



## **The Holy One of Israel and His Chosen People: Understanding the Biblical Relationship between Israel and the Church**

On May 14, 1948 Israel established independence as a modern, western nation. For the first time in over 2,000 years, the Jewish people regained sovereignty over a portion of the land that the Bible defines as the Promised Land. As a result of Israel's return to her ancient homeland a controversy arose within the Church. While many Christians hailed the rebirth of Israel as the fulfillment of numerous biblical prophecies, others viewed the rebirth as an accident of history that resulted in the unjustified displacement of thousands of Palestinian people.

Dr. Jack Hayford, one of the most respected and admired evangelical pastors in the United States, wrote this concerning the rebirth of the modern state of Israel. "We are living in a sobering moment in history that calls us, as believers in Jesus Christ, to take a stand with Israel. We could be people of the last hour. We are not to be passive in the face of prophecy; we are called to pray with passion, to intercede, and to minister according to the words of the Savior who said it is not our task to speculate when the end will be. It is our responsibility to do Kingdom business until He comes. This is about the Word of God, but the political ramifications are extremely dramatic."

Dr. Hayford's view on the rebirth of Israel represents an example of theology known as **Christian Zionism**.

On the other hand, Dr. Stephen Sizer, an English evangelical pastor, disagrees with Dr. Hayford and other Christian Zionists. He wrote, "The central theological question is this: Does possession of the land by Jewish people today, and the existence of the State of Israel, have any theological significance in terms of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy or within the purposes of God? Or, do we find in Scripture grounds for criticizing and rejecting this ideology as sub-Christian or even heretical?"

Dr. Sizer not only disagrees with Christian Zionism but also suggests that the theology is “sub-Christian or even heretical.” This accusation illustrates the level of contention that surrounds the issue.

This study provides biblical and historical support for Christian Zionism.

## About the Author

The Rev. Samuel R. Clarke earned a Masters of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1997 and served as the pastor of churches in Tennessee and Florida.

Following his pastoral responsibilities, Sam accepted the position as the first Director of the Christian Office in the International Relations Department of Yad Vashem—The Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Jerusalem, Israel. This office was established through an agreement made between Yad Vashem and the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.

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