

Review: JAZ003

## IN DEFENSE OF ZIONISM: HAGEE'S MANDATE FOR SUPPORTING ISRAEL

a book review of

*In Defense of Israel: The Bible's Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State*

by John Hagee

(Frontline, 2007)

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John Hagee is a *New York Times* best-selling author, prominent televangelist on Trinity Broadcasting Network, and pastor of the 19,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio. In his latest book he argues that Christians are obligated to support the political state of Israel (pp. 84–85). He demands that we support Israel *in anything it does*, because we as Christians have “a biblical mandate to stand in *absolute solidarity* with Israel” (84, emphasis added). His book *In Defense of Israel* is virtually a hagiography (or overly idealizing presentation) of Jews and Judaism that borders on Judeolatry.

Hagee rebukes Christianity for anti-Semitism while he himself extols Judaism, declaring Jerusalem his “spiritual home” (12), speaking of Jews as his “spiritual brothers” (36, 173), even worshiping with them (144), and stating that they are “quite literally God’s children” (51, emphasis in original) whom “we are commanded to love unconditionally” (2).

*In Defense of Israel* is a study in relentless confusion and massive inaccuracy, containing nearly as many errors as pages. The following addresses the most glaring of these.

**Hagee’s Historical Confusion.** He states that Acts 11:26 occurred “forty years after the crucifixion” (93), around AD 70, but it actually occurred in the early 40s during “the reign of Claudius,” according to Acts 11:28.<sup>1</sup>

He states that Jesus went to His first Passover “at the end of his twelfth year” (95), but instead He did so “when He became twelve” (Luke 2:42). He thinks Paul “wrote most of the New Testament” (98), although Luke did, in terms of volume, writing twenty-five percent of it.

Hagee believes, incredibly, that as a child Jesus studied the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish traditions and scriptural interpretations) and the rest of the Talmud (96). The Mishnah was compiled around AD 200, however, and the Talmud 200 years later. On page 97, he speaks of “the creation of the world in seven days,” whereas it happened in six days (Gen. 1; Exod. 20:11; 31:17). He states that Caiaphas “was appointed by Herod” (127), but he was appointed by Valerius Gratus, more than twenty years after Herod died.

**Hagee’s Theological Errors.** Hagee also appears to have some theological confusion—for example, he confuses the virgin birth with the immaculate conception of Mary (93). This leads to serious doctrinal errors, which I list below.

1. *Hagee claims that Jesus did not come to be the Messiah.* He writes, “not one verse of Scripture in the New Testament...says Jesus came to be the Messiah” (136; cf. 137, 140, 145). Jesus is called “Christ” (Messiah) throughout the New Testament, however. Peter declares, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”

(Matt. 16:15–16), as do Martha (John 11:27) and Jesus Himself (John 10:24–25), and John writes his gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:30–31). In Matthew 26:63–64 the high priest demands, “tell us whether You are the Christ.” Jesus responds, “You have said it yourself.” Also, Paul set about “confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22).

2. *Hagee maintains that “the Jews did not reject Jesus as Messiah”* (132), since “Jesus had to live to be the Messiah” (135). Early in John’s gospel, however, we read that “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). At the end of His ministry Jesus weeps: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I wanted to gather your children together...and you were unwilling” (Matt. 23:37, emphasis added). Clearly then, Hagee is wrong for declaring that the Jews did not reject Jesus. Furthermore, Christ *did* come to die, for Paul busied himself “explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’” (Acts 17:3; cf. 3:18; 26:23).

3. *Hagee teaches that the Jews did not kill Jesus.* He vigorously argues that this is “one of those deadly New Testament myths” and that “no justification can be found in the New Testament to support this lie” (125; cf. 122). Peter, however, preaches, “Men of Israel....this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, *you nailed to a cross* by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Acts 2:22–23, emphasis added.) Stephen declares that the same Jews were the “ betrayers and murderers” of “the Righteous One” (Acts 7:52). Paul charges that “the Jews...both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets” (1 Thess. 2:15; see also Acts 2:36; 3:13–15; 4:10; 5:28, 30; 10:39; 13:27–29; 26:10).

4. *Hagee argues that “the Old Covenant is not dead”* (158). Paul, however, writes that the Old Covenant’s glory was fading even when Moses gave it (2 Cor. 3:7, 13) and “has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it” in the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:10). Hebrews 8:13 thus notes that “when He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.”

Lamentably, the fact that Hagee is a best-selling author reminds us anew that, as God proclaimed, “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6).

— *reviewed by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.*

## NOTES

1. All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.