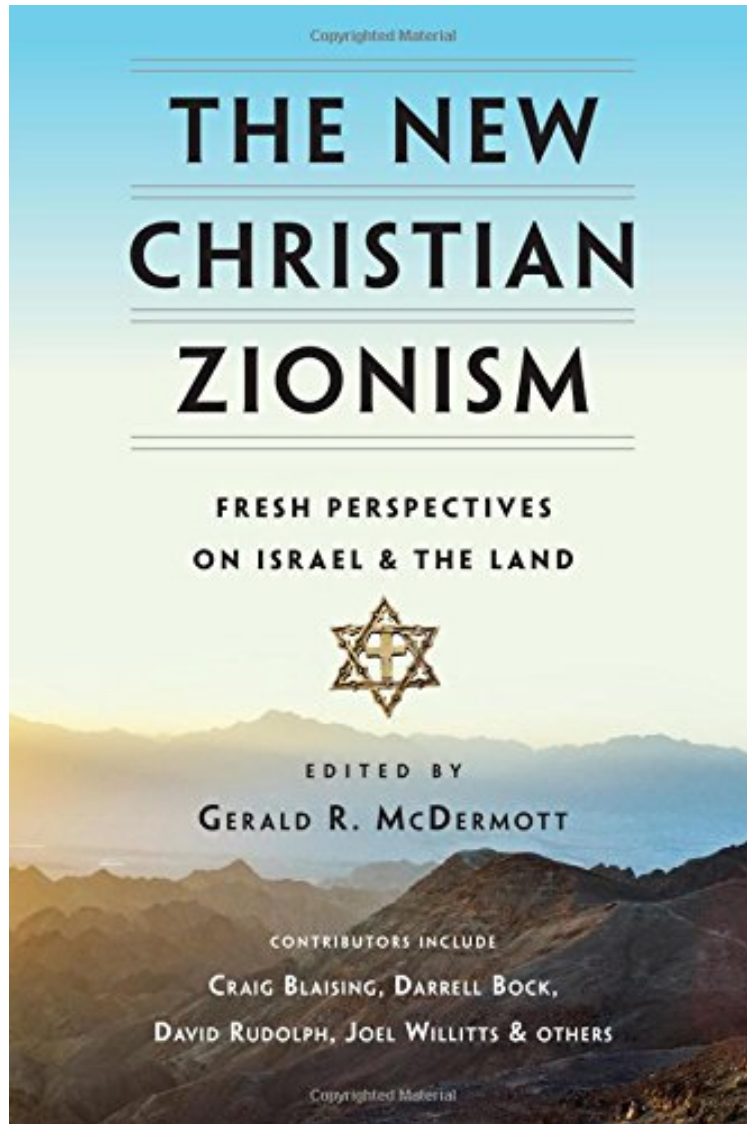


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# The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land

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**From InterVarsity Press :** The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Fresh Perspective Indeed!By Eric ChabotAs someone thats been involved in Jewish ministry, when I heard about the new book The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on

Israel and the Land, I was quite eager to engage such an important topic as this one. This book lives up to its title by being a fresh perspective on the issue of Israel and the land. Having taught on some of the topics mentioned in this book, I can say without hesitation that there is great ignorance across the church on such a topic as this one. As McDermott says in the introduction, Most scholars have assumed that all Christian Zionism is an outgrowth of premillennial dispensationalist theology. Originating in the nineteenth century, this school of thought became popular because it was taught in the notes of the Scofield version of the King James Bible and then developed by Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth and the best-selling Left Behind series. The traditional dispensationalist version of Christian Zionism puts Israel and the church on two different tracks, neither of which runs at the same time. schedule of end-time events dominated by the great tribulation and a rapture of the church that leaves Jews and the rest of the world behind.- pg 11. He goes on to say, The Christian Zionism that this book proposes is not connected to the dispensationalism described in the previous paragraph. It looks to a long history of Christian Zionists who lived long before the rise of dispensationalism and to other thinkers in the last two centuries who have had nothing to do with dispensationalist theologians such as Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Jenson and the Catholic Old Testament scholar Gary Anderson, as well as President Harry Truman.- pg 11. Why does this topic matter? As McDermott says: The first is that the people and land of Israel are central to the story of the Bible. This might seem obvious. But Israel has not been central to the church's traditional way of telling the story of salvation. Typically the story has moved from creation and fall to Christ's death and resurrection, with Israel as an illustration of false paths. We believe that the Bible claims that God saves the world through Israel and the perfect Israelite; thus the Bible is incoherent and salvation impossible without Israel. pg 11-12. So with this in mind, I want to say from the outset that if you're looking for another book that pits dispensational vs covenantal theology against one another, this isn't it. This book has many strengths. First, the exegetical essays by Joel Willitts on the case for Zionism in Matthew, Mark Kinzer on Zionism in Luke/Acts, and David Rudolph on Zionism in Pauline Literature are worth the price of the book alone. Rudolph rightly addresses some of the comments by popular theologian N.T. Wright. From my experience, it seems that many follow the lead of Wright. So I was more than pleased to see Rudolph did mention Wright in this essay. The essay by Willitts mentions that the late Anthony Saldarini who wrote, The gospel of Matthew should be read along with other Jewish post destruction literature, such as the apocalyptic works 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and Apocalypse of Abraham, early strata of the Mishnah and Josephus. pg 114. This demonstrates the willingness of Willitts to utilize all the relevant Jewish literature to build a case for Zionism in Matthew's Gospel. The book also addresses the common complaints about Israel such as the accusation they violate international law or violate the covenant stipulations that are laid out in the Torah. In the chapter called Theology and Morality: Is Modern Israel Faithful to the Moral Demands of the Covenant in Its Treatment of Minorities? by Shadi Khalloul, he rightly points out the following: Muslim Arab leaders deny the Holocaust, and some supported it. While much of the world demonizes Israel for its supposedly immoral treatment of its minorities, of whom I am one, we see little condemnation of terror attacks against innocent Jews or Christians and their symbols in Israel and surrounding Arab countries, either by the media or the international community. While Israel has been condemned and targeted by more than sixty-five United Nations resolutions and has its own agenda item (#7) at the United Nations Human Rights Council, no other United Nations member state, including egregious human-rights violators like North Korea, Syria, Iran and Sudan, gets its own agenda item. When has the United Nations blamed the Grand Mufti or other Islamic leaders for their hateful speeches that have led to thousands of Israeli casualties? Why does the United Nations not protect persecuted minorities like Christians and Yazidis from terrorism in the Middle East conducted by Muslim powers (like ISIS) or states (Syria)? Israel is routinely charged with violation of international law for its supposed occupation of the West Bank. When was the last time the United Nations condemned Turkey for its illegal occupation of one-third of Cyprus for forty-one years and its deployment of forty thousand Turkish troops there? Or China's brutal occupation of Tibet? Where are the United Nations resolutions condemning present and past genocides by Muslims against Jews and Christians in the Middle East? A Palestinian journalist exclaims, It is a scandal of global proportions that the UN in general and UNRWA in particular as well as the EU ignore the hundreds of thousands of killed and maimed and the millions of refugees desperately in need of aid in the neighboring Arab countries.- pgs 295-296. It is important to note that Khalloul also points out the shortcomings of Israel as well. So this book isn't a one-sided defense of Israel. The book also addresses the charges of racism and apartheid by Israel. All the essays are well researched and they provide more than enough footnotes for further reading. In Darrell Bock's essay called How Should the New Christian Zionism Proceed? he says: Christian Zionism is not an oxymoron; it is an appeal in an era of narratives to get the story right about God, his character and his promises. Whether one thinks theologically, morally, historically, politically or legally, the way one views Israel is also a reflection of how one thinks about God. This discussion is a big deal because the character of God, his faithfulness and his promises are in view. - pg 305. Let me add the following as to why this topic matters: It impacts how we read the Bible. Hence, do we read the Bible as one continuous story (from Genesis to Revelation), or do we just read the New Testament and skip the Scriptures that both Jesus and Paul read? It impacts our view of the character of God. It impacts our view of ecclesiology (the study of the ekklesia). It impacts our missiology: the area of practical theology that investigates the mandate, message, and mission of the ekklesia. It impacts our view of eschatology. It impacts our view

of Israel today and the Middle East situation. Let me add a few more challenges: As someone who has done campus ministry for a number of years, it seems that within the social justice crowd (not that I am against social justice), Israel is not viewed in a positive light. Hence, Israel is demonized in the media as well as in the Christian crowds that tend to fall into the pro-Palestinian movement. This book is a wonderful tool to educate those in that school of thought. The history and issues involved here are very complex. It is obvious that it is a challenge to get a sound-bite generation to even want to take the time to learn about the complexity of such a topic as this one. Furthermore, we are living in a time of great theological illiteracy. Many Christians are theologically illiterate which means they have no concept of the role of Israel in the Bible. When you are told all that matters is that Jesus has saved you from heaven or hell, it is no wonder that many Christians don't even know the biblical narrative. Furthermore, with the over-reaction to *The Left Behind Series*, any mention of Israel as having a present or future role is automatically labeled as dumb dispensationalism or something worse. Sadly, many Christians aren't interested in learning about the history nor the origins of their faith. In my experience, many of the points leveled against Israel are almost always straw man arguments and don't have any exegetical basis to them. Also, even though many professing followers of Jesus are fully convinced that He is the Savior of the world, and millions of evangelistic appeals are given each year for people to accept Him as personal Savior, many believers know very little about what it means to affirm that Jesus is actually the promised Messiah of Israel and the nations. The confusion as to whether Jesus is actually the Jewish Messiah was clearly demonstrated to me several years ago when I hosted a lecture on a major college campus called *Is the Jewish Messiah?* The speaker, our friend and scholar Dr. Michael Brown, was more than qualified to speak on the topic. But when it came time to promote the event, I began to quickly see the challenge with the title when several Christians said to me, "So you're saying Jesus isn't the Christian Messiah?" Let me say it bluntly: There is no ability to understand the role of the Messiah apart from his relationship with Israel. The statement that Jesus is the Messiah presupposes a certain way of reading Israel's Scriptures and assumes a certain hermeneutical approach that finds in Jesus the unifying thread and the supreme goal of Israel's sacred literature. A messiah can only be a messiah from Israel and for Israel. The story of the Messiah can only be understood as part of the story of Israel. Paul arguably says as much to a largely Gentile audience in Rome: "For I tell you that Christ [Messiah] has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy (Rom. 15:89)." Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2009), 163. Finally, another challenge is the issue of systematic theology. While I am not opposed to all forms of systematic theology, we should heed the words of the late F.F. Bruce who once said, "There is a great danger, when once we have adhered to one particular school of thought or adopted one particular system of theology, of reading the Bible in the light of that school or system and finding its distinctive features in what we read." *God's Strategy in Human History*, By Paul Marston, Roger Forster, pg 10. It can be a challenge for many Christians to rethink paradigms and schools of thought. In some cases, when you go to a seminary, you are taught to defend a school of thought. My hope is that a book such as this one might cause people to move beyond such categories. It is with these thoughts that I highly recommend the book *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land*. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. I highly recommend this book to every Christian -- and to all avid readers who like to read and learn. By Cicero I can't wait to delve into this book. I only heard the conference and was blown away that Reformed theologians of the Christian faith would actually support this topic. It's a concept I've held to for many years since researching the Bible for myself in regard to eschatology. All I can say is that I highly recommend this book to every Christian. I ask you to read it with an open mind while being a Berean at the same time. If you've never taken the time to research this topic for yourself, it's time to get started! A refreshing biblical approach to eschatological issues. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. the greatest weakness of this book is a failure to explore ... By Alice Linsley *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land* Edited by Gerald R. McDermott, PhD 2016 IVP Academic, 349 pages Reviewed by Alice C. Linsley *The New Christian Zionism* is a penetrating look at how Christians have framed conversations about Israel as a people and a land in the 20th century. Contributors to the book include Robert Benne, Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, Mark S. Kinzer, Shadi Khalloul, Gerald R. McDermott, Robert Nicholson, David Rudolph, Mark Tooley, and Joel Willitts. The writers define the New Christian Zionism as a theologically-rooted conviction that Israel has a corporate right to exist with the same human rights and security guarantees that other nations receive and that God's plan in the future involves Israel as a national entity and as a body of Jewish followers of Messiah. (p. 308) The book addresses the oddity of Dispensationalist end-times scenarios. The authors of this book reject those dispensationalist approaches that are confident they can plot the sequence or chronology of end-times events. (p. 14) It exposes the notion of Supersessionism (held by many Eastern Orthodox) by pointing out that Biblical writers believed that Israel is to play a significant role in the future. The book of Revelation places Zion at the center of the Messianic kingdom on earth and the Apostles as rulers. Dr. McDermott writes that Israel is not merely a voice from the past, she is a living presence in the Church and will be the center of the world to come. (p. 321) Craig Blaising points out that Israel has a presence in the New Testament that is not nullified by the advent of Messiah. The writers also reject the view that the establishment of Israel as a state and the expansion of the

states land holdings represents land theft. The arguments offered are not entirely satisfying, however. One is the assertion that Jews have been living in the area for 4000 years. Apparently, the writers assign Jewish ethnicity to Abraham, which even rabbis recognize as inappropriate. The waters are further muddied by a later statement that Jews have held the land since Joshua and his Israelite army captured it. In my view, the greatest weakness of this book is a failure to explore the archeological and anthropological evidence that supports the presence of Hebrew rulers in the Middle East from before the time of Abraham. This is the true origin of Hebrew land consciousness. (p. 28)The writers stress that the New Christian Zionism is not a blind endorsement for Israel that overlooks injustices and moral obligations. Rather, Christian Zionism merely makes an affirmation that Israel has a right to a secure homeland, which she should govern and occupy morally and responsibly. (p. 309)Shadi Khalloul, an Israeli Christian Maronite, argues that the state of Israel protects minorities more than the nations that surround it. He writes that Israel has initiated and continues to maintain a wide variety of social and cultural programs to support minority communities. (p. 289)However, Khalloul acknowledges that Israel's treatment of his own Aramean Christians in Israel has been stained by Jewish fear that Christians might align with Israel's enemies. In 1948 the residents of the Aramaic Maronite village of Kfar Baram in northern Israel were told to leave by Jewish fighters. The villagers had hoped to return within a few weeks, but sixty-seven years later these Maronite Christians are still displaced. Khalloul makes the point that the original Christians of Israel were Arameans. Arameans are Semitic peoples of great antiquity that widely dispersed across the ancient Near East and the Nile Valley. Jacob (Israel) is called a wandering Aramean in Deuteronomy because he journeyed between Canaan and Paddan-Aram and Edom and Egypt. The book ends with some excellent recommendations, including rendering the word Christ as Messiah in English Bibles. The recognition that Christianity is a Messianic faith helps to correct strange peripheral developments among church people that send a wrong message to the world. McDermott also recommends that Christians engage in serious study of the Old Testament (Tanak). Unfortunately, his urging to deeper consideration of the Old Testament appears to be linked to rabbinic interpretations (p. 320) which often mislead Christians in their understanding of the Old Testament. Gerald McDermott writes, The rabbis said the book of Leviticus is the most important book of all the Tanak because it is the deepest revelation of the character of the God of Israel the Holy One, and the most particular blueprint for how his elect people were to maintain communion with him. Leviticus is certainly an important book for Christians, but in reality it sheds little light on Zionism. To understand how Israel as a people and a land are related to the Church we must turn to the book of Genesis. Here we discover the origin of Messianic expectation among Abraham's Hebrew ancestors and we come to see that both Israel and the Church emerge organically from the Messianic expectation of people who lived long before the Jewish ethnicity. And yes, there is a region on earth over which these mighty men of old ruled. It is ancient Eden and, according to Genesis 2, it extended from the sources of the Nile to the Tigris and Euphrates. David's Zion is located at the very heart of this ancient Paradise, and at the coming of Messiah it will be again. Our Lord Jesus had to deal with the strife that even today exists surrounding the Jews and their claims to autonomy in a land of their own. He addressed the strife in a sinless way, censuring the wrong-minded and mean-spirited, comforting the sorrowful, seeking the lost, and reconciling the estranged to the Father. He makes the peoples one people, His own inheritance. Darrell Bock writes, Participants in Christ share the same savior, salvation and benefits. Reconciliation is an important feature of our vision for God's people in God's land at the end. We need to reflect on that more. (p. 313) I fully agree, and I encourage readers to buy this book and delve into these matters of great theological significance.

Can a theological case be made from Scripture that Israel still has a claim to the Promised Land? Christian Zionism is often seen as the offspring of premillennial dispensationalism. But the historical roots of Christian Zionism came long before the rise of the Plymouth Brethren and John Nelson Darby. In fact, the authors of *The New Christian Zionism* contend that the biblical and theological connections between covenant and land are nearly as close in the New Testament as in the Old. Written with academic rigor by experts in the field, this book proposes that Zionism can be defended historically, theologically, politically and morally. While this does not sanctify every policy and practice of the current Israeli government, the authors include recommendations for how twenty-first-century Christian theology should rethink its understanding of both ancient and contemporary Israel, the Bible and Christian theology more broadly. This provocative volume proposes a place for Christian Zionism in an integrated biblical vision.

"In certain circles, the cause of Christian Zionism has acquired a bad odor. Some would-be sympathizers cringe at its history of dubious end-times speculation, while others want to avoid blessing the government and military policies of Israel. The theologians and historians included in this volume propose, as its title suggests, a new Christian Zionism, grounded not in the belief that Israel is 'a perfect country' or 'the last Jewish state we will see before the end of days,' but in sound biblical theology and common-sense political wisdom." (Matt Reynolds, *Christianity Today*, September 2016) "In this exciting and extraordinarily important work, Gerald McDermott and his contributors point us toward a fresh way of understanding the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in which Israel is not regarded merely as a voice from the past or a transitional entity consigned to a passing dispensational role, but regarded instead as an essential and enduring presence at the heart of the church's ongoing life. In their view, the 'scandal of Zionism' is

an instance of the 'scandal of particularity' at the very core of the gospel the paradox that the biblical God has conveyed a universal message by means of a particular people and a particular land whose particularity is never to be effaced or superseded. If they are right, the implications are enormous for Christians and Jews alike." (Wilfred M. McClay, G. T. and Libby Blankenship Chair in the History of Liberty, University of Oklahoma)"This book is rigorous in its scholarship and speaks with thoughtfulness and passion about an understudied and widely misunderstood subject. This important book is both learned and provocative. It is clearly written and argued throughout and displays a wealth of historical understanding, theological richness and exegetical savvy. This book is a must-read for all who are interested in the truly big questions of our day." (Byron R. Johnson, Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University)"The essays here offer a fresh perspective on Christian Zionism, one based on careful biblical exegesis and in dialogue with the historic traditions of the church. A paradigm-challenging volume." (Timothy George, founding dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, general editor of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture)About the AuthorGerald R. McDermott (PhD, University of Iowa) is Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. He is also associate pastor at Christ the King Anglican Church. His books include *The Other Jonathan Edwards: Readings in Love, Society, and Justice* (with Ronald Story), *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (with Michael McClymond), *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions* (with Harold Netland), *Cancer: A Medical and Spiritual Guide* (with William Fintel, MD), *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods and World Religions: An Indispensable Guide*.