

Thirsting for Armageddon?

☒ Time and time again one hears the accusation that Christians view the restoration of Israel as a stepping-stone to the final battle of Armageddon in which countless Jews will perish. Supposedly, this is what motivates Christian Zionists to side with Israel at present, while ultimately wanting to accelerate 'the end' and with it the second coming of Jesus.

As a consequence, the Jewish world is being warned to stay away from such Christians, since their support is insincere and based on a dark eschatological agenda.

This brings to mind an incident that took place some seven years ago in which a Jewish producer working out of London with the popular American TV show 60 Minutes asked me for an interview. While very friendly and warm at first, he quickly changed tone and asked, "So, do you believe in the New Testament books like Daniel and Zechariah which speak of a coming Armageddon in which hundreds of thousands Jews will be killed?"

I responded by asking him if he was a God-fearing Jew, to which he answered yes. I then retorted: "Well, how is it that as a God-fearing Jew, you do not know that the two books you mentioned are not in the New Testament, but in fact are in the Hebrew Scriptures?" You can imagine the embarrassing silence that ensued.

But this brings the whole issue into proper focus. That is, the accusation leveled against Christians in this regard has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures and not the Christian Scriptures. Armageddon (literally the "hill of Megiddo") is only mentioned briefly in the New Testament in Revelation 16, and even then without any great detail.

Fuller accounts of this battle, however, are given in the

Hebrew books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel and Zechariah. In fact, in the latter the author foretells of the destruction of two-thirds of the Jews living in the land (see Zechariah 13:8).

This writer happens to believe that this passage found its fulfillment in the uprisings against Roman oppression that took place in the land of Israel in the First Century. At that time a considerable slaughter of the Jewish community did take place.

This writer has also heard respected Orthodox Jewish rabbis preach on these same prophetic scriptures from Ezekiel onwards with similar zeal to that of their Christian counterparts.

My point is the idea that this theology is exclusively a Christian one is false. Jewish and Christian preachers have addressed it! The only difference lies in the identity of the Deliverer who intervenes. Christians believe he is Jesus and Jews assert that he will be someone else. So be it. However, one thing is clear, according to both testaments of Scripture, the coming of Messiah will be glorious and unmistakable.

I am, therefore, willing to wager that when he arrives in splendor, we all will embrace him. To do otherwise because of historical considerations and positions would be nothing short of crazy!

Also as a matter of record, most Christian Zionists do not support Israel because of some future eschatological blow-up. No, they support Israel because of the past. That is, 4000 years ago God made a promise to the Jewish people through the Patriarch Abraham that Canaan would be their everlasting possession. This promise he ratified by a covenant. This effectively means that Israel's presence in the Holy Land is not because of prophetic considerations but because of God's faithfulness to His promise given to Abraham.

By the way, the conflict raging in the Middle East also is about this divine promise, and God will eventually keep it in

full; exactly when we do not know.

This Abrahamic covenant is also clear about the fact that Israel's existence is for the blessing of the world (Genesis 12:1-3) and thus Christians bless her and stand alongside her because they have been profoundly enriched and blessed by her. In short, they are grateful and seek to demonstrate it. There is no other agenda. Love, from a biblical perspective, is unconditional.

A future conflict in the Middle East there no doubt will be, but I have the sneaky feeling that we will all be in it together!

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