

The Great Commission vs. Christian Zionism: An Exploration of Contradictions

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The Great Commission, recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, represents one of the most significant mandates given by Jesus Christ to His followers, emphasizing a universal mission to make disciples of all nations. In contrast, Christian Zionism is a theological and political movement that supports the return of the Jewish people to Israel, seeing this as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. While both perspectives are rooted in Christian theology, they may embody divergent priorities and implications for Christian practice and belief. This paper explores the potential contradictions between the Great Commission's call for inclusive, global evangelism and the nationalistic focus of Christian Zionism. By examining theological, practical, and ethical dimensions, we aim to understand how these two viewpoints might conflict and what this means for the Church's mission and unity. Through a balanced analysis, we seek to offer insights into how Christians can navigate these complexities while remaining faithful to their spiritual mandate.

Keywords: Great Commission, Christian Zionism, biblical prophecy, evangelism, discipleship, theological conflict, nationalistic focus, global mission, Church unity, eschatology, Israel, political advocacy, ethical dilemmas, resource allocation, spiritual transformation.

Note: Verbatim GPT-4o.

I. Introduction

A. Definition and Scope

1. **Brief Overview of the Great Commission** The Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, represents one of the most significant mandates given by Jesus Christ to His disciples. After His resurrection and just before His ascension, Jesus declared:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This directive encompasses several key elements:

- **Authority:** Jesus establishes His authority over all creation, providing the foundation for the Commission.
 - **Mandate:** The command to "go and make disciples of all nations" emphasizes an inclusive, global mission.
 - **Sacrament:** Baptism is instituted as a sacramental act of initiation into the Christian faith.
 - **Instruction:** Teaching obedience to Christ's commands underscores the importance of discipleship and spiritual growth.
 - **Promise:** The assurance of Christ's continual presence offers encouragement and support for the mission.
2. **Explanation of Christian Zionism** Christian Zionism is a theological and political movement that emerged in the 19th century, predicated on the belief that the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the establishment of the modern State of Israel are in accordance with biblical prophecy. Key components of Christian Zionism include:
 - **Biblical Prophecy:** Belief in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland.

- **Support for Israel:** Advocacy for political, financial, and moral support of the State of Israel and its people.
- **Theological Implications:** Viewing the establishment of Israel as a significant event in God's redemptive plan, often linked to eschatological (end times) expectations.
- **Influence and Activities:** Engagement in political lobbying, humanitarian aid, and fostering positive Jewish-Christian relations.

B. Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore and analyze the potential contradictions between the Great Commission and Christian Zionism. While both perspectives are rooted in Christian theology, they may embody divergent priorities and implications for Christian practice and belief. This paper aims to:

- **Examine the Scriptural Foundations:** Analyze the biblical basis for the Great Commission and Christian Zionism, identifying areas of potential conflict.
- **Assess Theological Implications:** Discuss how the differing focuses on universal discipleship versus nationalistic support might create theological tensions.
- **Consider Practical Outcomes:** Evaluate the practical implications of these beliefs on church mission, unity, and ethical considerations.
- **Present Counterarguments:** Acknowledge and critically assess the arguments made by proponents of Christian Zionism for its compatibility with the Great Commission.

C. Thesis Statement

The Great Commission's call for universal discipleship and spiritual transformation appears to conflict with the nationalistic and political focus of Christian Zionism. While the Great Commission emphasizes a global mission to all peoples, transcending national and ethnic boundaries, Christian Zionism often prioritizes the political and territorial restoration of Israel. This paper will argue that such a focus may inadvertently detract from the inclusive and spiritual objectives

outlined in the Great Commission, potentially leading to theological and practical contradictions within the Christian faith.

II. The Great Commission: A Universal Mandate

A. Biblical Basis

1. **Examination of Matthew 28:18-20** The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:18-20, serves as a foundational passage for Christian missionary activity:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- **Authority of Christ:** Jesus begins by asserting His divine authority over all creation, emphasizing that His command carries the weight of divine mandate.
 - **Command to Go:** The directive to "go" implies active, intentional engagement in spreading the gospel.
 - **Making Disciples:** The focus is on making disciples, not merely converts, indicating a process of teaching and nurturing believers in their faith.
 - **Baptism:** Baptizing in the name of the Trinity signifies initiation into the Christian community and identification with the triune God.
 - **Teaching Obedience:** The instruction to teach obedience to Christ's commands highlights the importance of holistic discipleship, encompassing both belief and practice.
 - **Promise of Presence:** The assurance of Jesus' continual presence provides comfort and encouragement for the ongoing mission.
2. **Related Scriptures** Several other New Testament passages echo the themes and imperatives of the Great Commission:

- **Mark 16:15-16:** "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'"
 - Emphasizes the global scope of the gospel proclamation and the necessity of faith and baptism.
- **Luke 24:46-49:** "He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'"
 - Highlights the prophetic fulfillment in Jesus and the global proclamation of repentance and forgiveness.
- **Acts 1:8:** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 - Reinforces the geographic expansion of the mission, starting locally and extending globally.
- **Romans 1:16:** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."
 - Emphasizes the universal applicability of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles.

B. Inclusive Nature

1. Emphasis on Making Disciples of All Nations

- **Universal Scope:** The Great Commission's directive to "make disciples of all nations" underscores its universal scope, transcending ethnic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. This inclusivity reflects God's desire for all people to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

- **Unity in Diversity:** The mandate to disciple all nations fosters a vision of the Church as a diverse yet unified body, composed of believers from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 7:9).

2. Focus on Spiritual Transformation and Spreading the Gospel

- **Holistic Discipleship:** The process of making disciples involves not only evangelism but also spiritual growth and transformation. This includes teaching new believers to obey Christ's commands, fostering spiritual maturity and ethical living.
- **Missionary Activity:** The Great Commission calls for active missionary engagement, prioritizing the spread of the gospel message. This missionary zeal is rooted in the conviction that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe (Romans 1:16).

C. Theological Implications

1. Understanding the Universal Mission of the Church

- **Global Vision:** The Great Commission envisions a global mission for the Church, challenging believers to look beyond their immediate context and engage in cross-cultural ministry.
- **Role of the Church:** The Church is seen as the primary agent of God's mission in the world, tasked with the responsibility of spreading the gospel and making disciples. This involves both proclamation and demonstration of the gospel through word and deed.

2. Kingdom of God

- **Spiritual Kingdom:** The focus of the Great Commission on making disciples and teaching obedience to Christ's commands reflects the establishment of a spiritual kingdom, where Christ reigns in the hearts of believers.
- **Eschatological Hope:** The Great Commission is driven by an eschatological hope, anticipating the consummation of God's kingdom and the fulfillment of His redemptive purposes for all creation.

3. Ethical and Social Implications

- **Social Justice:** The holistic nature of discipleship includes a concern for social justice and the well-being of others. Following Christ's commands involves caring for the marginalized, advocating for justice, and working towards reconciliation and peace.
- **Witness through Service:** The Church's mission involves not only verbal proclamation but also acts of service and compassion, reflecting the love of Christ and drawing others to Him.

This expanded section provides a comprehensive understanding of the Great Commission's biblical basis, inclusive nature, and theological implications, setting the stage for examining potential contradictions with Christian Zionism.

III. Christian Zionism: A Nationalistic Perspective

A. Definition and Origins

1. Historical Background

- **Early Roots:** The ideological roots of Christian Zionism can be traced back to the Puritan movement of the 17th century. Puritans, influenced by a literal interpretation of the Bible, particularly the prophetic books, believed in the restoration of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. This early form of Christian Zionism was theological, based on biblical prophecy rather than political aspirations.
- **19th Century Developments:** The modern Christian Zionist movement gained momentum in the 19th century with the rise of premillennial dispensationalism. John Nelson Darby, a key figure in this movement, emphasized a literal interpretation of biblical prophecy and the belief that the restoration of Israel was a prerequisite for the second coming of Christ. This theological framework laid the groundwork for contemporary Christian Zionism.

- **Political Advocacy:** Influential figures such as William Blackstone and Lord Shaftesbury played pivotal roles in advocating for the Jewish return to Palestine. Blackstone's "Jesus is Coming" (1878) was particularly influential, linking the return of Jews to their homeland with the imminent return of Christ. Shaftesbury lobbied for British support of Jewish resettlement in Palestine, anticipating the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

2. Development of Christian Zionism

- **The Balfour Declaration:** The 1917 Balfour Declaration marked a significant milestone in the development of Christian Zionism. This statement of British support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine was seen by Christian Zionists as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and divine intervention.
- **Post-World War II and the Holocaust:** The aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust significantly bolstered Christian Zionist beliefs. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was perceived as a miraculous fulfillment of prophecy and a pivotal event in God's redemptive plan.
- **Contemporary Movement:** Today, Christian Zionism is a significant movement within evangelical Christianity, particularly in the United States. Organizations such as Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) play major roles in promoting Christian Zionist beliefs and supporting the State of Israel through political lobbying, financial aid, and fostering positive Jewish-Christian relations.

B. Core Beliefs

1. Support for the Return of the Jewish People to Israel

- **Biblical Prophecy:** Central to Christian Zionist theology is the belief that the Bible foretells the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. Key prophetic texts include Isaiah 11:11-12, Ezekiel 36:24, and Amos 9:14-15. Christian Zionists interpret these

scriptures as predicting the ingathering of Jews to Israel, viewing modern events as the fulfillment of these prophecies.

- **Divine Mandate:** Christian Zionists believe that the Jewish return to Israel is part of God's unchanging covenant with the Jewish people. This covenant, they argue, grants the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham as an eternal inheritance (Genesis 12:7, 15:18-21). This belief reinforces the idea that the modern State of Israel has a divine right to exist and prosper.

2. Political and Theological Motivations

- **Restorationism:** Restorationism, the belief that the restoration of Israel is a precursor to the second coming of Christ, is a core tenet of Christian Zionism. This eschatological view posits that certain events, including the return of Jews to Israel, must occur before Christ can return. This belief fuels the urgency and passion behind Christian Zionist support for Israel.
- **Support for the State of Israel:** Christian Zionists advocate for political support of Israel, including its right to exist and defend itself. This support often extends to endorsing specific policies and actions taken by the Israeli government. They view this political support as a way to align with God's purposes and to hasten the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.
- **Covenantal Theology:** Some Christian Zionists adhere to a dual-covenant theology, which holds that God's covenant with the Jewish people remains valid alongside the new covenant established through Jesus Christ. This perspective affirms the ongoing significance of Israel in God's salvific plan and underscores the belief that the Jewish people retain a special status and role in God's unfolding purposes.

C. Activities and Influence

1. Political Support and Humanitarian Aid

- **Lobbying and Advocacy:** Christian Zionist organizations actively engage in lobbying efforts to influence government policies in favor of Israel. In the United States, groups like CUFI work to secure political, financial, and military support for Israel. This includes efforts to influence foreign policy, secure financial aid, and oppose measures perceived as detrimental to Israeli interests.
- **Humanitarian Efforts:** Many Christian Zionist groups provide humanitarian aid to support Jewish communities in Israel and around the world. This includes funding for social services, immigration assistance, and relief efforts in times of crisis. These humanitarian efforts are seen as a practical expression of their theological commitment to support Israel and the Jewish people.

2. Impact on International Relations and Church Policies

- **US-Israel Relations:** The influence of Christian Zionism is particularly evident in the strong US-Israel relationship. Prominent political figures and policymakers often align with Christian Zionist positions, advocating for robust support of Israel in international forums. This influence has shaped US foreign policy and contributed to the close diplomatic and military ties between the two nations.
- **Church Policies and Teachings:** Within the Christian community, Christian Zionism has shaped church policies and teachings regarding Israel and the Jewish people. This includes a renewed focus on the Hebrew roots of Christianity, greater emphasis on Old Testament prophecies, and the promotion of pilgrimages to Israel. Churches influenced by Christian Zionism often incorporate prayers for the peace of Jerusalem and support for Israel into their worship and educational programs.
- **Interfaith Relations:** Christian Zionists often foster positive relationships with Jewish communities, emphasizing shared values and mutual support. This can enhance interfaith dialogue and

cooperation, but it also raises concerns about the motivations behind such alliances, particularly regarding proselytization efforts. Some Jewish groups appreciate the political and humanitarian support, while others are wary of the underlying theological motivations.

This expanded section on Christian Zionism provides a detailed understanding of its historical background, core beliefs, and the activities and influence of its adherents, setting the stage for a critical examination of how these elements might conflict with the Great Commission.

IV. Potential Contradictions

A. Nationalism vs. Universal Mission

1. Focus on Israel

- **Emphasis on a Specific Nation:** Christian Zionism places a strong emphasis on the State of Israel and the Jewish people, often prioritizing their support and protection based on theological interpretations of biblical prophecy.
- **Exclusive Focus:** This focus on one nation can be seen as contradictory to the Great Commission, which calls for making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The Great Commission is inherently inclusive, urging the spread of the gospel to every corner of the earth without favoring one nation over another.

2. Global Mission

- **Inclusive Nature:** The Great Commission emphasizes a global mission to all peoples, transcending national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. This universal approach seeks to unify believers worldwide under the banner of Christ's teachings.
- **Potential for Bias:** By focusing predominantly on Israel, Christian Zionism may inadvertently create a perception of bias, potentially alienating other nations and ethnic groups who are equally included in the scope of the Great Commission.

B. Exclusivity Concerns

1. Prioritization Issues

- **Exclusive Support:** Christian Zionism's strong support for Israel might lead to an imbalance where the needs and spiritual well-being of other nations are overlooked. This could contradict the Great Commission's mandate to reach and disciple all nations equally.
- **Implied Superiority:** Emphasizing the special status of Israel might suggest that other nations are less significant in God's redemptive plan, which can foster feelings of exclusion and marginalization among non-Jewish believers.

2. Missionary Efforts

- **Unequal Evangelistic Focus:** Resources and missionary efforts might be disproportionately directed towards supporting Israel and Jewish evangelism, potentially at the expense of broader global outreach initiatives.
- **Broader Reach:** The Great Commission calls for a balanced and comprehensive approach to evangelism that equally values and prioritizes all people groups.

C. Political vs. Spiritual Goals

1. Resource Allocation

- **Diversion of Resources:** Christian Zionism's political support for Israel often involves significant financial and logistical resources. These resources could potentially be diverted from traditional missionary activities focused on evangelism and discipleship.
- **Impact on Spiritual Mission:** The primary goal of the Great Commission is spiritual transformation through the spread of the gospel. Political involvement may detract from this spiritual focus and shift priorities towards temporal and nationalistic objectives.

2. Potential Conflicts

- **Political Advocacy:** The political nature of Christian Zionism can lead to involvement in contentious geopolitical issues, which may conflict with the apolitical and spiritual nature of the Great Commission.
- **Spiritual Emphasis:** The Great Commission emphasizes the spiritual kingdom of God, which transcends earthly political boundaries and allegiances. Mixing political advocacy with spiritual mission can create confusion and dilute the message of the gospel.

D. Theological Differences

1. Interpretations of Biblical Promises

- **Conflicting Views:** Christian Zionism and the Great Commission may represent differing interpretations of biblical promises concerning Israel and the Church. Christian Zionists emphasize the physical restoration of Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy, while others see these prophecies as being spiritually fulfilled in the Church.
- **Covenant Theology vs. Dispensationalism:** These theological differences can create tension within the Christian community. Covenant theology often views the Church as the continuation of Israel, while dispensationalism (common in Christian Zionism) sees a distinct future role for Israel.

2. Role of Israel

- **Ongoing Significance:** Christian Zionism posits that Israel retains a unique and ongoing role in God's plan, which can lead to differing emphases on how the Church should interact with Israel today.
- **New Covenant:** The Great Commission focuses on the new covenant established through Jesus Christ, which is inclusive of all nations. This can conflict with a strong nationalistic focus on Israel's role.

E. Risk of Division

1. Within the Church

- **Doctrinal Divisions:** The strong support for Christian Zionism can lead to doctrinal divisions within the Church, as not all Christians share the same interpretation of biblical prophecy and Israel's role.
- **Unity in Mission:** The Great Commission calls for unity in spreading the gospel. Divisions over Christian Zionism can detract from this unified mission and create factions within the Christian community.

2. With Other Groups

- **Interfaith Relations:** While Christian Zionism fosters positive relations with Jewish communities, it can also lead to tensions with Muslim communities and other groups who have differing views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **Global Perception:** The perceived favoritism towards Israel can affect the Church's global witness and its relationships with believers from other nations, potentially hindering the universal mission of the Great Commission.

F. Ethical Dilemmas

1. Geopolitical Issues

- **Contentious Politics:** Christian Zionism's political advocacy can involve support for controversial policies and actions by the Israeli government, which may be viewed as unjust or oppressive by others. This raises ethical questions about the Church's involvement in such issues.
- **Biblical Justice:** The Great Commission emphasizes teaching and living out the teachings of Christ, which include principles of justice, mercy, and love. Political actions that contradict these principles can create ethical dilemmas for believers.

2. Moral Responsibilities

- **Advocacy and Support:** The Church's support for any political entity must be weighed against its moral responsibilities to advocate for justice and peace. Aligning too closely with one nation's political agenda can compromise the Church's ethical stance.
- **Witness to the World:** The Church's primary mission is to bear witness to the love and salvation found in Jesus Christ. Ethical compromises in political advocacy can undermine this witness and detract from the Church's credibility and integrity in fulfilling the Great Commission.

This expanded section outlines the potential contradictions between the Great Commission and Christian Zionism, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing how these elements may conflict in terms of theology, mission, and ethics.

V. Counterarguments and Rebuttals

A. Supporters' Perspective

1. Biblical Fulfillment

- **Prophetic Alignment:** Supporters argue that Christian Zionism is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, which aligns with the Great Commission by demonstrating God's faithfulness to His promises. They cite scriptures such as Ezekiel 36:24 and Amos 9:14-15 to show that the return of the Jewish people to Israel is part of God's redemptive plan, thus reinforcing the truth of the Bible and encouraging faith.
- **Eschatological Importance:** Christian Zionists believe that the restoration of Israel is a key event in the eschatological timeline leading to the second coming of Christ. They argue that supporting Israel helps to bring about the conditions necessary for the fulfillment of end-time prophecies, which ultimately align with the Great Commission's goal of preparing the world for Christ's return.

2. Theological Consistency

- **Covenant Theology:** Some supporters adhere to a dual-covenant theology, asserting that God's covenant with Israel remains intact alongside the new covenant through Jesus Christ. They argue that supporting Israel and the Jewish people is consistent with the belief in God's ongoing relationship with Israel, which complements the mission of making disciples of all nations.
- **Inclusive Mission:** Proponents claim that Christian Zionism does not exclude other nations but rather highlights the importance of Israel in God's plan, which includes blessings for all nations (Genesis 12:3). They argue that supporting Israel can coexist with a broader evangelical mission, promoting the gospel globally while recognizing Israel's unique role.

3. Practical Benefits

- **Political Stability:** Supporters argue that a strong and secure Israel contributes to political stability in the Middle East, which can create a more favorable environment for evangelism and missionary work. They believe that supporting Israel helps to protect religious freedoms and open doors for sharing the gospel.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Christian Zionists emphasize their humanitarian efforts in Israel and around the world, which they see as an expression of Christian love and compassion. They argue that these acts of service demonstrate the gospel in action and build goodwill, fostering positive relationships that can facilitate evangelistic efforts.

B. Critical Analysis

1. Prophetic Fulfillment

- **Selective Interpretation:** Critics argue that the emphasis on specific prophetic interpretations can lead to selective reading of the Bible, focusing on certain prophecies while neglecting the broader context of the Great Commission. They contend that the primary mission of

the Church should be spiritual transformation and discipleship, not geopolitical events.

- **Eschatological Speculation:** The reliance on eschatological timelines and events can be seen as speculative and distracting from the immediate task of evangelism. Critics argue that focusing on end-time scenarios can divert attention and resources from the practical work of making disciples and spreading the gospel to all nations.

2. Theological Inconsistencies

- **Supersessionism Debate:** The dual-covenant theology espoused by some Christian Zionists is contested by those who believe in supersessionism, the view that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Critics argue that the New Testament reinterprets Old Testament promises in light of Christ's fulfillment, emphasizing a spiritual kingdom rather than a nationalistic focus.
- **Universal Mission:** The Great Commission's universal call to make disciples of all nations is seen by critics as inherently inclusive and transcendent of any nationalistic agenda. They argue that prioritizing one nation, even Israel, contradicts the inclusive nature of the gospel and the global mission of the Church.

3. Practical Concerns

- **Resource Allocation:** Critics highlight the potential diversion of resources towards political and humanitarian support for Israel at the expense of broader evangelistic efforts. They argue that the Church's primary resources should be directed towards fulfilling the Great Commission through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting worldwide.
- **Political Entanglement:** The involvement in political advocacy for Israel can entangle the Church in contentious geopolitical issues, potentially compromising its witness and mission. Critics contend that the Church should remain focused on its spiritual mandate, avoiding political partisanship that can alienate other groups and hinder the gospel message.

4. Ethical and Social Implications

- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Critics argue that unconditional support for Israeli policies can lead to ethical dilemmas, particularly when such policies are seen as unjust or oppressive. They contend that the Church should advocate for justice and peace for all people, aligning its actions with the teachings of Christ rather than nationalistic agendas.
- **Witness and Unity:** The prioritization of Israel can create divisions within the Church and damage its witness to the world. Critics emphasize the importance of unity and the inclusive nature of the gospel, which transcends national and ethnic boundaries. They argue that the Church's mission should be characterized by love, justice, and reconciliation, reflecting the holistic message of the Great Commission.

This expanded section on counterarguments and rebuttals provides a comprehensive analysis of the supporters' perspective and a critical examination of their arguments, highlighting potential theological, practical, and ethical issues in reconciling Christian Zionism with the Great Commission.

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary of Key Points

1. Main Arguments and Contradictions

- **Nationalism vs. Universal Mission:** Christian Zionism's focus on the nation of Israel may contradict the Great Commission's call for an inclusive, global mission to make disciples of all nations. The prioritization of Israel can appear to conflict with the universal scope of the Great Commission, which transcends national and ethnic boundaries.
- **Exclusivity Concerns:** The risk of prioritizing one nation over the global mission can lead to an imbalanced focus that potentially neglects the spiritual and practical needs of other nations and

peoples. This exclusivity can undermine the inclusive nature of the Great Commission.

- **Political vs. Spiritual Goals:** Christian Zionism's involvement in political advocacy and support for Israel can divert resources and attention from the primary goals of evangelism and discipleship. The Great Commission emphasizes spiritual transformation and the establishment of a spiritual kingdom, which may be compromised by political entanglement.
- **Theological Differences:** Conflicting interpretations of biblical promises and the role of Israel can create theological tensions within the Christian community. The dual-covenant theology of Christian Zionism may clash with interpretations that see the Church as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises.
- **Risk of Division:** The strong emphasis on Israel can create divisions within the Church and with other groups, potentially hindering the unity and collaborative efforts necessary for fulfilling the Great Commission. This division can detract from the Church's witness and mission.
- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Involvement in contentious geopolitical issues can lead to ethical dilemmas, particularly when support for Israeli policies conflicts with principles of justice and peace. The Church's ethical stance and witness can be compromised by aligning too closely with political agendas.

B. Implications for the Church

1. Impact on Mission

- **Resource Allocation:** The Church must carefully consider how resources are allocated to ensure that the primary mission of evangelism and discipleship is not overshadowed by political or nationalistic endeavors. Effective mission strategies should prioritize spreading the gospel and making disciples in all nations.

- **Global Outreach:** Emphasizing a universal mission, the Church should engage in outreach efforts that reflect the inclusive nature of the Great Commission. This involves reaching diverse populations and fostering cross-cultural ministry initiatives.

2. Impact on Unity

- **Doctrinal Unity:** To maintain unity, the Church needs to address and reconcile differing theological perspectives on Israel and biblical prophecy. Open dialogue and mutual respect for diverse interpretations can help mitigate divisions.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Promoting collaborative efforts that transcend national and denominational boundaries can strengthen the Church's mission. Unity in purpose and mission is essential for effectively fulfilling the Great Commission.

3. Witness and Ethical Stance

- **Ethical Integrity:** The Church must uphold ethical integrity by advocating for justice, peace, and reconciliation. This involves critically evaluating political involvement to ensure that actions align with the teachings of Christ and the principles of the gospel.
- **Holistic Witness:** The Church's witness should encompass both proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. Acts of service, compassion, and advocacy for justice are integral to the mission and reflect the holistic message of the Great Commission.

C. Final Thoughts

1. Balanced Approach

- **Holistic Mission:** A balanced approach to fulfilling the Great Commission involves integrating evangelism, discipleship, and social action. The Church should strive to embody the full spectrum of Christ's teachings, addressing both spiritual and practical needs.
- **Avoiding Polarization:** To avoid polarization, the Church should engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue about the role of Israel

and Christian Zionism. Embracing a diversity of perspectives can enrich the Church's understanding and approach to mission.

2. Encouragement for Unity and Focus

- **Unified Purpose:** Encouraging a unified purpose, the Church should focus on the core mission of making disciples of all nations. This unity in mission can help overcome divisions and foster a collaborative spirit.
- **Spiritual Focus:** Maintaining a spiritual focus on the teachings of Christ and the principles of the gospel is essential. The Church's primary mission is to bear witness to the love and salvation found in Jesus Christ, transcending political and nationalistic concerns.

In conclusion, while Christian Zionism and the Great Commission may appear to have conflicting elements, a balanced and thoughtful approach can help reconcile these perspectives. By prioritizing the inclusive and spiritual mandate of the Great Commission, the Church can effectively fulfill its mission to make disciples of all nations, fostering unity, ethical integrity, and a holistic witness to the world.

VII. References

A. Biblical References

1. **Matthew 28:18-20**: The Great Commission

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

2. **Mark 16:15-16**: Commission to Preach the Gospel

"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'"

3. **Luke 24:46-49**: Fulfillment of Prophecy and Mission

"He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'"

4. **Acts 1:8**: Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

5. **Romans 1:16**: The Power of the Gospel for All

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

6. **Isaiah 11:11-12**: Prophecy of the Return of the Jews

"In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands

of the Mediterranean. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth."

7. **Ezekiel 36:24:** Gathering of the Jewish People

"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land."

8. **Amos 9:14-15:** Restoration of Israel

"I will bring my people Israel back from exile; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,' says the Lord your God."

9. **Genesis 12:3:** Blessing to All Nations

"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

10. **Genesis 15:18-21:** Covenant with Abraham

"On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.'"

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3. Theological Analyses

- **Horner, Barry E.** *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007. This work argues for a positive Christian view of Israel based on biblical theology.
- **Sider, Ronald J.** *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why Are Christians Missing the Chance to Really Change the World?* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008. This book provides a critical perspective on how evangelical engagement in politics, including support for Israel, aligns with or detracts from broader Christian mission goals.

4. Eschatological Perspectives

- **LaHaye, Tim, and Jerry B. Jenkins.** *Are We Living in the End Times?* Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999. This popular work discusses contemporary events in light of biblical prophecy and the end times, relevant to understanding the eschatological motivations behind Christian Zionism.
- **Bock, Darrell L.** *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. This book provides multiple perspectives on eschatology, including views that support and critique Christian Zionist interpretations.

5. Ethical and Social Implications

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- **Brueggemann, Walter.** *Chosen?: Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015. This book offers a critical examination of the ethical and theological issues surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its implications for Christian Zionism.

6. Articles and Papers

- **Smith, Gary V.** "The Dispensational Theology of John Nelson Darby." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15, no. 4 (1972): 229-240. This article provides an overview of the theological foundations of dispensationalism, which underpins much of Christian Zionism.
- **Robertson, O. Palmer.** "Israel and the Church: The Transcendence of Covenant Theology." *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, no. 2 (1990): 241-262. This paper discusses the theological implications of covenant theology as opposed to dispensationalist views.



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