

Jonathan Feldstein: Jesus Was a Palestinian? Really?

Just in time for Christmas, the world was treated this week to the latest offense from the “Palestinians” with the declaration by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that Jesus was a “Palestinian.” Abbas’ offensive Christmas greeting called Jesus “a Palestinian messenger who would become a guiding light for millions around the world,” and suggested Israel was to blame for the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land.

With a reference to Luke 23:34, Israel’s foreign ministry spokesman noted, “He should have read the gospel before uttering such offensive nonsense, but we will forgive him because he doesn’t know what he’s doing,” adding that Abbas’ remarks are an “outrageous rewriting of Christian history.”

I’m no theologian and, as an Orthodox Jew, certainly no expert in Christianity or the gospel. However, I know a dangerous and offensive ambush on both Judaism and Christianity when I see it, and when those called “Palestinians” today erase and rewrite whole sections of Scripture that are the foundation of Judaism and Christianity, it must be called for what it is: a dangerous lie that is a hybrid between Palestinian nationalism and the ultimate Islamic replacement theology.

There are many, many examples of this, but one of the best is when “Palestinians” say (often) that there was never a temple on the Temple Mount, the focal point of biblical Jerusalem whose central architectural landmark was destroyed, rebuilt, destroyed again in the year 70 and replaced by two mosques hundreds of years later, as if to spread the dominance of Islam over Jerusalem as an Islamic city, which is never even mentioned in the Quran. Of course, any Jew or Christian knows that the Temple was a reality, and the denial of its very

existence also denies those of us who share so much in common—literally, the foundation of our respective faiths.

This is one egregious example, but one doesn't have to look too hard to find plenty more, the same way one doesn't have to dig too deep in Jerusalem to find archeological remains, evidence of the reality we know from the Bible.

Of course, denying the underpinnings of Judaism and Christianity are no problem in "Palestinian" society, but stating the inconvenient truth that Islam is the main threat to both, particularly to Christians living among Muslims and the primary cause for the Christian exodus, would be a PC no-no. For instance, Abbas also mentioned Palestinians "trapped under siege" in Gaza, "who are prevented from worshipping in Bethlehem," conveniently overlooking that it's his good friends from Hamas who control Gaza and who make life for Christians there a living hell. The same is true among Christians in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and the list goes on.

Why do I care? Why write this? It's simple. Israel is the birthplace of both Judaism and Christianity. Jews and Christians have a common bond that's based biblically and has never been more important. True, thousands of years of history from Jesus' time until the last century have displayed a less enlightened, less kind and certainly not a gentle approach by what's loosely referred to as "the church" to Jewish neighbors and Judaism as a whole.

But the awakening in the last century of Christians who understand the biblical injunction to bless Israel and who know that Israel's rebirth is fulfillment of prophesy, period, needs to be met with open arms by Jews and reciprocated. So when a Palestinian leader refers to Jesus as a Palestinian, it's an affront to the foundation of Christianity, making one want to imagine Jesus dying not on a Roman cross but with a suicide belt packed with explosives at a 2,000-year-old

Jerusalem café, and must be challenged at every turn.

Why refer to “Palestinians” in quotes? The name *Palestine* in modern use initiated with the League of Nations and the British. Native residents of what’s Israel today were referred to as “Palestinian,” but the term was used by the British to refer to Jews. My father, for instance, born in Haifa, was a “Palestinian.” Only decades after Israeli independence when Jews (and what’s grown into about 1.5 million Arabs) became Israeli, did the term *Palestinian* morph to refer to Arabs.

There is ample historical documentation to prove that while there were indigenous Arabs in Israel as well, Arab migration to Israel exploded as the land flourished with Jews returning from exile and corresponding economic opportunities, drawing many whose origins are still unmistakable by their names as being from Egypt or Syria and that are still evident today. But while Jews returned en mass, fulfilling prophecy, there was always an unbreakable and majority of Jews in the land.

So while there is legitimate evidence to show that many of today’s “Palestinians” are, in fact, not indigenous to Israel and that “Palestinian” nationalism was born more as a way to delegitimize and destroy Israel, I, for one, understand that there is a reality on the ground that must be dealt with today, and I am all for coexistence and peace, if the latter is even possible.

However, by claiming Jesus was a “Palestinian,” since everyone knows he was a Jew, what they have done is debunked the myth of a “Palestinian” people as the term is abused today. The latest “Palestinian” lie underscores the reality that if Jesus were a “Palestinian,” it is the indigenous Jews who have the rightful claim to Israel, going back to those lived in here in Jesus’ time, with its center in Jerusalem established by the Jewish King David 3,000 years ago, in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long before that, and documented in the Bible.

But those who read and understand Scripture—and don't try to erase and rewrite it—knew that already.

Jonathan Feldstein is the director of Heart to Heart, a unique virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a column for Charisma's Standing With Israel. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.