

Why I Agreed to Speak at the 2018 Christ at the Checkpoint Conference

Why did I agree to speak a conference that I have blasted in the past for being anti-Zionistic and perhaps even anti-Semitic? Why am I participating in an event that has been used to propagate what I have branded “a deadly anti-Israel theological error”? (I meant the word “deadly” quite literally.)

In a 2014 radio broadcast, I suggested that the Christ at the Checkpoint (CATC) conference that was about to be held would be “anything but constructive” and, in some cases, “anything but from above”—meaning, from the Lord and His Spirit. (The relevant comments begin about one hour and six minutes into the show. For my comments on the 2016 CATC conference, which I said would be “biased” and “hostile” to a pro-Israel position, go [here](#).)

When I first saw the 2010 video *With God on Our Side*, I branded it an “anti-Semitic hit piece.” Yet that video reflects the perspective of many CATC participants (although the official CATC statement rejects anti-Semitism). Why then would I participate in such an event in 2018, perhaps as the only speaker espousing my position? Why allow my name to be used to grant further legitimacy to the event, as critics have already asked me?

The answer is simple.

Palestinian Christian leaders have invited me to speak at the conference *because of* my deep disagreement with their positions. To quote the invitation I was sent, “We want to challenge and be challenged! In other words, we are inviting you because we disagree, and we want you to present your point

of view and articulate it with your own words, and then someone who represents a different point of view (either a Palestinian Christian or an international) will respond and then [be] followed by a small conversation.”

And what if I wanted to address radical Islam, the real culprit in the oppression of Palestinians? I was assured I had complete freedom to do so.

Looking at the list of conference speakers, I already know that I have some profound and deep differences with them (and they with me). But that’s the very reason I’ll be there: I get to voice my disagreements in the clearest possible terms, without compromise, excuse, or equivocation. Then I get to hear them do the same. Then we get to challenge each other. Isn’t this exactly what followers of Jesus should do?

Again, I’ve been told for several years now that to participate is to legitimize. I’ve been warned that the whole conference is an elaborate propaganda machine designed to undermine the State of Israel. To speak at the conference, then, is to be a useful idiot in someone else’s agenda.

I understand those concerns, and I appreciate them being raised. But there are cogent responses to those concerns.

First, no matter what someone else’s purpose is, if I can get my viewpoint out to an audience that strongly rejects my views, I will take that opportunity every day of the week. Those are the people I want to reach.

Second, by God’s grace, I have a large platform as well, and through radio, TV and internet, I can reach millions of people each week with the spoken and written word. All the sessions are livestreamed for the world to watch, and if I feel anything is being misreported or falsely portrayed, I can instantly post a blog or article or video that will set the record straight.

Third, and most importantly, I take these brothers at their word. They have asked me to speak because of our deeply-held differences, and they have asked me to hear their side as well. I will do this with joy, praying that God would help me communicate the truth in the clearest possible terms as well hear whatever truth they are communicating.

As a Messianic Jew, I am both a friend and critic of Israel, so I have no problem acknowledging our nation's many shortcomings. Where my people have wronged (or continue to wrong) Palestinians, I will stand with the Palestinians for justice. And if I am shown definitively that Israel is persecuting Palestinian Christians for their Christian faith, I will shout it out for the world to hear.

But what is non-negotiable to me is that: 1) God's promises to Israel are eternal and unbreakable and to deny these promises is to undermine the authority of the Word and the integrity of the Lord; 2) those promises include the physical preservation of the Jewish people and their return to the Land of Israel, along with the future salvation of Jews worldwide (what Paul called "all Israel"); 3) the doctrine called supersessionism (or replacement theology, meaning that the Church has superseded or replaced Israel in God's redemptive plan) has opened the floodgates of anti-Semitism in Church history, leading to the slaughter of millions of Jews; 4) we cannot be a prophetic people in harmony with Jesus and reject the modern State of Israel as established by God.

All this holds true whether Israel is saintly or sinful and whether or not the Israelis currently believe in Jesus-Yeshua. It has to do with the faithfulness of God, not the faithfulness of His people.

I pray that my presence at the 2018 CATC conference will be redemptive and not combative, and that the church and world will be reminded that it is the Lord who regathered the Jewish people and established the modern State of Israel; that the

real enemy to peace in the Middle East is militant Islam, not Israel; that the Lord wants justice for both Palestinians and Israelis; and that born-again, Palestinian Christians are our beloved brothers and sisters, fellow-heirs of the Messiah.