

Dear Kay Arthur,

I sincerely appreciate the reply from your assistant, Becky Lucarelli, and the openness it implies. What I write does not come from a callow, carping critic. I write out of great concern for you and the many people you influence. Please take this in a spirit of love from a fellow Christian who has been involved in ministry for over fifty years. We all need to have input from those who are both competent to address an issue and committed to Christ and to the good of others.

You made a statement, which I had heard about secondhand before and heard firsthand in your own voice on the Monday night news segment on a local Christian station. What you said about preferring Israel over the United States is based on gratuitous assumptions and has very serious, far-reaching implications that you may have not thoroughly considered. I want to emphasize that I am a dispensationalist who rejects “replacement theology,” and I believe that God has a special, covenant purpose for Jews which will come to fruition in the Millennium. We should not invoke biblical passages that pertain to the Tribulation and the Millennium to shape our perspective of Israel today.

I hope you will carefully read my OPEN LETTER TO HAL LINDSEY. He has moved to my area, near Palm Springs, and I gave him and the pastor of the church that he has joined a copy of my OPEN LETTER. It was triggered by a message that I heard him give three months ago.

I am deeply concerned about the egregious errors of so-called Christian Zionism. I will briefly state some of the errors.

First, Genesis 12:3 has nothing to do with the State of Israel, *per se*, that was founded in 1948. I know this statement will strike you as absurd, but hear me out. Contemporary Israel is a nation-state,

and all historians recognize that nation-states are a modern phenomenon, having come to efflorescence in the nineteenth century. Genesis 12:3 did not envisage the political entity that is Israel today. *It refers to people, not to political structures. It refers to the covenanted physical and spiritual seed of Abraham.*

Second, it is therefore anachronistic to read the term “Israel” in the Bible as if the current nation-state of Israel is its equivalence. Even most of the population of Israel in the Bible were not of the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Third, a careful study of the *remnant* in the entire Bible shows that it is the seed of Abraham. Even then, it is only secondarily the seed of Abraham, for Christ is his preeminent Seed in whom and from whom the Abrahamic covenant must be understood (Galatians 3:16). From Genesis to Revelation, it is the remnant of true believers, whether in Israel or subsequently in the professing church that is the seed of Abraham. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). This church-age remnant consists of Jews and Gentiles who savingly trust in Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28). Even the Israel that will enter the Millennium is a relatively small remnant (Romans 11:25), for two-thirds of the Jews in the land of Israel will perish during the Great Tribulation (Zechariah 13:8, 9), and all unbelieving, Christ-rejecting Jews will be purged and removed from the earth by divine judgment at the end of the Tribulation (Ezekiel 20).

Fourth, the contemporary State of Israel is largely secular—rejecting Christ and deriding the Bible as a hodge-podge of mythical folklore--and both its secularists and its so-called observant Jews reject Christ, thereby putting themselves outside the Abrahamic seed in both its primary (Christ, the Seed) and secondary (true believers who constitute the Body of Christ) senses. The Christian community in the State of Israel today is a

very small remnant, constituted by “messianic Jews” and other ethnic individuals, including some Palestinians and ex-patriats who are residing in Israel. *Therefore, if we want to fulfill the mandate of Genesis 12:3, we must focus our blessing on our fellow believers in Israel and in the rest of the world.* A radically skewed view of Scripture ignores or twists the teaching of Romans 9-11. The passage teaches that the Jewish remnant in the church age are those Jews who receive Christ as Savior, Lord, and Messiah just as Gentile believers do (Romans 10:12).

Fifth, Scripture nowhere teaches that we should have ultimate or even penultimate loyalty to the nation-state of Israel. It clearly teaches that our ultimate loyalty should be to Christ, for “in everything he should have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18). Therefore, if you had said, “If I have to choose between the United States and Christ, I would choose Christ,” you would have been right and thoroughly biblical. Or if you had said, “If I have to choose between the United States and the Body of Christ, I would choose the Body of Christ,” you would have been right and thoroughly biblical. “We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (I John 3:16). The State of Israel is neither Christ nor Christ-honoring; nor is it part of the Body of Christ. **To make a statement like yours is a reverse and perverse form of “replacement theology,” for it substitutes the State of Israel for Christ and His Body.**

Sixth, the Bible teaches that we should render to Caesar the things that are Caesars. This means that we owe loyalty to the governmental authorities and country of which we are citizens, *and that loyalty supersedes allegiance to any other government or country, Israel included.* Your statement giving precedence to the State of Israel is a violation of Scripture and it is quasi-treasonous. Of course, if any government or authority commands a belief or action contrary to Christ, we must put Christ first. Acts 5:20 says, “We must obey God rather than men.” This was said to those who

opposed Christ and sought to silence the apostles. In fact, it was political-religious leaders in Israel who sought to do this. The apostles, therefore, opposed the government of Israel in their day no less than they opposed obeisance to the idolatries of the Roman empire. They were not victims of the wrongheaded notions of “Christian Zionism,” however—which notions afflict countless undiscerning Christians today. *As American citizens, our loyalty to our country, with the foregoing qualification, must be to the United States above any other nation, the State of Israel included.* I am patriotic but I am not a jingoist for my country, the United States, but your statement reveals a lamentable jingoism for Israel.

If you or anyone else gives overriding loyalty to the State of Israel or any other country, the only honest, unhypocritical thing to do is to renounce American citizenship and emigrate to that country and become one of its citizens. The United States is far from being perfect, but it is still the best country in the world, and our democracy is far better than the putative and questionable democracy of the State of Israel, which defines itself as a Jewish-Zionist State, thereby denying the very pluralism that is essential to a true democracy.

Your statement about the precedence of Israel is not only anti-biblical but it is also far more disastrous than you apparently suspect. It is very damaging to the Body of Christ. *It will provoke more persecution of Christians in the United States and elsewhere in the world. We will be viewed as a traitorous fifth column that should be opposed and oppressed. That is what statements like yours will bring about.*

Right now in Muslim countries the beleaguered, small communities of Christians are being blamed by their fellow-citizens for the heinous caricatures (heinous in Muslim eyes) of Muhammad. Now add your statement to the fray. *As word of your statement filters out to the world, it will add even more fuel to the*

*flames. And who suffers? Our fellow-members of the Body of Christ for whom we should lay down our lives.* You seem more intent on supporting the State of Israel and elevating it to some plateau of value that the Bible does not recognize. Suppose that our fellow Christians in other lands—especially Muslim countries—made the statement that you made and said, “If I have to choose between Egypt (put the name of any other Muslim country here) and Israel, I would choose Israel.” They would not survive one day. I lived in the Middle East for four years, and I know what I am talking about. Muslims will attribute your sentiment to the Christians who live among them, even if those Christians repudiate what you have said. You cannot imagine the untold suffering statements like yours and other Christian Zionists bring to fellow members of the Body of Christ.

If your statement should not be made a universal maxim among Christians, this also shows it to be blatantly wrong. It is your private opinion, and because of the freedom we have in the United States people are free to believe whatever nonsense they like. They are not *rationally* entitled to believe wrongheaded notions when the Bible, evidence, and logic do not support them. But a person who is in a position of substantial influence, as you are, is flagrantly irresponsible in making such a statement. You may be well-meaning, but you know that sincerity is not guarantee of truth or goodness. Suppose one of our congressmen made a statement like yours, it would clearly be a case of treason and he or she would be thrown out of office or worse. Christian leaders, like yourself, should be extremely careful in what they say, for their statements have a way of reverberating throughout the world (consider the effect of some of the fatuous and reprehensible things Pat Robertson has said). Muslims, in particular, tend to take the statements of such visible Christians as indicative of the entire Christian community.

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” (James 3:1, 2). This applies even more powerfully to those whose public sphere of influence is especially great. I pray that you will have the grace to recognize the relevance of this passage to your statement and respond in humility. Even if you believe what you stated—and I think that such a belief is contrary to the word of God—you should have considered the consequences of publicly expressing such an opinion. To state it publicly was hardly a responsible thing to do, especially in view of its potential damage. Besides, there was nothing of value that could come from stating such an opinion.

*In order to combat the immense harm that your statement is bringing, please have the humility to public admit that you were wrong to make it. For the sake of the Lord and the Body of Christ, retract that statement and make it clear that although you believe that God has a special, covenantal role for the Jewish people, your loyalty as a Christian is ultimately to Christ and as an American citizen to the United States and not to Israel. **If you do not do so, and do so soon, you will reveal that you have either no understanding of the relevant facts or that you do not care that such a statement brings reproach on the name of Christ and brings persecution to Christians everywhere.***

Pat Robertson is to be commended for finally apologizing publicly for his insensitive and gratuitous comment about Ariel Sharon. He made an unfortunate mistake, and I think your statement is much worse than his. Please have the courage to apologize and set the record straight—unless you want to persist in misleading people and hurting the Body of Christ. No one can compel you to do this; it is your choice, but remember that “we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

Furthermore, if no retraction is forthcoming in the next few days, I will be compelled to use whatever resources I can muster—including fellow dispensationalist scholars--to expose the horrendous error that you and other Christian Zionists have espoused and propagate. Christian Zionists do not understand the hermeneutical priority of the New Testament in understanding the diachronic and synchronic role and meaning of *Abraham's seed*. We are not living in Old Testament times, nor in the Tribulation, nor in the Millennium when the redeemed remnant of Jews will be the special vehicle of God's blessing in the world. We are in the church age in which the Body of Christ is His special means of blessing the world. We need to understand the implications of this, especially in terms of the perspective we should have regarding Jews and the State of Israel.

I am not anti-Semitic nor do I want to hurt the State of Israel. Christians should believe and act like New Testament believers, however. I plead with you to read my OPEN LETTER TO HAL LINDSEY. It will present a more comprehensive case for a New Testament perspective than I have written in this letter.

Sincerely in Christ,  
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