

# Forgive Us: Zionism

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 March 2024

Preacher: Anthony Parrott

[ 0 : 00 ] We are in the season of Lent, which is this 46-day season that starts with Ash Wednesday and leads up to Easter. And it is a season historically of repentance, of meditation on what is wrong with the world and what is wrong with us.

Which, you know, I don't need a set season for that. I do that all year round. But this one we do on purpose as a way of engaging in repentance, of taking a look at where perhaps I have turned astray, perhaps where my community or my nation or my religion has turned astray and caused harm, and in how we can repent, turn, and do something new.

And so last week we talked about Christian supremacy, this notion that Christianity reigns above all and all others must kneel to it.

And this week we're going to talk about Christian Zionism. I'm going to tell you a couple things to just sort of set the stage from the beginning. One, this will not be a good sermon.

Now I'm just sort of lowering expectations so that then at the end you can tell me that was fine, Anthony. So, but this is not a good sermon in terms of like, if I were to deliver this in a sermon preaching class, I would not get a good grade.

[ 1 : 21 ] It's not particularly well organized. There's not a whole lot of like uplifting, gospel-soaking sort of things in it. When you're doing a season and Lent that's all about like the things that have gone wrong with our religion, it's hard to have a sermon that everyone's going to be like, good job, pastor.

It's not that kind of sermon, okay? Second, two, we're going to be here for a little while longer than the sermons that I usually preach. My average sermon length is something like 25 to 28 minutes. Yes, I keep track.

It's going to be longer than that because we have a lot to cover. Third, this sermon is going to feel a little bit like the meme that you put on the screen of like the red yarn and the conspiracy theory board.

Because when you talk about something as pervasive as Christian Zionism, you begin to see its talons, its claws kind of get into everything.

And it has very much this sort of like Marvel Cinematic Universe. It's all connected sort of feel. So I don't think I'm going to, I don't think, I am certain I'm not propagating any sort of actual conspiracy theories.

[ 2 : 24 ] It was based off like actual history. But if you get the sense of like, boy, this certainly seems like you're connecting this to everything in society, that's because I am, okay? Finally, Christian Zionism, we're talking about this week.

And then there's going to be a separate sermon about Christian anti-Semitism. And these two are obviously related. You're talking about Zionism. You're talking about Israel, Palestine, land, temple.

Talking about anti-Semitism. You're talking about the Jewish people and everything related to Judaism. Judaism. So that will be sort of kept separate in a different sermon.

Obviously, we have to touch on it a little bit today as well. Brian Regan is a comedian. He has a joke about going to a museum and seeing like a placard at the museum that said something like, you know, something, something, something happened.

One thing led to another. Then this happened. And Brian Regan's like, I feel like that's pretty lazy for a museum to just say one thing led to another. Like, that's what you're supposed to tell me.

[ 3 : 26 ] It would be like reading a pamphlet about World War II. Adolf Hitler failed art class. One thing led to another. And America dropped a bomb on the sovereign nation of Japan. Like, one thing led to another does not do a lot of explanatory power.

What I'm going to try to do today is try to explain the one thing led to another, okay? So, the one thing, the two things I want to connect are Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew in first century Palestine, a failed stonemason and lynched rabbi in first century Palestine.

One thing leads to another. America stands with Israel, okay? That's what we want to try to connect. Jesus to America stands with Israel.

You can go ahead and put that image on the screen. You can go on Amazon and find stickers, flags, banners of any variety, of any size, with things that say things like that.

Christians united for Israel with an American flag and an Israeli flag. You can find these to put on your window, on your door, in your yard, like all over. How did that happen from a lynched stonemason to today?

[ 4 : 37 ] Okay. So, to begin with, my first sort of pinpoint in this red yarn map is my first study Bible was the Prophecy Study Bible by John C. Haggy.

I had my sort of salvation experience in sixth grade. I was really into the Bible. And the first study Bible that I pretty sure spent my own money on was the Prophecy Study Bible because I loved studying biblical prophecy.

And this study Bible was filled with lots of charts like this. Next slide. It should be like a picture of a bunch of things. Oh, no. I didn't make it to the slideshow.

Okay. That's not your fault. It's my fault. Okay. It had lots of charts. They're like, okay, you've got the Book of Revelation. And there's seven trumpets. And there's seven bulls. And there's seven seals. And then there's the beast.

And the prophet of the beast. And the pit. And the Satan. And how do all these things connect? And I would spend hours and hours studying this study Bible that was trying to explain how the end of the world was going to work, how Jesus was going to come back, try to have some predictions about how soon Jesus was going to come back, try to explain all sorts of things.

[ 5 : 50 ] Now, what that study Bible was trying to do was answer questions like, one, what is the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible? Two, what is the relationship between Israel and the church?

Three, what is the relationship between Judaism and Christianity? Four, what happens at the end of history? What happens to Christians? What happens to Jews? Five, how do you make sense of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, prophecies in light of Jesus?

Six, how do you make sense of Christian Bible prophecies when comparing them to the Hebrew prophets? And these questions are the same questions that have been asked since the first century.

Much of the book of Acts and the letters of Paul are concerned with the fact that Paul is a Jew, but his Jewish kin aren't accepting that Jesus is the Messiah, but the Gentiles are.

Paul is torn up by this. In fact, he says in the book of Romans, he says, And so these questions about, you have Jesus, who is a Jew, who is killed, who starts, who acts the Jew, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed, who is killed.

[ 7 : 29 ] And then it becomes very opposed by first century Jews and immensely successful by Gentiles. And then you have all of these questions of Gentiles who are coming into a Jewish faith, being introduced to the Hebrew Bible, composing scriptures of their own, answering these questions.

Why didn't the Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah? What is the connection between Jesus and the Old Testament, what they just knew as the scriptures? So, some of the ways that these questions were attempted to be answered was that...

Sorry, I lost my place in my notes. I told you, this is going to be... it's a bad sermon. Messiah was meant to kick out the empire. This was the expectation of the Jews.

Why were the Jews not accepting Jesus? Messiah was meant to kick out the empire, not die at Rome's hands. So, Jesus doesn't look like the Messiah that the Jews had expected.

Two, the land was meant to be no longer occupied by the enemy. So, the land, the physical land that where Jerusalem was, Galilee and Judea, where many Jews lived, this land was meant to be saved by Messiah, kick out the empire, kick out the oppressors, and make sure that they didn't come back.

[ 9 : 00 ] Jesus failed at this task. Three, the Davidic king was meant to be back on a literal throne. Jesus did not have a literal throne. Four, the resurrection of the Holy Ones was meant to occur.

Only Jesus was claimed to be resurrected by these Christians. There was no general resurrection of everybody. Five, the expectation of the Messiah was that the glory was meant to refill the temple.

And there's something you can trace throughout scriptures where Moses and the Israelites who leave Egypt, they build the tabernacle and the glory fills it. Then Solomon builds the temple and the glory fills it.

And then the temple of Solomon is torn down by Babylon. Jews come back from exile. They rebuild the temple, but the glory doesn't fill it. And so maybe when Messiah comes, the glory will refill the temple.

But that doesn't happen. Jesus actually stops the temple from working. He goes into it, turns over tables, and says, stop it. Six, the kingdom that the Messiah was meant to establish was meant to be an ethnographic state.

[ 10 : 11 ] So ethno, meaning a nation, a people group, and geographic, the typo there, ethnogeographic state. It is meant to be geography. It is meant to be acreage.

It is meant to be square miles or square cubits or whatever they used in the first century. It is meant to be a physical place that you could go. And Jesus seemed to have no interest in establishing an ethnogeographic state.

Jesus died because the empire still occupied Judea, Galilee, Palestine. Caesar was still Lord. No general resurrection had occurred.

Jesus ceased temple operations for a day and cursed the temple. There's a passage where Jesus says, If you have faith to move a mountain, you can throw a mountain into the sea. The mountain that Jesus is referring to is the Temple Mount.

So Jesus has failed nearly every test of what a first century Jew may be expecting from the Messiah. But then the Christians come along and say, No, God has surprisingly, shockingly did exactly what he said he was going to do, but in a way that no one expected it.

[ 11 : 14 ] So the Christians would answer these questions differently. They would say, one, yes, Messiah defeated the powers of evil, not by throwing out the empire of Rome, but by defeating the powers of death, by being crucified on a cross, descending to the grave, defeating death and Satan, taking the keys of Hades, opening up the gates, and inviting everyone to leave.

Two, the land was now understood to be lands, not just a simple stretch of land along the Mediterranean, but rather that the Lord's glory would fill the earth and that the promises of the land in the Hebrew Bible now apply to the entire world.

The Christians claim that Jesus was in fact Lord and that Caesar was not. Colossians 2.15, Paul writes, Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities, exposed them to public displays by leading them in a triumphal parade.

The very thing that Rome thought that they had been successful in defeating this Jesus Messiah was actually the very thing that embarrassed him because he came back.

Jesus, yes, did not start a general resurrection, but he was the template of what would happen to everyone. He was the first fruits, according to 1 Corinthians 15, that what happened to Jesus would, in fact, happen to all people.

[ 12 : 28 ] The temple was redefined, not as a building, but as humanity. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians, and don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? Don't you know that you all, plural, the gathering of you, the group of you, are a temple of the Holy Spirit?

So the temple is no longer bricks, but flesh and blood. And six, the kingdom was a rebirth of all creation. The kingdom was not going to be an ethno-geographic state, but rather all of creation, all of the world, being remade into God's intentions for it, that God's will would be done on earth as it was in heaven.

Now, the Christians who believed this obviously had a lot going against them because they were persecuted. They were killed. They were thrown out of cities.

And it's easy to say, hey, death has been defeated, and it's much harder to not die. And so it became harder and harder to preach this message and harder for folks to believe it to be true, particularly the Jews who said, yeah, we don't believe in the so-called gospel, the so-called good news of yours, so you go do your own thing.

Us Jews are going to keep waiting for the Messiah. The kingdom, as time went on, stopped being about God's healing presence and instead became about raw political power.

[ 13 : 59 ] And the afterlife stopped being about resurrection and instead became about escapism. Christianity ended up being wildly successful in the Roman Empire because this gospel of the kingdom that the first Christians were preaching actually did seem to have some sort of transformative effect, yes, people kept dying, but on the other hand, Christians were actually bringing healing to people and changing economics for the better and not just allowing infants to die on the sides of hills and not just allowing women to be treated terribly or slaves to be treated terribly, but rather would create these alternative communities with different sorts of economics and different sorts of priorities, daring to proclaim that everyone was equal.

And it turned out that the Roman Empire masses were like, actually, that doesn't sound so bad. And then it became so successful that Constantine, the emperor of Rome, made it no longer illegal to be a Christian and then the emperor after that actually said, actually, everybody needs to be a Christian.

And that changing point gave Christianity raw political power. And as we all know, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And so as Christianity no longer had to be a grassroots movement that was sort of the underdog fighting to survive, but was rather given the armies and the swords of Rome, then it stopped being about God's healing presence and rather about imposing a will over a population.

The afterlife stopped being this powerful means by which people could push back against empire because a belief in the resurrection said, I don't care if you kill me, I'm going to come back someday.

[ 15 : 50 ] The afterlife instead became about escapism, about getting away from the earth, getting away from God's work of renewing all things and just believing that everything would be better if I were just a disembodied soul on a cloud somewhere.

So Christianity became corrupted. Now, not wholly corrupted. They were still theologians and writers and thinkers who kept to the original message of Jesus in that first century, first couple centuries of the church.

But the corruption was real and powerful. Now we've got to skip ahead to a gentleman named John Nelson Darby who lived in the 1800s.

And it's a good time to remember that all theology arises from historical context. All theology is trying to use finite human language to describe infinite truths.

And the theology is usually trying to answer real historical problems and therefore history arises from those historical problems. The Apostles' Creed.

[ 16 : 52 ] We believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. And then it skips over Jesus' life and goes to and was suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried.

And it skips over 33 years of Jesus' ministry, maybe 36, because that's not what the Apostles' Creed is trying to answer. The Apostles' Creed is arising in a time when there is controversy around the nature of God, around the nature of Jesus, and what the relationship is between the human Jesus and the divine God.

And so answering questions about Jesus' life was not particularly important to the writers of the Apostles' Creed in the 4th century. They're asking different questions. It's an accident in history that that creed happens to be the one that many people still recite today, even though it doesn't talk about the 1st century Christians' opposition to empire.

It doesn't talk about the original Christians' opposition to systems of hierarchy, even though that was inherent in the gospel of the 1st century. So, John Nelson Darby, he's alive in the 1800s, and he's growing up in England during an age of pessimism after the American and French revolutions.

Folks in Britain are sitting there watching America rebel and eventually win their rebellion and start their democracy. They're watching the French decapitate royalty, and the folks who are, you know, under monarchy in Britain who have power are wondering, what's going to happen to us?

[ 18 : 30 ] So they are thinking about these questions of empire and if the hopes of the Church of England wedded with the monarchy of England are actually going to come true.

The predominant Christian belief during the 1800s was something called post-millennialism. Millennialism deals with the question of the book of Revelation and this 1,000-year reign of Christ.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus returns, sets up a 1,000-year reign, and everything is great for a while. And the belief then, predominantly, was that Jesus started that 1,000-year reign when he was resurrected.

And that 1,000 years was a symbolic 1,000 years. It referred to the age of the Church and that under the Church, particularly wedded with empire or monarchy or power, everything would just get better and better and better until the new truth descended from the class.

That was post-millennialism. John Darby sees America rebel, sees France decapitate their royalty, and begins to think, huh, maybe things are going to get worse and worse and worse.

[ 19 : 46 ] So John Darby picks up some old theological ideas and creates some new ones and comes up with post-millennialism. I'm sorry, pre-millennialism.

That we live in a world that is getting worse and worse and worse, and then Jesus will return and then the millennium begins. So it's post-millennialism. We're in the 1,000-year reign now.

Everything's going to be great. Pre-millennialism, everything's terrible. Until Jesus comes back, then Jesus will set everything up and everything will be wonderful. So that's John Darby, and he then invents this idea called the rapture.

The rapture was a necessary theological invention to say Jesus has to scoop up the church, store them in heaven for a while, so then God can get back to his original plan with Israel and boot up the end of the world.

That was why the rapture was invented, because it's dealing with these questions of what is God going to do with the church and what is God going to do with Israel?

[ 20 : 55 ] So post-millennialism, Jesus' return comes after an era of blessedness established for the church. America kicks Britain behind. France beheads its aristocracy.

Britain wonders what's going to happen, and Darby invents dispensationalism. He combines pre-millennialism with this idea of a rapture and this idea that God treats the world and humanity in different ways through different areas.

Now this is a good moment to pause and say that if there's a theological movement that ultimately harms people and protects empire, it probably has its roots in white supremacy.

And the reason I bring this up now is because England's colonialistic tendencies are at threat during the 1800s. And Darby wants to protect England's thought right to colonize the world.

And Darby can do that as a theologian by saying England and the monarchy and colonialism can keep doing what it's doing because that's God's will.

[ 22 : 08 ] And it's God's will until God shows up and sets up a different dispensation. So let's talk about dispensationalism. Do you have that chart?

Those are multicolored charts. Yes. The dispensations of the Bible. So dispensationalism is a framework that views history as divided into distinct periods in which God interacts with humankind in specific ways.

So I don't want to spend a lot of time on this, but you get this idea of God treating Adam and Eve in a certain way in the dispensation, the era of innocence.

And then there's the era of conscience. They eat, Adam and Eve eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So God has to treat humanity differently then. Then the flood happens. God sets up a specific covenant with Noah.

And now we have the dispensation of human government. Then you have the call of Abraham and the law of Moses. Abraham is an era of promise. Moses descends from Mount Sinai with the Torah, the Ten Commandments.

[ 23 : 10 ] You have an era of law. And then Jesus and Paul show up and you no longer have law, but an era of grace. Then you have the rapture, seven-year tribulation, and then finally the kingdom, the great light throne, and eternity.

And so God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, supposedly, but has to treat humanity in different ways in different eras. And this is meant to go back to those original questions of explaining the relationship between Israel and the church and between Judaism and Christianity.

So what's the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible in this sort of theological system? The New Testament does not in any way reinterpret or reimagine the Hebrew Bible.

Everything that was said in the Hebrew Bible must be interpreted literally and will happen literally. What's the relationship between Israel and the church? The church and Israel are two separate peoples of God with different covenants in place, and God must treat them differently.

The relationship between Judaism and Christianity? Christianity is the one true way, and Jews will be damned to hell in this theological system unless they follow Jesus. But God will still use Judaism as a tool to bring about the end of the world.

[ 24 : 32 ] How do you make sense of the Hebrew Bible prophecies in light of Jesus? Jesus does not reinterpret anything. Everything in the Hebrew Bible must happen literally. Now, you shouldn't have to know about this, and I shouldn't have to waste all of our time teaching this.

It's made up in the 1800s. Okay? Let me go ahead and flash that next picture on the screen. Of the lady with the shelf. Yes.

So this is one of my favorite memes. You can fill the speech bubble with all sorts of things, but let's pretend for today that she's talking about the rapture. And she can say, the top shelf is all the books from the church fathers about the rapture.

And the middle shelf is all the books from the Catholic scholastics about the rapture. And the bottom shelf is all the books by the Protestant reformers about the rapture. Empty, empty, empty.

There are no books about it because it was a made-up idea. Okay? It was sprung up in the 1800s to give England the permission to keep its colonialistic tendencies going and to answer what's going to happen to the church and to Israel in the era where things seem to be falling apart a little bit.

[ 25 : 44 ] Now, what does this have to do with Zionism and everything that we're trying to talk to? Mark Knoll is a historian. He wrote a very thick, excellent book called *Civil War as Theological Crisis*.

And he's talking about what's happening in America during the 1800s as you have the abolitionists who are pushing against slavery and the pro-slavery folks who are using the Bible to support slavery.

And the Civil War was this massive theological crisis because the abolitionists are saying, you have to read with the grain of Scripture and with the grain of Scripture means reading towards liberation, against oppression, no matter what you may read in an individual verse, you have to read with the grain, with that trajectory in mind.

Whereas the pro-slavery folks are saying, no, no, no, every word is literal, you must accept every word and that means that we accept slavery and anybody who doesn't accept slavery is a filthy liberal who doesn't take the Bible seriously.

Okay? That's what's happening in the 1800s. As the Civil War is decided, you have a group of theologians who have to step back, reassess what to do and they retrench themselves in this position of biblical literalism and a stake in the ground that they are the one true interpreters of what it means to take the Bible seriously.

[ 27 : 10 ] And so in that moment, you can find all sorts of origins of Zionism, Christian supremacy, anti-homosexuality, the origins of biblical inerrancy of the concept, all the sort of things that a lot of table church folks are allergic to for good reason.

Now here's the red yarn part. So Darby is this theologian. He creates this system. He becomes friends with an American Bible study writer named Schofield.

Schofield puts out a Bible, a study Bible called the Schofield Reference Study Bible. Some of you, any of you grow up with this like in, yep, yep, yep, like on your grandfather's shelves, your shelves, your parents' shelves, the Schofield Reference Study Bible is immensely popular in the late 1800s.

It's still being published in its like 17th edition today. And that begins to propagate the idea of dispensationalism and the rapture and all of that. And it becomes the de facto standard store brand, name brand Christianity in seminaries and churches throughout the land.

And it deeply influences a changing set of Christians named Evangelicals. Evangelicals had their foundation actually as abolitionists.

[ 28 : 33 ] They were the original social justice warriors of their day in the 1850s, 1860s, pushing against slavery. And they were called the filthy liberals because they wanted to use the gospel of Jesus as a reason to make the world a better place.

Evangelicals, though, got sick and tired of being told that they didn't take the Bible seriously and so they began to be influenced by Schofield's Reference Bible. They start Dallas Theological Seminary and sort of adopt this system of dispensationalism.

Okay, so Darby influences Schofield. Darby also influences a British statesman named Lord Shaftesbury who is friends with the British foreign minister who is influenced by the secular Jew named Theodore Herzl who is the father of Jewish Zionism.

Together, those influence somebody named Lord Balfour who in 1948 writes the Balfour Declaration which establishes Palestine as a modern state for Jews.

So Darby creates this system and it ripples across America and across British imperialistic policy and it leads us to today. So what is Zionism?

[ 29 : 55 ] the fourth International Christian Congress on Biblical Zionism held in Jerusalem in February 2001. Yes, such a thing exists.

Brought together a wide representation of Christian Zionist spokespersons. They created some statements. So here is them defending or defining Zionism in their own word. Biblical Zionism is the firm belief that God chose the Jewish people and bequeathed to them as an everlasting possession the land of Canaan.

Christians must take courageous action to support the return of Jewish people to the land of Israel in all its parts. The Bible puts in full weight its full weight behind the return of Jewish exiles to Eretz that's the Jewish word for land Eretz Israel therefore Christians have no biblical grounds upon which to base support for Palestinian nationalism.

In other words if you are to take the Bible seriously as a sensationalist as a biblical Zionist you must read you are obligated to read the promises of land in the Hebrew Bible as literal historical promises that did not stop the Jesus they did not stop with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD they did not stop with the Duraspora being spread across the world the Jewish Diaspora they continue through this day and they must be they must happen literally so Zionism says the Jews must return to the land that land must be defended at all cost and then the theological reason behind all of this is in order then for Jesus to be able to return because Jesus cannot return until the Jews return to the land and temple sacrifices start up all over again and there is a sick irony in that while Christian



Zionism depends on Jews to bring on the return of Jesus most Christian Zionists will also believe that Jews are sentenced to hell unless they accept Jesus and so they have no theological issues with Israel with Jews being used as theological tools to make a Christian world happen the return of Jesus happen now the Apostle Paul is the primary biblical theologian to wrestle with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism as a Jew who accepts Jesus as Messiah this is a big theological problem for him as we read earlier in Romans 9 he actually wishes that he could be cut off from Jesus if it would help his Jewish brothers and sisters come to faith Romans 9 10 11 we are going to wrestle with at length this summer and what to do with those tricky passages but he actually concludes those three chapters wrestling with this theological problem by declaring something very very surprising which is all Israel will be saved and people rarely believe me when I say this but Paul is the most universalistic writer in the

[ 33 : 19 ] Bible and has no issue whatsoever by saying yeah of course all of Israel is going to be reconciled to God so already Christian Zionism is bumping up some problems that is ready to say most Jews will burn in hell where Paul will have nothing to do with that theologically Paul answers some of these questions at length in Ephesians where he says remember he's talking to Gentiles that once you were Gentiles by physical descent who were called uncircumcised by Jews who are physically circumcised and at that time you were without Christ you were aliens rather than citizens of Israel and strangers to the covenants of God's promise in this world you had no hope and no God but now thanks to Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood or the life the sacrifice of Christ Christ is our peace he made both Jews and Gentiles into one group with his body he broke down the barrier of hatred that provided us he cancelled the detailed rules of the law so that he could create one new person some translations would say one new humanity out of the two groups making peace he reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross which ended the hostility to God when he came when Jesus came he announced the good news of peace to you who are far away from God and to those who are near we both have access to the father through Christ by the spirit so now you are no longer strangers and aliens rather you are fellow citizens with God's people and you belong to

God's household as God's household you were built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone the whole building is joined together in Christ and it grows up into a temple dedicated to the Lord Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the spirit so in Paul's theology it's not as though God has a covenant with Israel and a covenant with Gentiles and those have to reach their natural conclusion at the end of time it's rather at the cross in Jesus every dividing line is brought into one new humanity and we could get into Greek and tense and all of that but this is all past tense language for Paul it is something that has happened in Christ it is not a promise of something to come it is something that is currently true that in Christ at the cross part of what happened was bringing together the separate groups and so there is no separate covenant for Israel and separate covenant for Gentiles there is but one people of

God later in the book of Romans Paul uses the analogy of a tree there is a tree called the people of God that began with the promised covenant to Abraham and what happened is not that God uprooted Israel and set it aside rather that the Gentiles are grafted onto this tree because there is only one tree there is only one people of God not two separate trees not that the church replaced Israel but rather that the Gentiles are brought into the one single people of God so all of the promises of the Hebrew Bible all of the promises of restoration of the exile coming to end of the glory returning of the land being restored of a king of David sitting on the throne did come true but in ways that we never expected they came true in ways that did not require violence or armies or war they came true in ways that did not belong to ethnic geographic realities but something far more pervasive far more universal something that actually would create peace and not just reboot the same old hostilities over and over again any theology that depends on someone's death is wrong any theology that needs someone to die in order to get God to do something is wrong and if you set that as sort of like a basic foundational belief it will help make sense of a lot of the things that might make us uncomfortable about what has been at least in the past couple hundred years traditionally taught about

Christianity Jesus didn't need to die in order to get God to love us Romans makes it clear God always loved us that's always been the case Christian Zionism needs Jews and therefore Palestinians to die in order for Jesus to return but any theology that depends on someone's death is wrong it flies in the face of a God that says that they desire no one to perish if you take that seriously then Christian Zionism becomes a very very sick joke that would dare say that God needs thousands and thousands of people to die in order to set up utopia Christian Zionism it needs to create these nice tidy dispensations and boxes in order to make all of these theological questions work and therefore God becomes duplicitous he deals with some people in some ways and some people in another way and you're never really sure what

God you're going to get are you going to get the God who is gracious and loving and kind and forgiving the God who shows up with a sword and kills everybody the God who wants everyone to be saved but also wants the Jews to die so that everyone can be saved whereas a single covenant that begins with Abraham and says you have faith and therefore that to you that to me is righteousness of God that makes sense of everything so Christian Zionism to me is a it's a system that only continues the same old violent lies that humans have always believed and it dares use God's name and the scriptures in order to prop it up it can be difficult to take a look at the Hebrew Bible and the Christian scriptures the Old and New

[ 40 : 09 ] Testament and be willing to say Jesus actually changed things Jesus actually fulfilled these prophecies in unexpected and new ways but if we're not willing to do that we're then forced to make God into a bloodthirsty violent tyrant who is just doing the same thing that human tyrants have always done rather Jesus is willing to say you've heard it said but I say to you Jesus is willing to say yes I am going to come into my glory and my glory is to absorb the violence of the empire and come back from it not to just set up new systems of empire now what does this practically mean for us today as we look at Israel and Palestine again we'll get into this a little bit more next week but the first thing I'll say is that any solution that dares try to say it's simple has not been paying attention is the solution to

Zionism anti-Zionism well it depends on what you mean by anti-Zionism do you mean the end of the Israeli states well that's going to have some pretty rough repercussions for the folks that are there now by anti-Zionism do you mean at the end of the occupation well that might be you know a better place to start something that ends violence and is not connected to anti-Semitism unfortunately all of these things are so well interconnected that as soon as you say something like anti-Zionist you will have Jews rightfully say that smacks of anti-Semitism because Jews have suffered endlessly over the centuries do they not deserve a land what are you talking about when you talk about land are you talking about an ethnic state or a civic state how are those boundaries defined are you talking about a one state solution a two state solution a one state two government solution all of this is to say is it's complex and therefore deserves our attention not our looking away it's complex and that's not an excuse to not engage but an excuse to engage more fully no matter what you're going to step into it and stepping into it is going to be necessary in order to move towards a solution to pretend like you're not going to step into it that you're going to say something and no one is going to be pissed off at you is a great way to just never step into it

I think that the first thing that we have to do is we have to set aside any sort of theology that says God needs people to die in order for this to work set that aside immediately you set aside any sort of theology that God's promises depend on one piece of land in the Mediterranean no God is far better than that God wishes for all of the world to be restored into a place of peace and non-violence you set aside any sort of theology that says that only certain kinds of people will be able to experience something good after they die and most other people will suffer endlessly set that aside and then you have to wade once you're free of those theological burdens into the real life the real lives of actual people on the ground who do suffer who do bleed who do live and die because of their home there is no simple solution but there are some pretty obvious things that we can set aside knowing that they have no biblical basis they have their basis in white supremacy and colonialism and they have their basis in the theology that assumes that God revels in bloodshed and violence

I want to conclude with a prayer of confession as is the case with any of the prayers that we put up on the screen you are welcome to join along or to simply read along if you're not sure you want to join along it is one that confesses violence and is one that uses plural pronouns because even if I have not myself shed blood I have contributed to the system that has and the thing I'll say about any sort of confession that uses plural pronouns we us is that Jesus did this too Jesus said forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors Jesus was sinless and perfect that's what Christians have usually said and believed yet Jesus was willing to also admit some complicity and some participation in systems that did cause harm Jesus was a Roman citizen Jesus paid taxes and

Jesus was aware of the fact that his taxes did harm I'm an American citizen and I am very aware of the fact that my taxes have killed people so with that I invite you to confess or at least read along with me oh Lord our hearts are heavy with the sufferings of the ages with the crusades and the holocaust of a thousand years the blood of the victims is still warm the cries of anguish still fill the night to you we lift our outspread hands Lord have mercy we have squandered the gift of life the good life of some is built on the pain of many the pleasure of a few on the agony of millions to you we lift our outspread hands Lord have mercy

[ 46 : 39 ] Lord forgive our life denying pursuits of life and teach us anew what it means to be your children to you we lift our outspread hands Lord have mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen Father Amen Father Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen