



A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM CHALLENGED

NEW VIDEO GIVES OTHER SIDE TO ISRAELI - PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

A REVIEW BY ALBERT JAMES DAGER

The DVD entitled, *With God on Our Side* (Rooftop Productions, 2010), has thrown down the gauntlet to Christian Zionists who champion the modern state of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. Christian Zionists believe modern Israel is the fulfillment, or the beginning of the fulfillment, of biblical prophecies that speak of God's chosen people returning to their ancient land (Zion). They also believe that the return of the Jews to Israel is a prerequisite to the coming of the Lord.

In the video Malcom Hedding, with International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, a Christian Zionist group, defines his cause:

Well biblical Zionism is—the short answer is—the belief that the Abrahamic Covenant, either in part or in full, has never been abolished.

George Morrison of Christians United For Israel (CUFI), states:

You can't separate the land from the people.

When God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to all the Jewish people—it included a piece of real estate called Israel. It is the only country in the world where God actually outlined its borders and parameters, and gave it that land. So if I were to strictly look at the Bible, and look at its borders, I see parameters go further north than what it is now, even up to Damascus, and down south to the river—Egypt river—over to the Mediterranean, and then, of course, all the way across the east side of the Jordan River, which include Jordan and that.

Now that's not the way it is now, and I don't know if that's what it's going to come back to in our lifetime, but I do believe in the end, when God—which I believe will establish His Kingdom on this earth—there will be a return to those borders.

Upon these beliefs rest the actions and teachings of leaders within Christianity dedicated to supporting the state of Israel through lobbying of the U.S. Congress and president. The objective of Christian Zionism is to aid Israel in just about any way possible to maintain its hold upon the land of Palestine.

To briefly set the background to the issues addressed in this video we start with Israel's beginning in 1948.

Israel holds the land granted it through the partitioning of Palestine by the British who occupied that area after defeating the Ottoman Turks after World War I with the help of native Bedouin tribes. The British promised the Bedouins a nation of their own, but reneged on that promise and established a British protectorate over the land.

Led by Britain, the United Nations mandated creation of a homeland in Palestine primarily for displaced Jews who had suffered under the Holocaust. Implementing that UN mandate, the British displaced many Arabs and other ethnic Palestinians in order to make room for the Jews, thus creating a climate of hatred and conflict from the beginning. Even before Israel formally declared itself a state the surrounding Muslim countries determined they would destroy it before it could be born. Five Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria—attacked Israel in May, 1948, shortly after it had declared its independence on the eve of final British withdrawal. But they were soundly repelled by a poorly trained, ill-equipped, and vastly outnumbered Israeli army, leading to an armistice that allowed Israel to remain. That war, known by Israelis as the War of Independence, and by Arabs as “the Catastrophe,” was the first in a series of wars and diplomatic maneuvering that came to be known as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since its inception Israel has been on a state of military alert, and virtually all citizens are considered members of its army.

Originally, the UN General Assembly, in its Resolution 181, would have created side-by-side both an Arab state and a Jewish state. But that Resolution was rejected by the Arabs, thus creating a large displaced population of Palestinians who insist that Israel has been an obstacle to their having an independent state. Generations of Israelis and Palestinians have grown up in that area, propagandized to hate one another.

In 1956, in violation of the 1949 Armistice, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba in violation of the Constantinople Convention of 1888 which guaranteed the passage of all ships during times of war or peace. This led to the Suez Canal Crisis, during which Israel, with British and French support, invaded and captured the



Egyptian Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Under pressure from the United States and the UN, Israel withdrew from the Egyptian territories and Egypt ceased its blockade and agreed to demilitarize the Sinai which was overseen by the newly created United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).

The most significant war in the Arab-Israeli conflict occurred on May 19, 1967, when Egypt again closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Having earlier expelled the UNEF monitors, Egypt then deployed 100,000 troops to the Sinai and mobilized them on Israel's southern border. Joining Egypt in this new attempt to destroy Israel were Jordan, Syria and Iraq who amassed on Israel's eastern border. On June 5, Israel preemptively launched a surprise attack on Egypt. The Israeli Air Force destroyed most of the Egyptian Air Force, then turned east to destroy the Jordanian, Syrian, and Iraqi air forces.

So swiftly did Israel dispatch its enemies that the conflict came to be known as the Six-Day War. In the process of defending itself Israel gained control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and eastern Jerusalem. This brought all of Jerusalem under Israeli control.

Since the Six-Day War the Arab states and the Palestinians have demanded that Israel relinquish their control of the captured territories. Instead, Israel has continued to expand its settlements into those territories, creating more hardship for the Palestinians who fled into refugee camps maintained by the Arab states. Palestinians who remain in those territories captured by Israel are subjected to difficulties they had not known prior to the Six-Day War. Unable to dislodge Israel through conventional military means, the Arab states have resorted to financing and supporting Palestinian terrorism through what it calls Intifada (uprising). As a result of that terrorism launched against it by Palestinian terrorist organizations such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Hamas in the south and east, and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, Israel has taken harsh measures to protect itself. Palestinians and other Arabs must now pass through numerous checkpoints and undergo rigorous scrutiny to move about within those territories controlled by Israel.

Christian Zionists insist that Israel must not give up those territories because they are part of Israel's God-given land and the Jews are entitled to it in perpetuity. Many, if not most, Christian Zionists take a laissez-faire approach to the plight of the Palestinians, often ignoring even Christian Palestinians who are also subject to Israeli restrictions.

With this background we may assess the message of *With God on Our Side*.

The video opens with John Hagee, founder and pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, speaking to the applause of a congregation waving American and Israeli flags, some dancing the Jewish Hora:

I repeat, we cannot change the past. But Christians and Jews can unite, and we can control the future. Fifty million Evangelicals with five million Jews in North America is a match made in Heaven!

John Hagee is arguably the most visible proponent of Christian Zionism. In conjunction with 400 leaders from the

Christian and Jewish religions, he founded Christians United For Israel (CUFI) in February, 2006. Hagee, a strong supporter of the Christian right, has taught that Jesus did not die for the Jews, but for "the Church." Therefore, Hagee reasons, it is not necessary to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews:

The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses. I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the Word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.

The Law of Moses is sufficient enough to bring a person into the knowledge of God until God gives him a greater revelation. And God has not.

Paul abandoned the idea [of evangelizing Jews]. In the book of Romans he said, "I am now going to go to the Gentiles from this time forward." Judaism doesn't need Christianity to explain its existence. But Christianity has to have Judaism to explain its existence.¹

This aberrant teaching ignores the historical and biblical evidence that the other apostles continued to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews. But this evidently doesn't matter to the Christian Zionists who seem to have more affinity toward Jewish anti-Christians than toward their own brethren living in Israel and the surrounding Arab nations.²

While claiming to love the Jews, many Christian Zionists withhold the only avenue to God's love in the person of Jesus Christ when interacting with Jews on behalf of modern Israel.

Having dismissed the Gospel as irrelevant to the Jews, Hagee has no problem with working side-by-side with Jews who reject Christ as long as they stand together for the state of Israel, as Hagee states in this clip from *With God on Our Side*:

When the enemies of Israel threaten the existence of the Jewish state, silence is not an option. When it comes to standing with Israel in her fight for survival—the survival of the only democracy in the Middle East—all of our differences disappear, and we truly become Christians united in behalf of Israel.

All our differences do *not* disappear. One may have sympathy for the state of Israel for various reasons, but to say that *all* our differences disappear for that cause is essentially to deny Christ as the only way to the Father. Christian Zionists are so blinded by their inordinate love for the secular state of Israel and "democracy," that the Gospel takes a back seat to their agenda.

With God on Our Side takes a strong stance against Christian Zionism, but unfortunately that stance is predicated only upon what the producers see as tolerance of Israeli injustice toward Palestinians (which, admittedly, is a problem). They do not even

¹ Julia Dunn, *Houston Chronicle*, April 30, 1988, Religion, p. 1.

² When we say, "Arab nations" we understand that all the nations outside the Arabian peninsula are not truly Arab. But that name has come to include the nations that are generally allied against Israel and are part of the Arab League, or League of Arab States.

address Hagee's aberrant theology, choosing rather to focus on Dispensationalist eschatology which underlies Hagee's Christian Zionism.

Besides combating the ideology of Christian Zionism, a primary focus of *With God on Our Side* is a call for justice for the Palestinians. The video takes issue with the Christian Zionist appeal to Genesis 12:3 where God says to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and curse him who curses you, and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed."

At issue is the question, "To whom is God referring?" Christian Zionists say that this is a mandate to bless the Jews in all circumstances. Others, such as preterists and amillennialists, say that God is addressing spiritual Israel—that is, all who come to faith in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile; Genesis 12:3 has nothing to do with Jews as God's chosen people because all who are in Christ are God's chosen people.

But why must it be either/or? For those who believe the Lord is coming to establish His physical reign upon the earth with His headquarters in Jerusalem, the land will again be populated by natural, mortal Israelites whom Jesus calls from out of all the nations. At the same time, the inheritors of the Kingdom—the resurrected saints, both Jews and Gentiles—will reign with Him, administering His government with a rod of iron. Confusion on both sides exists because neither has a proper understanding of biblical prophecy related to the Kingdom of Heaven, which will be manifested on the earth during the Millennium. Until then, Israelites will not inherit all the land.

It is on misunderstanding the Kingdom of Heaven as it functions now as opposed to how it will function under Jesus' direct rule during the Millennium that both Christian Zionists and their detractors base their arguments. This video builds its case against Jews as the legitimate inhabitants of the territory it has occupied as a nation since 1948, particularly the territories it annexed in the Six-Day War, on a largely preterist viewpoint which rejects any future application to biblical last-days prophecy.

With God on Our Side follows a young American named simply "Christopher," who has had his eyes opened since visiting the Middle East and seeing firsthand what he perceives as Israeli injustice against Palestinians. Christopher introduces Palestinian Christian Salim Munayer, Ph.D., founder of Musalaha, an organization that promotes reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinian believers in Jesus. Munayer states that the Jews "left this land" two thousand years ago; why are they coming back now?

To be accurate, the Jews never "left this land," in the sense they chose voluntarily to leave. They were driven out by the Romans in the first century, creating the third and final Diaspora. Over the past two millennia other peoples, primarily Arabs, migrated into the land and settled there, but there was never a nation state established. It was more like an unincorporated area. Some Jews remained, but a large influx of Arabs created an Arab majority. The video states that by the time the Ottoman Empire was defeated the population of Palestine was 95% Arab and only 5% Jewish.

Salim Munayer takes the side of the Arabs, being one himself, albeit Christian, not Muslim:

In reality there were people here, living. But how you are going to justify it? Do you say, "Well, this land is desert, it's empty, and swamps, and we came here and we turned the desert into green, and we dried the swamps, and we flourish, and we made all this area like a Garden of Eden, and as a result, Arabs from the neighboring Arab countries came and moved in to live here as a result of the prosperity that the Jewish people brought here?"

Well, my life story and my experience challenge those two premises: one, my parents were living here generation upon generation. We trace our history back to the twelfth century in the Middle East—in this part as well. My great grandfather built a church here, and it's written evidence—historical evidence. My family owned a lot of land here. In 1948 they been ordered by gun to go out of their home, and some people in the city did not want to, they got shot. It was a massacre in the city so people, out of fear, they were running for their lives. And as they were going out, as a matter of fact, they were not allowed to take anything with them.

As compelling evidence of Israeli atrocities, Munayer's words are spoken while a scene of dead bodies is displayed on the screen. It is strongly implied that Arabs were shot merely for refusing to leave the city. The problem, however, is that the bodies on the ground are those of men in military clothing.

We are now some 62 years removed from these events. Munayer appears to be in his early 60s, which means the best he can offer is anecdotal accounts of events passed down by his parents and other Arabs. But we should not dismiss his claims of Israeli injustice on the face of it.

In response to Munayer's appeal, Christopher says:

Wait. I'd always been told that the Palestinians were the aggressors. Before I went any further I knew I needed to find out more about what had happened in the past hundred years or so.

Christopher's case for rethinking what he had believed about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is followed by Ben White, a Middle East journalist, who is featured often in the video. White sets the stage for others who accuse Israel of committing ethnic cleansing when it became a state in 1948. White says that before Israel became a state there was no conflict between the Jews and Arabs. The conflict, he says, has a specific historical root—the establishment of Israel as a nation.

This is true, but when Israel became a nation it had no militaristic aims; it faced fierce opposition from the surrounding Arab nations. It is those Arab nations that started the conflict.

The video presents a brief history from the World Zionist Organization in 1897 whose purpose was to work for the creation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, to the establishment of the state of Israel. It gives scant reference to the first war that resulted as Arab countries determined to destroy Israel upon its birth. The narrator concludes this brief history by saying, "By the time a lasting cease fire was brokered, Israel controlled over 77% of Mandate Palestine. There were over 700,000 refugees."

Ilan Pappé, Ph.D., author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, states, “In my mind, in 1948 the Israelis committed ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians. And I think the historical evidence proves beyond any doubt that the ideology, the strategy, and the policy itself can only be described as ethnic cleansing.”

Ben White also accuses Israel of ethnic cleansing, and gives the UN’s definition: “Ethnic cleansing is rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group.”

Matthew Hand, Middle East Director of Reconciliation Walk, has a slightly different take:

Like other places in the Middle East, it was a tremendous misfortune—the kind of misfortune you have in war. But certainly both sides were suffering from different causes, and both sides can look at the other and claim that they were the victims of the other. Some of the new Israeli historians have described the events of Israel’s independence in 1948 as an ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians. I think it’s too early to say that.

A search of historical documents reveals more to the story than Israelis arbitrarily driving out people from their homes.

In its Proclamation of Israel’s Independence, the Jewish state began by offering full and equal citizenship to all the inhabitants without regard to religion, race or gender:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the principles of liberty, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel, will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race or sex; will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture; will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and will loyally uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the Resolution of the Assembly of November, 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about Economic Union over the whole of Palestine. We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its State and to admit Israel into the family of Nations. In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions - provisional and permanent.

We extend our hand in peace and neighbourliness to all the neighbouring states and their peoples, and invite them to co-operate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all. The State of Israel is prepared to make its contribution to the progress of the Middle East as a whole.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfilment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.

With trust in Almighty God, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948.

So what happened to Israel’s extension of goodwill toward the Arabs? Unfortunately, Israel was attacked at its inception. Somehow Israel managed to repel its enemies, but with the Arab states warning the Arab inhabitants of Israel that they were in danger from the Jews, many Arabs fled in fear, abandoning their homes, thus creating the refugee situation that continues to grow.

Matthew Hand of Reconciliation Walk states:

What happened eventually in the War of Independence was that the Arabs were not very well led; they were displaced from their homes, and Jews who were themselves refugees ended up settling in many of those homes, in the Jerusalem area in particular.

Christopher responds by asking why he was never told about this episode in Israel’s history while growing up in the Church.

This is a good question, but it is asked as an indictment against Israel rather than as an objective look at the problem as it occurred. When the Arabs fled, many chose not to return, abandoning their homes because they had been propagandized by their leaders that they would be killed if they remained in Israel. In much the same way that Arabs populated the land of Israel during the third Diaspora when the Jews fled their homes, now the Jews began to settle in the homes vacated by the Arabs when they fled. This is not mentioned in the video; rather, we are consistently hammered with the idea that the Israeli government purposely drove the Arabs from their homes.

Now, to be fair, such did take place at least on a limited scale. But the vast majority of Palestinian refugees were not displaced as the result of ethnic cleansing as much as they are victims of their own leaders’ propaganda efforts against the state of Israel. Every expansion of Israel’s territory has been the result of defensive warfare against its Arab enemies bent on its destruction.

Since its inception in 1948 Israel has been a thorn in the side of the Arab nations. Because of their largely Muslim populations, a number of those nations have decreed that the Jews in Israel must be driven into the Mediterranean Sea. There is no love lost on either side of the conflict toward the other.

The history of modern Israel is a testament to the tenacity and determination of those Jews who have settled there from out of many nations. Yet there are many Jews who are against the state of Israel for a number of reasons. One reason is found among some Jews who consider themselves true to the Torah by asserting that it is un-Jewish to have a state; Jews are to await God’s redemption through the appearance of the Messiah, at which time the only Jewish state sanctioned by God will be established.

Other religious Jews also reject Israeli politics, claiming that there is no need for a Jewish state because there is no real anti-Semitism to be protected against. Still others take a secular approach, considering themselves more a part of humanity as a whole than part of an homogeneous people with a common ancestry. One Jew who takes an overwhelmingly pro-Arab position, consistently indicting Israel as the bad guy in the conflict, is Norman Finkel. An anti-Israel Jew, Finkel accuses Israel of acting contrary to international law:

U.N. Resolution 242 states that it's inadmissible to acquire territory by war. That's a basic, bedrock principle of international law. And so that effectively says to Israel, "You conquered the West Bank in the course of a war; you conquered the Golan in the course of a war; you conquered Sinai in the course of a war; you have no title to that territory, so you have to withdraw fully, unequivocally, unambiguously.

Outrage over Israel's occupation of the disputed territories led to a series of Palestinian uprisings known as the Intifada.

Finkel makes it seem as if Israel purposely acted contrary to "international law." But UN Resolution 242 was enacted *after* the Six-Day War specifically to indict Israel for annexing those territories. Never before had the UN sanctioned any nation for annexing conquered territory, even if that territory had been taken by aggression.

Only when Israel, in defending itself in 1967, took control of the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank did the UN decide to retroactively impose Resolution 242 to forbid the taking of territory by war.

The truth is that Israel has continuously returned captured territory to its antagonists, only to be set upon again and again, either through threat of war with surrounding Arab nations, or through terrorist attacks by organizations such as Hamas, the PLO, and Hezbollah. How often can Israel be expected to jeopardize its security by allowing its enemies strongholds within close striking distance to its central regions?

Although the UN during the mid-twentieth century created Israel as a nation state, within a few years it began to turn against Israel. Any sympathy the UN nations felt for the Jews as a result of the Holocaust quickly gave way to a wave of anti-Semitism—or at least anti-Zionism—as dependence on Arab oil began to influence those nations' foreign policies.

What would the UN and the anti-Israel factions have said had the Arab nations succeeded in their attacks against Israel? In view of no serious sanctions against those Arab states for having attacked Israel in the first place, it is obvious that the UN wouldn't have been unduly concerned.

Turning the other cheek is a mandate from the Lord to His people as individuals. But if a nation is attacked it should be able to take the territory it conquered in its defense, particularly if doing so positions it to prevent further attacks, such as is the case with Israel annexing the territories it captured.

Finkel blames Israel for the creation of the Intifada. And Ron Dart, director of Amnesty International, B.C. Yukon Division from 1985 to 1995, adds his justification for the Intifada:

Intifada was just one reaction amongst many. Once you really trace the decades leading up to it you can begin to understand it. Any oppressed people are going to respond.

You can't have people living over decades in contexts which dehumanize people without reactions. If you put your heel on someone's head, and hold it and press it in, there's going to be a reaction. Eventually, eventually it will come. The tinder is there for the fire. Put spark to tinder you get eruption. That happens in any social context. That's just not a Jewish-Palestinian—that happens in any place in the world, what Dickens would call "Tale of Two Cities."

So let me get this straight. If a nation attacks another nation and is defeated, losing territory in the process, then the nation that was attacked is responsible to give back the territory it took. Otherwise, if they don't return the territory, terrorism is justified in order to retaliate against the nation that was attacked.

When such arguments are presented in this video it quickly becomes apparent to any thinking person that this is a propaganda piece in favor of the Arabs and against Israel. We are treated to scenes of a number of Arabs living their domestic lives as soft music plays. The Arabs go about trying to do the best they can under Israeli oppression. Not a single Jewish home is interviewed. But when Israel is spoken of, the music turns ominous, suggesting some evil is afoot.

We are also shown Jewish radicals waving Israeli flags as they move through an Arab enclave shouting, "Death to Arabs!" Arab merchants complain that Jews pelt their stores with stones and garbage from their apartments above while Israeli soldiers stand idly by. Thus the Arab merchants have shielded themselves with fencing above and around their marketplace.

These are deplorable circumstances to be sure. But where are the scenes of Arabs shouting "Death to the Jews!?" Where are the scenes of Arabs pelting Israelis, including Israeli soldiers, with rocks? Is only one side culpable?

In truth, I must confess that as I was watching this video I thought to myself, "This would make a great Nazi propaganda film."

My apologies to the producers; I am absolutely certain that they would never take the side of the Nazis against the Jews. In fact, as the video began to unfold further, it was stated a few times that Israel has a right to exist. But it took a while before Israel's right to exist was stated. Even so, all inferences about Israel's right to exist were essentially followed by a "But..."

Even as we are told that Israel has a right to exist, we are constantly told that Israel has no right to be in the territories it annexed in the Six-Day War, and that the Arabs are constantly harassed by the Israelis.

One Palestinian Muslim woman named Deena is interviewed and describes the hardships she must endure because of the wall. She heard that a pregnant Palestinian woman died at the checkpoint because she couldn't get through to the hospital in time to give birth. There is no evidence to support this claim. She merely "heard" about it. But the emotions of the viewer are manipulated to feel sorry for something that may or may not have happened. In truth, anecdotal renderings of Israeli injustices are a large part of this video.

Christopher is seen walking with a Palestinian named Ayman who tells him how his family was oppressed by the Israeli army. Ayman relates how, when he was ten years old during the first Intifada, life was very difficult for his family. They were under constant curfew and often were forbidden to move about freely. Says Ayman:

I remember the army entered our house, and they took my brother, the middle one. They took him outside the house and beat him up, broke three ribs and we had to take him to the hospital.

Deplorable. But what is the context? Was his brother involved with the Intifada? Had he been seen throwing rocks at Israeli troops? Had he fled into his home pursued by Israeli soldiers after committing an act of insurrection? We're not told. But it is made to appear as if this is just a regular pastime for the Israeli army—to arbitrarily enter people's homes and beat someone up.

I'm sorry, but there must be more to the story than what we are told; else why wasn't Ayman or other members of his family subjected to a beating? And that's a problem with this video. Much of its accusations lack context.

So let's put the shoe on the other foot for a moment. What would happen to a Jew in an Arab state, were that Jew to rebel against the authority? In most cases he would not have been beaten up only, but would have been beheaded. Nor are Jews represented in Arab countries, but Israel's Knesset has the United Arab List, representing and supported by Arabs.

Ayman continues by telling Christopher how the Israeli army occupied his house for over a month, cutting off the water and not allowing his family to leave the house. After the army left, the water was polluted and they could not drink it.

"We had a lot of problems," says Ayman. "We experienced harassment, violence and persecution. We often wondered if we should pack up and leave this land. But our ancestors have been here and this is our land. Therefore we decided to stay and live here. We are trying to convey to the world that we are people who really want peace."

The question comes to mind, if they had no water and were not allowed to leave their house for over a month, how did they survive? They should have been dead in less than a week. Something is not being fully stated here.

And everyone wants peace. But why is Ayman not also blaming the Arab nations for attacking Israel on numerous occasions in the first place, thus creating conditions for such restrictions? Why not put at least some blame on the Arabs for forcing Israel to take such drastic measures to protect itself?

I am not justifying anything Israel does that is contrary to compassion for one's enemies or suspected enemies. We are dealing with unregenerate men on both sides of the issue. We cannot expect such men to act lovingly toward those who threaten them. The Arabs feel threatened by Israel; Israel feels threatened by the Arabs. Both have acted ungodly toward the other. So why pick on Israel and ignore the Arabs' atrocities?

Anecdotal history does not tell the full story. Hard evidence alone should be presented for both sides of the conflict in order to come to a proper understanding of what is truly happening.

Special disdain is exhibited toward Israel's Security Wall which was built to stem the tide of suicide bombers that wreaked havoc upon Israelis for decades. Evidently it is difficult for Palestinians to cross through checkpoints along the wall. Sometimes they cannot get through, creating serious difficulties such as not being able to get to Israeli hospitals. A pregnant woman must prove she is pregnant to get through for hospitalization to give birth. Sometimes they don't get through in time and they give birth at the checkpoint.

Yet at least the video does show Malcom Hedding pointing out that since the Security Wall was erected terrorism on the Israeli side went down over 98% overnight. Even so, Hedding is countered by Christopher who says that "officially speaking" the barrier was constructed to combat terrorism. This suggests another, ulterior motive. He is then followed by others who infer that the real reason for the wall is not security but to separate some Palestinians from others so they can harass and persecute them. This is because portions of the wall do intrude into Palestinian communities resulting in some 100,000 Palestinians living on the Israeli side of the wall.

The reason the Israeli government would do this is merely hinted at; it is left for us to build upon those hints and imagine some sinister reason other than safety from terrorist attacks. We are told that the wall is unnecessary because the Palestinians don't use suicide bombers anymore.

Yes. Because the wall is there to keep them out! Without question Israelis have lived more securely since the wall was constructed.

No doubt the wall creates problems for Palestinians, but the answer is not as simplistic as deconstructing the wall or even rerouting it so that virtually all Palestinians are kept outside. The truth is that the Palestinians residing within the confines of the wall along with the Israeli citizens depend on the Israeli economy for jobs and other benefits. The hardship is primarily upon Palestinians living outside the confines of the wall. The oil-rich Arabs haven't built them hospitals or provided jobs for them.

With God on Our Side has no mention of the Jewish exodus from the Arab nations due to persecution. Beginning in the late 19th century and peaking after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, a mass migration of Jews resulted when over 1 million Jews were driven from their homes due to persecution, anti-Semitism and political instability. Virtually all the Jews expelled from the Arab nations were required to either sell or abandon their homes and give them to the state. This persecution was a deliberate policy decision on the part of the League of Arab States. Approximately 260,000 of those displaced Jews settled in Israel between 1948–1951. By 1972 the number increased to 600,000. The state of Israel offered hope to those Jews by giving them a homeland in which they could feel safe. But they've never felt safe because of continued Arab attacks.

So while we agree with some of the concerns about Palestinians having to flee their homes in Israel, we ask why there is no similar concern for Jews forced by Arab nations to leave their homes. The only Middle East refuges for Jews has been in Israel and Lebanon, until recently a relatively Christian nation.

As for Christian Palestinians suffering under Israeli dominance, one might reasonably ask if they would rather be under Arab dominance. Jesus told us to expect tribulation in this world regardless of where we live. Christians are treated better in some places than in others. In Israel the problem is greater for Jews who receive Christ than for Christians from other backgrounds. The mistreatment of Jewish Christians comes more at the hands of family, friends, and neighbors than from the Israeli government, although the government tends to turn a blind eye to persecution of Jewish Christians.

I viewed *With God on Our Side* at Westminster Chapel in Bellevue, Washington, one of several churches in which the video was being premiered. At the conclusion of the showing the audience was invited to ask questions (no comments, please) of the producer Porter Speakman, Jr., and one of the video's featured interviewees, Stephen Sizer. For the most part they were commended for showing Christians the other side of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One man stood to comment on how, when the video was shown at his church, about a dozen Muslims came. They were extremely happy and said, "Thank you for showing this." The man described how the video resulted in a feeling of solidarity with the Muslims.

Porter Speakman's response also demonstrated solidarity with Arab Muslims who also appreciate this video.

So although the video criticizes Christian Zionists for their solidarity with Israeli Jews, evidently there is no problem in solidarity with Muslims in America, many of whom hate Jews.

Let's be honest. In the Middle East there is tremendous hatred of all Jews among the vast populations of the Arab states, and among Arabs living within Israel. And there is tremendous hatred of Arabs by many Israeli Jews. Now, not every individual Arab hates all Jews, nor does every individual Jew hate all Arabs. But Israel is in a constant state of war, surrounded by so many who hate Jews and have vowed to destroy Israel.

The only love between Arabs and Jews is found between Arab and Jewish Christians. And that is brought out well in the video. Yet the Arab Christians seem to be sympathetic to the Palestinians over the Jews regardless of religion. Even some Jewish Christians have sympathy for the Palestinians, as we all should. But this video is unbalanced in presenting its case against Israel while taking a strong pro-Palestinian stance.

When I had my chance to speak at the viewing I first commented that I believe Christian Zionism is a deception, particularly John Hagee's brand that says we do not need to evangelize the Jews. I then told Speakman and Sizer that their video is not evenhanded, and asked why they never mentioned Hamas or Hezbollah in the video (actually they did mention them once, but so briefly I missed it). The same may be said about the PLO and other terrorist organizations.

Porter Speakman stated that he doesn't claim that the film is balanced, nor has he ever made that claim. He believes the situation isn't balanced, and that American Christians are getting only one side of the picture from Christian Zionism. His goal is not to be evenhanded, and he stated that if a documentary is evenhanded it's just entertainment.

I thanked him for at least being honest about it. In truth, however, if a documentary doesn't present all sides it isn't a documentary; it is a propaganda piece.

Sizer said that nearly half the people in the video are either Israelis or Jewish, so their viewpoint was given.

To which I replied, that, yes, they gave their viewpoint, but their viewpoint was always countered by an anti-Israeli viewpoint. Also, that they showed a number of Palestinian citizens giving their side, but not a single Israeli citizen. There was no answer.

I also pointed out how the video ridicules Dispensationalism, particularly where Stephen Sizer is interviewed. Sizer picks apart Dispensationalism but doesn't offer his eschatology to counter it. Thus, my second question to both men was to ask them what is their particular eschatology.

Speakman replied that he doesn't know what his eschatology is. His concern is justice; eschatology doesn't matter.

Sizer also did not state his eschatological position, but merely said that he was always raised as a young Christian to believe "Jesus died yesterday, He rose today, and He's coming back tomorrow."

I thanked him but said that his answer could also fit Dispensationalism. As far as what he was always raised to believe, what does he believe today? Reading his book, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010), I found him to be largely non-committal, but leaning toward preterism and amillennialism.

Sizer is a vicar at Christ Church in Virginia Water, Surrey, England. He eschews what he calls "ultra literalism," and thus dismisses much end-time prophecy as either unable to be understood or irrelevant. He seems to have a problem with prophecy in general, preferring to use the word "predictions" even when speaking of Jesus' prophecies—particularly those that address the last days. But predictions are little more than educated guesses based on observation, experience, or scientific reason; prophecy is a sure word from God.

Sizer's apparent aversion to supernaturalism seems to cloud his understanding of the part God has been playing in preserving Israel against overwhelming odds. Even while Israelis are largely secular, and even anti-Christ, God's hand is upon that nation to accomplish His will.

After my prodding of Sizer and Speakman on their eschatology, Westminster Chapel's pastor, Dr. Gary Gulbranson, diverted the talk away from eschatology. The consensus was that eschatology is not an issue.

But if it's not an issue why is Dispensationalism attacked so strongly in the video? And how can someone whose eschatology is vague at best, attack another's eschatology? If Speakman and Porter don't have any specific understanding of eschatology, who are they to say Dispensationalists are wrong, let alone indict them for creating problems for Palestinians without good cause?

The truth is that one's eschatology shapes one's viewpoint about Israel. Dispensationalists believe Israel's existence is evidence of the Lord's soon return. They also believe in the millennial reign of Jesus on the earth during which time all the

natural descendants of Israel will be gathered in the Promised Land. But not all who believe these things are Dispensationalists. I disagree with much Dispensational teaching, but not everything from the Dispensational camp is erroneous.

In direct opposition to Dispensationalists are preterists who deny the millennial Kingdom and believe that all prophecy has been fulfilled. They also reject the idea that natural Israel has any further place in God's plan for the future.

This is Stephen Sizer's position. So we can see why he has taken the side of the Palestinians against Israel. He believes there is no divine purpose to Israel's existence. Yet he forgets that all nations exist by the will of God. All nations are established by God; all nations fall at the behest of God. If Israel exists it is because God has established it. And Israel's existence in the face of an entire world's opposition must be a clue that God has not abandoned the natural seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the Lord returns at the ending of the time of the Gentiles, Israel will behold its Messiah coming to Zion. They will look upon Him whom they had pierced, and they will mourn, not only for the sin of their ancestors, but for having rejected Him through the centuries. Then they will be saved through faith in Him (Romans 11:26). In the meantime there is a remnant of Israel being saved along with Gentiles who are grafted into Israel by faith. Many Jews will be in Zion when Jesus comes again to gather the rest from the nations. There is a supernatural quality to the existence of Israel as an homogeneous people after three Diasporas. Although assimilated into many cultures they have retained their unique identity. Without God's intervention Israel would have ceased to exist centuries ago, particularly in view of the world's hatred of them, which itself is supernatural. God has not abandoned His promise to Abraham.

Of course none of this justifies any ungodliness Israel commits. Judaism is as anti-Christ as Islam. Unbelieving Jews have no more standing with God than unbelievers who go by any other religious or non-religious appellation. Yet we would be remiss to ignore the supernatural means by which Israel has been sustained on numerous occasions against overwhelming odds.

It's likely true that Christian Zionism has the lion's share of Christian attention, particularly in America. Sizer and Speakman believe that it is a matter of justice and fair play for Christians to be shown only the Palestinian viewpoint. That's why they purposely made this video so unbalanced in favor of the Palestinians.

So let's talk about justice and fair play.

How often do Christians sanctimoniously decry injustice in the world while in the churches justice is often lacking? Speak of justice to brethren who are ostracized from fellowship for having the audacity to speak truth to the powers that be. Speak of justice to the weak and poor within the churches who are ignored or patronized by pastors in favor of the wealthy and better educated. Speak of justice to those who have served in a church for years—even decades—only to be told to leave over some disagreement with a worldly program or for protesting the ungodly disposition of some members, including some of the leaders.

Justice is not to be found in the churches any more than it is to be found in the world. Yet Christian leaders want to change

the world without first changing their own behavior. God has not made us judges of the world during this age. That will come during the Millennium. In the meantime we are to judge only what happens within the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

And fair play? Of all the nations in the world only the United States has stood by Israel as a staunch ally, at least until now. The entire world is against Israel, yet Sizer and Speakman think that it is fair play to propagandize American Christians against Israel by building an inordinate sympathy for Israel's enemies. May Israel be allowed one ally among the nearly two hundred nations? Particularly when tiny Israel is surrounded by huge Arab nations bent on its destruction?

Proponents of this video insist that it's only right that American Christians see things from the Palestinian perspective. But that's not true. It's better if they see things from the perspective of truth. And the truth is that both sides have suffered, and both sides are culpable for the suffering.

We can't justify what evil men do, but we've got to see God's purpose in it. History is replete with instances of injustice and persecution. But history is also in God's hands. Although we should seek justice where we may today, we must also thank God for all that has transpired throughout history. Why? Because even the most horrific events of the past have been used by God to bring us to where we are today. Persecution drives people from their homes; they settle elsewhere; they meet people they would not have otherwise met, including their spouses; they marry and have children they would not have otherwise had. Most people alive today—I'd say virtually everyone alive today—exists because of the events throughout history that led to their parents coming together at a specific time to conceive them. Move one major historical element out of its place and most of us would not have been born.

Palestinian youth who decry the injustice of their refugee status—who are propagandized to feed their hatred of Jews—were born because their parents came together as a result of their experiences in life, bad as well as good. Were people on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict able to accept this truth they would thank God for the suffering of their ancestors.

With God on Our Side misses this truth. It would be far better were it to present both sides of the issue while at the same time encouraging American Christians to be sympathetic toward the plight of the Palestinians—particularly Christian Palestinians.

By portraying Palestinians as the sole victims in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Israel as the villain, *With God on Our Side* panders to anti-Semitism. Although to be anti-Zionist is not necessarily the same as being anti-Semitic, the truth is that all anti-Semites are anti-Zionists. One may be against some of the things Israel does without being anti-Semitic or even anti-Zionist, but one who truly understands the history behind the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot easily be anti-Israel without being anti-Semitic.

By all means point out the faults of Christian Zionism and Israel. But don't demonize Israelis as if they are fully to blame in this conflict. And don't neglect the faults of the Palestinian Arabs or the Arab nations that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the plight of the displaced Palestinians.

This could have been done in *With God on Our Side*, but it wasn't. ❖