

Are Christians commanded to support Israel?

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In a recent interview with commentator and political analyst Tucker Carlson, Republican Senator Ted Cruz of Texas stated, "When I came to the Senate, I resolved that I would be the leading defender of Israel." When asked by Tucker why, Ted Cruz replied, "Growing up in Sunday School, I was taught from the Bible that those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed. I want to be on the blessing side..." Although he could not tell where was this in the Bible, he added firmly: "Where does my support for Israel come from? Number one, because biblically we are commanded to support Israel..." And just like Ted Cruz, a large majority of U.S. congressmen and politicians make decisions in favor of the Zionist state of Israel for religious reasons, based on what they have been taught in their dispensationalist evangelical churches.

Added to this is the strong influence that powerful pro-Israel organizations such as the AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the ADL (Anti-Defamation League), to mention the most well-known, exert on these members of the U.S. Congress, which invest large sums of money in their electoral campaigns and in bringing them to Israel. Republican Congressman Thomas Massie, also in an interview with Tucker Carlson last year, said, "Everybody but me has an AIPAC person... [That person] is like a babysitter who is always talking to you for AIPAC... That's how it works on the Republican side and when [the new congressmen] come to D.C. [Washington], they have lunch with them, and they've got your cell phone number and you have conversations with them..." According to Massie, an AIPAC "guy" is assigned to each congressman. This is how more than 90% of the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate openly declare themselves as "Zionists" and display an Israeli flag on the doors of their offices in Washington. Something similar happens with members of Trump's cabinet.

Most troublingly, these political leaders, in accordance with their religious beliefs, favor the State of Israel and pass laws declaring any opposition to Israel's genocidal policies against Palestinians to be "anti-Semitism." This is undoubtedly a red flag that should provoke utter disapproval and condemnation from all who believe in the separation of religion and state. The foreign and domestic policy of the United States must be decided according to the Constitution, and not according to the religious beliefs of its political leaders.

But returning to the argument put forward by Senator Ted Cruz that the Bible commands support for Israel, it is necessary to make an analysis of the Bible passage to which he referred, because not only does this senator mistakenly believe that, but also millions of believers. The text in question is found at the beginning of Genesis chapter 12:

But the Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will magnify your name, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. (verses 1-3).

These words are part of the biblical account of the calling of Abram, or Abraham as he was later called, and as we can see, nowhere in this passage the word "Israel" is mentioned. The words were addressed to Abraham, the ancestor of both the Jews through his son Isaac, father of Jacob and Esau, as well as the Ishmaelites, descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's first son through Sarah's slave named Hagar. According to Genesis 25:1-4, Abraham even had other children from Keturah, another wife he had after Sarah's death, as well as several concubines. So Abraham's descendants were not just the Jews, and therefore to believe that the words of Genesis 12:1-3 apply to modern Israel, founded in 1948, is to read something that text does not say. Nor does it say there that Christians are commanded to "bless" (whatever that word means) Israel, as Ted Cruz claimed.

The problem with reading modern Israel in those words of Genesis is that it violates an important rule of biblical hermeneutics or interpretation. That rule was used by Christians throughout the centuries to understand the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. According to this principle, the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. In other words, nothing in the Old Testament should be applied without taking into account what the New Testament says. This is why Christians do not observe the laws and rituals given to the Jews and instead, affirm that the promises made to ancient Israel were fulfilled in Christ. The New Testament declares in several places that Christ fulfilled the entire Old Testament, that God's people are no longer Israel but the Christian church, and that the church includes both Jews and Gentiles, etc., etc.

However, that people like Ted Cruz believe that modern Jews are the chosen people and that Israel must be supported at all costs, regardless of the massacres and barbarities it commits against its neighbors and the Palestinian people in particular, is mainly due to the false teachings of Dispensationalism that are preached from many Christian pulpits. This is so outrageous and deplorable because, as a result of those erroneous beliefs, license and support is given to an entity that has nothing to do with biblical prophecies, an entity that despises human life by killing mercilessly, on a daily basis with total impunity, the indigenous population of Gaza and the West Bank in plain sight of the whole world. This way, millions of believers have become complicit in the genocide that Israel is committing against the Palestinians.

In conclusion, to believe that modern Israel is the same as biblical Israel and therefore must be unconditionally supported, would perhaps not be troubling if it were not for the tragic and

inhumane consequences of such a belief as the annihilation and extermination of a people and culture that have existed in Palestine for centuries. And this has been happening not only after October 7, 2023, but since the very founding of the State of Israel in 1948, with the support of imperial powers such as the United States and its allies, as well as the blessing of the millions of Christians who mistakenly believe that by supporting and praying for Israel, they will hasten the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Horrors like those that are happening every day in Gaza should not be tolerated by the international community. If there were true justice in this world, the genocidal leaders of the State of Israel and their accomplices in the governments that support them should be brought sooner rather than later before a real International Court of Justice (not like the current one) to be tried for crimes against humanity and genocide, and thus do justice to the thousands, perhaps millions, of people who have been murdered in this holocaust.

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