have related it to a word meaning "parched" or "very dry." In the latter case, some have translated it as meaning "a sunny place."

But at some point, it also came to mean "something erected as a pillar," or a "sign."

In fact, all of the above meanings characterize this most significant place. It is certainly dry. Water has always had to be carried up to its heights and stored there in cisterns. Originally, it was used as a threshing floor ... a high place where drying winds blow, separating wheat from chaff.

In a transaction that will remain in the public record as long as the Word of God stands, Ornan (called Araunah in the following text) offered to give the mountaintop to David out of respect for the King. David refused, saying that the Lord's ground would not be indebted to any man:

"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel" (II Sam. 24:24,25).

A wider view of the transaction is recorded in First Chronicles:

"And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

"So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (I Chr. 21:24-26).

A casual reading seems to reveal a textual problem here, since two different purchase prices are mentioned in the two accounts. But in fact, there is no conflict, since Samuel records the purchase of the threshingfloor, while Chronicles speaks of the "place," from the Hebrew *magom*, meaning "home." The higher price mentioned here is payment for the entire mountain, probably

including its lower portion, known as the "City of David."

As we have often mentioned, this is one of the oldest and probably the most accurate real estate abstracts in existence. Title deed for Mount Zion remains in the hands of the House of David, as it has for the last three millennia. No subsequent deed supercedes the one recorded here.

Zion, therefore, is on permanent record as the foundation of David's throne.

Modern Zionism

There is little doubt that Zionism is the world's most despised idea. One who supports the legitimacy of Zionism will sooner or later run into criticism. In particular, Israel's right to the 300,000 square miles of land granted to Abraham, and especially, Mount Zion, faces highly emotional opposition.

From A.D. 135 and the defeat of Simeon Bar Kochba, until the twentieth century, the Holy Land lay defeated and desolate. It witnessed occasional skirmishes, as Islam and the Crusaders stirred its dust. But by and large, it was not until 1948 that the Arab world "discovered" its deep roots in the land that it likes to call Palestine. Until very recently, Islam had felt no need to declare Zion one of its holiest sites.

Since Israeli statehood, the movement called Zionism has found itself at the central focus of a deep dispute. And no wonder, since the Bible describes the Holy Land as the center of the earth. Zionist pioneers, dating back to the late nineteenth century, had no idea that they were stirring up such a hornet's nest.

Zionism as Racism

The fury of the dispute became a global frenzy in 1975, when United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379 declared, "Zionism is racism." In official language, the Jewish claim to the Land was branded a nationalistic racist ideology. Their claim of exclusive right to Jewish national territory was quickly labeled as an offense to many anti-Semitic groups, Arabs in particular.

The wording of the resolution was truly amazing. In part, it said:

"3379. Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination The General Assembly, Recalling its resolution 1904 (XVIII) of 20 November 1963, proclaiming the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and in particular its affirmation that "any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous." Recalling also ... the unholy alliance between South African racism and Zionism ... Taking note of ... the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held at

Mexico City from 19 June to 2 July 1975, which promulgated the principle that "international cooperation and peace require the achievement of national liberation and independence, the elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, Zionism apartheid and racial discrimination in all its forms, as well as the recognition of the dignity of peoples and their right to self-determination." Taking note also of ... the organization of African Unity at its twelfth ordinary session ... "that the racist regime in occupied Palestine and the racist regime in Zimbabwe and South Africa have a common imperialist origin, forming a whole and having the same racist structure and being organically linked in their policy aimed at repression of the dignity and integrity of the human being ... Taking note also of the Political Declaration of ... Non-Aligned Countries held at Lima from 25 to 30 August 1975, which most severely condemned Zionism as a threat to world peace and security and called upon all countries to oppose this racist and imperialist ideology, Determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."

Later the same day, Israeli Ambassador Chaim Herzog addressed the U.N., citing the thousands of Arabs who were flocking to Israel for jobs, using Israel's free medical services and serving in the Israeli government. "Is that racism?" he asked. "It is not ... it is Zionism!"

He added, "For us, the Jewish people, this resolution based on hatred, falsehood and arrogance is devoid of any moral or legal value. For us, the Jewish people, this is no more than a piece of paper and we shall treat it as such." At that point, he demonstrated his disgust by ripping the Resolution in two.

Secular Awakening

Many criticize Zionism as a latter-day invention. This is simply not true. Its definition and scope are Scriptural. It is the prophetic expression of the House of David. As we have already seen, the concept was born when David came to Mount Moriah and established the City of David and the mountaintop as Zion. As such, it is specifically a spiritual idea.

But with the diaspora, Zionism sank into virtual non-existence, not to arise again until the end of the nineteenth century. Ironically, it did so under the banner of social ideals and "modern" theories of socio-economic thought.

Their return was driven by secular idealism. The ancient biblical ideal of Zionism was co-opted by academic intellectuals. But in fact, Bible prophecy actually foresaw this development.

In late nineteenth-century Europe, humanist thought exploded as a concept, into the hope of emancipation and the promise of socialistic security. European intellectuals idealized the thoughts of Hegel, Marx and Engels.

Author Abraham Shulman wrote,

"Moses Hess, a former collaborator of Marx and Engels, found himself betrayed by both his hopes in Emancipation and by the promises of socialism. He came to the conclusion that the situation of the Jews was not unlike that of the proletariat. Along the lines of the Communist Manifesto, he substituted for 'class' in 'class struggle,' the words 'oppressed nationality.' Only in a home of his own would the Jew function as a free man and a liberated human being. Moses Hess, who had formerly, along with Marx, believed that the liberation of the toiling masses would mean the redemption of the whole world, now shifted his view from the liberation of masses to the national liberation of the Jews. The revival of the Jewish state, he concluded, would mark the beginning of a spiritual revival of humanity. It would be the Messianic sign of the liberation of all oppressed individuals and nations.

"His book *Rome and Jerusalem*, published in 1862, was the first appeal for the revival of the Jewish homeland without recourse to the emotional mystique. For a long time, this book went unnoticed. Its importance became known much later, when another disillusioned Jewish assimilationist came out with a public plea that eventually changed the course of Jewish history. His name was Theodore Herzl" (Abraham Shulman, *Coming Home to Zion* (New York, Doubleday, 1979) pp. 12,14).

Herzl, a Hungarian Jewish journalist, wrote a small tract, entitled *Judanstaat* (A Jewish State). Under his direction, the First Zionist Congress was held at Basle, Switzerland in 1897. It was as though a light had suddenly been turned on. Jewish nationalism became an international idea.

A new Messianic fervor appeared, such as had not been seen among the Jews since the days of the first century. It emerged with the hope of a Jewish national government, and a state once again in its own homeland. But its spiritual vitality was buried in global political and economic theory, and it was secular to the core.

A few years earlier, in 1882, a few disillusioned Jewish Russian social revolutionaries, shocked that they were unwelcome in their own country, left Russia and arrived in Joppa. Their journey marked the First Aliyah (immigration) into Israel. It was followed by four other waves of immigrants, who came home to Israel through two World Wars and several more Zionist Congresses.

Of course, the modern State of Israel was born on May 14, 1948. It is deeply ironic that this was the result of a United Nations General Assembly decision in November 1947, to divide the territory of Palestine into three parts. The resolution stated,

"Independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem ... shall come into existence in Palestine."

Six months later David Ben-Gurion declared Israeli statehood. Zionism had become Zion. But shortly after that, on the first of October, 1948, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni spoke in Gaza, declaring an "all-Palestine government." The Arabs intended this regime to expand across the entirety of Palestine. And thus was the latter-day battle staged, which rages on to this day.

Christian Support

Throughout this time period, God's providence worked in another amazing way, as the followers of John Nelson Darby began to teach that Israel was about to return to the Land. These men were the Plymouth Brethren, so-called because of their first meetings held in Plymouth, England. They spearheaded a powerful Christian movement that taught Dispensationalism and the Premillennial view of prophecy, as well as the pretribulation rapture of the church.

Theodore Herzl was aided by an Episcopalian minister named William Heschler, who had been enlightened by the teaching of the Brethren. Heschler worked to help the Jews return to their homeland. In fact, he came to be called, "the prophet of the coming Jewish state."

From the very beginning of the state of Israel, Christians were present, either to facilitate the Zionist movement, or to stand by and watch eagerly as prophecy was progressively fulfilled. They were fully aware that it was based in socialism, but believed so strongly in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy that they looked beyond the settlers' socialist philosophy.

Prophecy Fulfilled

They correctly interpreted Israel's regathering to take place in a state of unbelief, as witnessed by the remarkable prophecy of Ezekiel. The following verses are a concise and accurate condensation of Israel's regathering:

"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,

and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezk. 36:24-28).

In *The Scofield Study Bible* of 1909, Dr. C. I. Scofield comments upon the foregoing verses in the following way:

"Having announced ... the restoration of the nation, Jehovah now gives in vision and symbol the method of its accomplishment."

He then comments upon Ezekiel 37, the chapter that follows. It features the prophecy of the "dry bones." To make his comments easier to understand, they are placed before each verse upon which he comments.

He says,

"Verse 11 gives the clue. The 'bones' are the whole house of Israel who shall then be living."

"Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts"(Ezek. 37:11).

He writes, "The 'graves' are the nations where they dwell. The order of procedure is: (1) the bringing of the people out (v. 12); (2) the bringing of them in (v. 12):

"Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezek. 37:12).

"(3) their conversion (v. 13):

"And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves," (Ezek. 37:13).

"(4) the filling with the Spirit (v. 14).

"And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD" (Ezek. 37:14).

Scofield's interpretation of these verses represents a concise description of pro-Zionist Christian beliefs, beginning first and foremost with a belief in the return of the Jews to the Land, and their redemption as a nation.

Implied in this position is a clear distinction between Israel and the Church. That is, the Kingdom Age is to be dominated by the Throne of David and a Jewish Messiah, who returns to build the third Temple. The church, the Body of Christ does not take this role.

This, in turn, bespeaks a belief that the age of the Church will come to an end before the age of the Kingdom.

The mechanism that terminates the Church Age is the rapture, which is more or less immediately followed by Daniel's Seventieth Week ... the seven-year Tribulation.

Thus, when Darby, the Plymouth Brethren and their followers began to teach the first principle that the Jews would return to the Holy Land, the rest of the dispensational system of interpretation quickly fell into place. Dispensationalism, of course, is the belief that history is divided into a succession of historical periods, each of which represents a distinct phase of God's redemptive work. Presently we are in the Dispensation of the church, which will be followed by the age of the Kingdom.

This fresh insight gave birth to a new term, "Christian Zionist." From the first, those who carried this label found themselves at the center of a great controversy. Namely, is it Scripturally defensible for a Christian to be a Zionist? Implied in this question is that the first mission of the church is to evangelize: "... to the Jew first."

In fact, Christian Zionism seemed to expect Jews to return to the Land without a living faith in God through Christ. Jews of many different faiths ... Orthodox, Hasidic, and socialist liberals ... were all thought to be part of the general aliyah, the return to the Land in unbelief. Christian Zionists believed that later, they would be brought to faith in the dramatic series of events given in prophecy, Old Testament and New.

When the Episcopalian minister William Heschler became a disciple of the Plymouth Brethren, he quickly became a Christian Zionist. The Brethren were at the center of Christian support for Israel's return to the Land. And in the providence of the Lord, Heschler met Theodore Herzl, and together, they founded the World Zionist Organization.

World War One witnessed the now-famous incident in which a Jewish chemist, Chaim Weismann, contributed to British victory by inventing a method of quickly fabricating smokeless gunpowder for their arsenals. By way of thanks, on

November 3, 1917, Lord Balfour - another follower of the Plymouth Brethren - promised the Jews a national homeland.

Zionism is simply the belief that God's covenant with Abraham exists in perpetuity. Once a Scriptural vision, it has become a thriving reality, and the world's foremost bone of contention.

Christian Zionism, a Threat?

Christian Zionism is more than an ideology and belief system. It is linked to geography, and to the ancient real estate abstract that records David's purchase from Ornan. Zion is loved by some and hated by others as heresy. But in its essence, it is characterized by a love for God's chosen people, the Jews, and their Scriptural destiny.

Christians remember the words of Paul, who grieved over the failure of his people to come to faith in their true Messiah, Jesus. His emotional questions move us to this day:

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (Rom. 11:1).

A bit further on, he asks,

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

"If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:11-15).

In no way does Paul believe that the Jews have been forever cast aside. Here, he writes of them as a national body that has been cast away, but will one day be received again. It is absolutely clear that he is speaking of their resurrection as a nation, not as individuals.

The dispensational understanding of Scripture places great importance upon the

latter-day rise of national Israel. Dispensationalists believe that its twelve tribes will return to their ancient Land, there to experience spiritual renewal, beginning with the sealing of 144,000 Israelites. The church has nothing at all to do with this watershed event. By the time this prophesied event comes to pass, the church will have been removed from the earth.

The Big Question

But here, we run into the classic eschatological problem. In what manner are the Jews to be brought to faith in the end times? Is it to come only through their evangelism by the church? This was the position of the church of the Middle Ages, and even the Reformation, which held with Augustine's fifth-century teaching that there would be no millennium. He spiritualized the apocalypse out of existence, and visualized the church as being in a struggle with the world, which would end with Christ's coming.

Israel in the Millennial Kingdom Age was completely omitted from his interpretation of Scripture. To this day, mainline denominations continue in his ideology, taking the position that Jews may achieve redemption only by becoming members of the institutional church ... that Jews may receive salvation only by entering into its ranks.

The mainline institutional church finds Christian Zionism, which sees Israel's regathering as God's will for the House of David, repugnant, even frightening.

A good example of their opinion is found in a brochure recently issued by the National Council of Churches [NCC]. Published in December 2008, it is entitled, *Why We Should be Concerned About Christian Zionism*. It provides a remarkable statement of the basic issues.

Doubtless, the timing of its dissemination is based upon the tightening conflict between Israel and the Arab world. With Iraq, Iran and nuclear conflict in view, the NCC view places the burden of the blame with Israel, which has claimed land that it regards as the Palestinian homeland. In fact, they use their theological argument to question the legitimacy of modern Israel's very existence.

One of its main points lays the blame for the conflict upon the Dispensational movement. Here is one of its key criticisms about Christian Zionism:

"It is not based on traditional teaching or doctrines of the Church – Christian Zionism and its theological presuppositions are nineteenth-century innovations in Christian doctrine. The most prominent spokesperson for these beliefs was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Although the advocates of Christian Zionism and its underlying theology sometimes claim to base their beliefs on ancient understandings, generally scholars recognize these to be recent innovations."

Here, we have an amazing theological argument, somehow based upon the premise that current insights into the prophetic interpretation of Scripture are by nature of their recent discovery, invalid. Under this thinking, doctrine, to be sound, must meet some sort of time test, having been recognized by some convocation of elders before a certain unspecified cutoff date.

John Nelson Darby and his followers apparently do not meet this test, even though he graduated from Trinity College as a "Master Scholar," and later became a priest in the Anglican church. Darby's biography documents the fact that if he had not been injured in an equestrian accident that left him bedridden for months, he would have continued on that path. Given his intelligence and drive, he would probably have risen to high office in the Church of England.

But his lengthy convalescence gave him time to read the Bible as he hadn't read it before. Scripture led him to two conclusions: First, it caused him to see the nineteenth century institutional church as "a ruin." Second, his eyes were opened to the prophetic certainty that Israel would return to her own Land. He saw a "new dispensation" coming.

Dispensationalism soon became a living faith. Christian Zionism was born.

In answer to the question, "What is Christian Zionism?" the NCC says,

"Christian Zionism may be defined either broadly or narrowly. Broadly speaking it designates any Christian support for the national revival movement of the Jewish people realized through the establishment of the modern State of Israel (historically known as Zionism). More narrowly defined, Christian Zionism is an ideology grounded in beliefs which consider the State of Israel to be divinely ordained and scripturally determined with a central role in ushering in the end of history, where unconverted Jews and unbelievers (including Christians who are considered to be of questionable status) are judged by God's wrath. It is the narrower form that causes immediate concern."

Here, it becomes perfectly clear that the NCC's real objection is to the Premillennial and Pretribulational view of history, which would include the rise of a Gentile world power structure, an antichrist and a literal seven-year Tribulation. They profoundly disagree with Darby's dispensational view.

In fact, the churches which fall under the NCC's purview conform in varying degrees to the theology of the reformers, who adopted the Amillennial doctrine of Augustine, or some form of Postmillennial doctrine. The former believes that there will be no Millennial reign of Christ, and the latter holds that the Millennium began during Christ's earthly ministry. The church is thus regarded as redeemed Israel.

Holy Ground

Today, there is a serious question for Christians that must be asked and answered. It has to do with the legitimacy of Israeli statehood. In 1947, under U.N. auspices, the world decided in the affirmative. In 1948, Israel became a nation. Immediately, a series of Middle East wars began. They have developed into a continuing, nerve-wracking chain of tremors, which will soon culminate in a catastrophic shaking - the Tribulation. In its upheavals, Israel will be spiritually reborn. Jesus will come again to reign as their King.

The modern institutional church denies this truth. To them, Zion is spiritual, not geographic. It is an artifact of the church.

But think of this: In all of Scripture, Zion is mentioned 160 times. In the Psalms, it occurs 38 times. In Isaiah, it is found 46 times. In Jeremiah ... 17 times.

In the King James New Testament, it appears as "Sion," and is found 7 times, and at each of these appearances it refers either to the twelve tribes of Israel, or to the geographic Mount Zion in modern Jerusalem, bought and paid for by the House of David.

At Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Matthew records the event as a fulfillment of prophecy, uttered by both Isaiah and Zechariah:

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion, [Zion] Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. 21:5).

Zion, a Composite

Israel is the "daughter of Zion," not the church. A composite picture of Zion reveals one thing: It is a place, a city and an idea. Some dismiss Zionism as a fabricated political movement, and say that the church cannot condone it, much less encourage it. The NCC calls it, "... a movement with negative consequences for Middle East Peace." They say, "It fosters fear and hatred of Muslims and non-Western Christians."

But a moment's reflection shows that it is an idea that lies at the center of God's heart:

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psa. 48:2).

"Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments" (Psa. 48:11).

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof." (Psa. 48:12).

"Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psa. 51:18).

"For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession" (Psa. 69:35).

"Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt" (Psa. 74:2).

"When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory" (Psa. 102:16).

"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Is. 66:8).

Look for yourself at the dozens of other, similar references in Scripture. See for yourself that Zion is an expression of God's love and His will. If you follow this simple exercise, you will find that you, too, are a Christian Zionist.

Zionism is revolting only to those who oppose the return of the Jews to their biblical homeland, and their Temple.

Never forget this convincing thought:

"The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psa. 87:2).