

Legal Reasons Why Christians Should Support Israel

Enemies of Israel attempt to convince us that Israel is an illegitimate, colonialist project in which foreigners moved in, took land and forced a state upon the locals. The truth is that Israel's founding has a firm basis in international law and was established through the same legal process behind the founding of every other country in the Middle East.

To question Israel's legality one must question countries like Jordan, Syria, Kuwait and Iraq, to name a few.

Continual Jewish Presence in the Land

A quick overview of history will reveal that Jews have maintained a continuous presence in the land of Israel for more than 3,000 years. Their connection to Jerusalem goes back almost as far. The city is mentioned close to 700 times in the Hebrew Bible and has been the Jewish people's capital since the days of King David.

Under the Roman Empire, however, the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were destroyed. Many Jews were killed, others fled, and more were forced out. This was the beginning of an exile that lasted 1,900 years, during which more than 100 generations of dispersed Jews prayed three times a day to return to Jerusalem. Even so, a small number of Jews had remained and maintained a presence in the holy city and other areas of the land. Israel's founding, therefore, was by the descendants of an indigenous people joining those who had maintained a presence in their ancient homeland.

Palestine

After its destruction in AD 70, the Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city, renaming it *Aelia Capitolina*. They also

changed the name of Judea to *Palestina*. Their goal was to remove all Jewish connection to the city and the land. The Roman Empire eventually became Christian, and the region of Palestine became peppered with churches.

In the seventh century, however, Islamic forces took the area, and for the next 1,300 years Palestine was in the very center of one Islamic empire after another, ruling from India in the east to Spain in the west. The last Islamic empire was the Ottoman Empire, whose rule lasted from 1517 to 1917.

Palestine was a small, insignificant region that these empires ignored and neglected. When the famous travel writer Mark Twain visited the Holy Land in the 19th century, he wrote, "Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. ... It is a barren, desolate land." Other writings of that era confirm this desolate situation—Palestine was not just barren and undeveloped, but it lacked a population.

Breakup of the Ottoman Empire

In World War I the Ottomans sided with Germany and lost, so their empire was divided among the British, French and Italians. Borders were drawn and leaders put in place to govern the new nation-states. The borders, however, were drawn with no regard to the people on the ground, which has resulted in many a skirmish to this day.

The Hashemite Arabs of Arabia had helped the British defeat the Ottomans—as depicted in the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*—and when the war was over, the British owed them favors. They were given territories outside of Arabia as payback.

British Mandate Over Palestine

The area of Palestine fell under the British mandate, and the 1917 Balfour Declaration had already stated Britain's intention of establishing a homeland for the Jews there. In 1920 the San Remo Conference transformed the Balfour

Declaration from a letter of intent to a legally binding foundational document of the mandate. In 1922, 52 nations of the brand-new League of Nations formalized the British mandate, including the Balfour Declaration.

Hashemite Emir Feisal, the premier leader of the Arab world, also supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He acknowledged the Zionists would enhance the economy of the entire Middle East. In return for his backing, he asked for his own state in Syria. When the French reneged, he withdrew support for—and even opposed—the Zionist endeavor.

In 1922 the British betrayed the Jewish people, and 78% of what the League of Nations had designated as “the national home of the Jewish people” was broken off and presented as a gift to Abdullah (Feisal’s brother) for an Arab state. The remaining 22% designated for a Jewish homeland was inhabited by both Jews and Arabs, and tensions were increasing between the two populations as Arabs opposed Jewish sovereignty.

United Nations Approves Statehood

The League of Nations morphed into the United Nations in 1946 and was soon given the responsibility of finding a solution to the problem of Palestine. In November 1947, they passed a resolution to partition the area, with one part designated for a Jewish state and the other for an Arab state. The Jews accepted this plan and declared statehood in May 1948. The Arabs rejected it and declared war.

In 1949, Israel was admitted into the United Nations with a majority vote, thereby placing a stamp of approval upon her founding and acceptance into the governing organization.

Same Legal Process Created Entire Middle East

Every country existing today in the Middle East was founded after 1920 and according to this same legal process: Following the 1918 breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations

sanctioned mandates to the British, French and Italians, authorizing them to establish independent nation-states, and those new states were then ratified and accepted as members of the United Nations.

Therefore, we can boldly support the existence of Israel because its founding was completely legal and formulated by the community of nations. {eo}

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