

Sermon Outline

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT | Geoff Lin

What this talk is (and is not) about ...

1. (Some) theological reflections ...

i. God's plan has always been to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants

Gen 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

- we belong to a bigger and better story
- initially vs ultimately
- God's chosen people (Dt 7:7), a holy nation/treasured possession (Ex 19:4-6), a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), a light to the Gentiles (Is 49:6)
- Israel's repeated failure (and the Babylonian Exile)
- Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews (Jn 19:19) and Saviour of the World (Jn 4:42)
- "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"" (Jn 14:6)

Gal 3:7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Gal 3:23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- not because we were born Jewish, but because we were born again in Jesus

ii. The big idea: the modern-day nation of Israel is no longer the people of God

The People of God	
Old Testament	New Testament
Biological Descendants of Abraham* (Israel) * plus a few adopted foreigners (eg Rahab)	Children of God in Christ (Jew and Gentile equally)
"Born into by blood"	"Born again by faith"

iii. Abraham's biological descendants can still be saved (through faith in Christ)

- Jesus the Jew and the "lost sheep of Israel (Mt 15:21-28); Paul's evangelistic strategy; the imagery of John's Revelation

Rom 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved.

- "all Israel" = "true Israel" ≠ "every single Israelite"

2. (Some) practical implications ...

i. We are to read the Old Testament not "literally" but "Christologically"

The butterfly doesn't *replace* the caterpillar; the butterfly *is* the caterpillar in a more developed and consummate form. The butterfly is what God intended the caterpillar to become. Likewise, the church doesn't *replace* Israel; the church *is* Israel as God always intended it to be. (Sam Storms, "Caterpillars, Butterflies and Replacement Theology"
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/caterpillars-butterflies-replacement-theology/>)

ii. Christians are free to hold different political positions on the Middle East conflict

- neither Zionism nor anti-Semitism
- "petitions and prayers ... that we may live peaceful and quiet lives" (1 Tim 2:1-3)
- "... The LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him" (Is 45:1)

iii. When talking with those who are not believers ...

- the conflict between Jew and Muslim can only be solved by Christ
- Rodney Stark, "The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History" (1996)

For discussion: how might we speak about the Middle East in a way that points people to Jesus?