

NOTES TO MJ 501
WEEK #8
Zionism

I. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Political: “A nationalistic movement to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine.”
- B. Loose biblical definition of “zionism”: love and a commitment to “Zion.”
By that definition, God is clearly a “Zionist.”

II. BIBLICAL (OT) BASIS FOR ZIONISM

- A. Title deed given by landowner (God, **Ps. 24:1**)
to Abraham, descendants in perpetuity (Gen. 15:17-19).
- B. God’s commitment to a physical “Zion,”—
Jerusalem- (broadly) nation of Israel (Ps. 48:1,8; Isa. 28:16).
 - 1. Solomon’s description: Temple is where God places his Presence, even knowing that the future of His city is defilement (**I Ki. 8:27-30**).
 - 2. Daniel’s description: destroyed Jerusalem, God has put his name upon it (**Dan. 9:18**). Israel exiled due to depraved idolatry, yet Jerusalem (“Zion”) still God’s city.
- C. **Israel’s redemption defined: spiritual and material** (Ezek. 36:24-30; 37:1-14).
 - 1. Step one: *re-gathering the nation* from exile, a monumental statement to Israel of God’s covenant keeping power. (36:24; 37:12-14).
 - 2. Step two: thorough internal cleansing/spiritual heart transplant. Power of the Spirit will energize Israel (36:25-27).
 - 3. God’s prosperity will be poured out on a Restored nation living in its land (36:28-30). Consistent with (Sinaitic) covenant - physical and spiritual blessings are inseparable.
 - 4. **The NT nowhere suggests that the land with its associated blessings is part of the blessings provided for God’s spiritual people, the Church.**
Not favoritism, different assignments—Abraham’s physical descendants given real estate, to fulfill their calling, function (**Mt. 23:39**).
- D. Literal Zion=Jerusalem required HQ for world-wide Messianic revival (**Isa. 2:2-4**).
No NT definition of how the Church would function except: **believers will “judge the world” (I Cor. 6:2; Isa. 11:3-4).**

III. NT PERSPECTIVE:

- A. The land, prominent in OT, play a marginal role in the NT.
- B. One **cannot argue from silence** that since the land is not addressed in the NT, it is no longer part of God's prophetic calendar.
 - 1. **Christian advocates for Palestinian rights (e.g. Chapman) suggest that since Israel has been replaced by the Church as the people of God, the promises of the land no longer apply to Jewish people.**
 - a. The land belongs to Palestinians, rightful owners, since biblical times.
 - b. Israel is European colonialists who came and took the land by force.
 - c. Biblically, Arab tribes were **one of a number of nomadic tribes** who wandered the southern portion of the land, the Negev Desert (e.g. Isa. 13:20; Neh. 2:19).
 - d. The Jewish/Hebrew people occupied the land beginning in the 13th century BCE.
 - e. More to the point, the **land has been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—not Abraham and Ishmael (Gen. 17:20-21)**
 - 2. Some would go so far as to suggest that the land of Israel at this stage belongs to Gentile Christians who are physically part of Israel (e.g. the Ephraimite or Two House Movement).
 - 3. Others simply state the blessings of Israel belong to the church in which ever country is resides (e.g. Dominion Theology or Theonomy).
- C. Messianic Judaism sees a continuity with the covenant blessings of the land for Israel.
 - 1. Many OT passages spell out covenant blessings of the land for Israel in detail but are ignored or mentioned in passing (e.g. creation, incest, tithing).
 - 2. **Much of the NT is laid out as "occasional literature," - it addresses specific issues that rise up, esp. in the epistles** (e.g. I Cor.).

The land of Israel was not a hot-button issue in the first century. The people of Israel were in their own land, albeit under Roman domination and with a large diaspora. There was no particular reason for attention to be given to the land by the apostles.

IV. HISTORY OF ZIONISM:

- A. 3rd-18th centuries, most Jews lived in the Diaspora: Europe and Middle East.
Although there was a yearning to return to the land of Israel, that yearning did not express itself in action. The expectation among Jewish people was that the coming of the Messiah would herald a return to the land along with the rebuilding of the Temple.
1. Two movements, one Jewish and the other non-Jewish, contributed to the development of Zionism—the vigorous actions necessary to resettle the land of Israel.
 2. Brutal persecution of Jews in Europe (1880's) prepared the ground for the forceful beginning of Zionism
- B. EUROPEAN NATIONALISM:
1. Early in 19th century, nationalistic fever took hold in European countries. Previously Europe existed as fragmented portions (e.g. Italy) or under larger entities (Austro-Hungarian Empire, etc.)
 2. Revolutions broke out, independent European republics formed
- C. The Haskalah (from Maskil, “the enlightened one”): Jewish version of European Enlightenment-superior role of reason instead of superstition and religion.
1. The Haskalah centered in Germany (e.g. Moses Mendlesohn) and Russia (Isaac Bar Levinsohn), *emphasized need to acquire secular learning and become more fully citizens of the countries in which they lived.*
 2. Refom Movement: translate Judaism into more European, “enlightened” version.
- D. 19th century - beginning of the Chalutzim (pioneers) and the settlement of land.
1. Massive persecution in Eastern Europe (e.g. Pogroms), Jews migrated to Palestine, under the Turks.
 2. Funded by Jewish philanthropists- Baron Rothschild, etc. purchased land from Arab landowners, peacefully, (contrary to Arab propaganda) not forceful colonization.

E. Theodore Herzl

1. *Assimilated Hungarian Jewish journalist covered the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, in 1894. Dreyfus was a captain in the French army who was accused and convicted of passing state secrets to the Germans. As the trial was taking place, Parisian mobs were shouting, "Death to the Jews." That shook Herzl to the core- he realized Jews would never be safe until they were in their own land.*
2. *One-man crusade to bring to Jewish consciousness the need for settling the land. Zionist Congress came together to debate the possible approaches to the need (on several occasions from 1897-1901).*

F. Chaim Weizmann (Zionist organic chemist) development of Zionism after the death of Herzl in 1904.

1. *During WWI, the British relied on acetone to produce cordite, a propellant needed for their artillery. Acetone was in short supply until Weizmann developed an alternate source of acetone using bacterial fermentation.*
2. *Weizmann worked with Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary to craft the Balfour Declaration which stated that the British government was in favor of the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (1918). Soon afterwards, the British government turned away from the policy of the Balfour Declaration toward a strongly pro-Arab posture and discouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine.*

G. Sho'ah (the Holocaust) massive impetus towards the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (other locations had been proposed: Uganda, Argentina, Birobidjan in the USSR etc.). Jewish people, especially survivors realized that the only safe place for Jews would be in their ancestral homeland.**H. Messianic Judaism** sees State of Israel (May 14, 1948) necessary precondition for fulfillment of God's prophetic calendar. Israel must exist if the End Time prophecies are to be fulfilled.

Reading Assignment: Ellisen pp. 131-147

Exegetical Study: Gen. 17:20-21; Isa. 19:16-25

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Does God have a plan about the Arab-Israeli conflict (Isa. 19)
2. What does reconciliation look like ?