

What is Christian Zionism?

Defining Features:

Christian Zionism is an ideology rooted in Christian beliefs and is found in nations across the globe. Different iterations of Christian Zionism can vary somewhat in beliefs and cultural expressions. There are, however, some key beliefs that the various iterations of Christian Zionism share:

- Christian Zionism rests on the fundamental belief that the modern state of Israel has a divine right to the land in the region of what is known today as Israel and Palestine.
 - This belief is based on the misconception that “Israel” mentioned in the bible is synonymous with the modern state of Israel.
 - It is based on Christian commitments such as the belief that Jesus savior, a belief in the second is second coming, and a belief that the Bible is revelation from God.
 - Christian Zionism's system of beliefs is rooted in literalist interpretations of scripture. Christian Zionism weaves a variety of scriptures from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament in a predictive fashion, using them to interpret contemporary global events as indicators for Jesus' second coming.
 - Christian Zionism relies heavily on interpretations of Genesis 12:3, which they argue says that individuals and nations will be blessed by God if they support Israel and that they will be cursed if they fail to support Israel.
- Christian Zionism "seeks to promote or preserve Jewish control over the geographic area known as Israel and Palestine." (Robert Smith, *More Desired than Our Own Salvation*). Many Christian Zionists believe that control over the region must be achieved through political means. In the U.S., for instance, Christian Zionists lobby for politicians whose policies express support for Israel, including providing Israel with financial and military support.
- Christian Zionism often opposes peace and negotiations between Israel and Palestine because it believes any action taken by the nation of Israel is approved by God, because it believes that scripture tells that Israel cannot concede any land and because peace plans disrupt a prophetic timeline they believe must occur in order to usher in the Jesus' second coming. (Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*)

Why is Christian Zionism Harmful?

- Christian Zionism necessitates the displacement of the Palestinian people who are indigenous to Palestine and to the region.
- Christian Zionism helps fund Israeli settlements, which forcefully and violently displace Palestinians from their homes.
- The Christian Zionist belief system objectifies Jews and Judaism.

Major Historical Markers:

- Some scholars date the roots of Christian Zionism to the early Reformation era (early 16th century) in Europe. They trace the roots to shifts brought on by Protestant Reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther. The shifts that laid the foundations for Christian Zionism are:
 - The Protestant Reformation shift to a literalist interpretation of scripture.
 - The emphasis on an apocalyptic view of scripture which used scripture to decode current events. The reformers believed they were living at the end of times and that Jesus' return was imminent.
 - Eventually, these ideas would continue to morph and evolve, making their way to the United States through the beliefs of the Puritan colonists, whom themselves believed that they were starting a new and divinely blessed nation (despite the presence of the indigenous people who had already dwelled on the land.)
- In the U.S., the literalist and apocalyptic interpretations of scripture were wedded to the ideals of American Christian nationalist exceptionalism. As a result, Christian Zionism in the U.S. has its own uniquely American history that has evolved from different iterations of Protestantism in the U.S., including premillennial dispensationalism, which sought the "physical restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine."
- The idea that Christians needed to facilitate the "physical restoration" of the Jewish people to Palestine can also be traced back to 16th-century Europe. This idea is rooted in an eschatological commitment that holds that the restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine would usher in the return of the second coming of Jesus.

Why Criticizing Christian Zionism is not Anti-Semitic?

- Critiquing Christian Zionism is not anti-Semitic because it is not an attack or criticism of Judaism or Jewish people. Critiquing and combatting Christian Zionism is rooted in care for the ongoing displacement and genocide of the Palestinian people.
- Christians who oppose Christian Zionism can and do oppose anti-Semitism. Even more, there are Jewish siblings who oppose Zionism and Christian Zionism.
- Christian Zionism can and should fight anti-Semitism and counter-Christian Zionism.