

Is God a Nationalist?

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Questions to consider, discuss or journal.

1. During the introduction, the Author shares his observations around the way that nation-based thinking has dehumanized people and groups of people. Can you identify this thought process in your own thinking or have you experienced this in your spiritual community? How can you be more aware of this? What steps can you take to remove a nationalist lens when considering God's perspective?
2. Nostalgia offers a sense of past greatness and can lead to minimizing the present and often alienate individuals who weren't part of this past greatness. Does this happen in your spiritual community? What steps can you take to avoid this?
3. The Author reminds us that Jesus was a brown person, speaking to enslaved peoples, and liberating them with his universalist message. How does your nationalist lens interpret the person Jesus?
4. The Author highlights lessons from Babel and the day of Pentecost, the contrasting importance of landownership between the Old Testament and New Testament, and dissolution of nationalism with specifically the Jews and Greeks. Which of these points did you find most intriguing? Are there other examples of this to draw from the Bible?
5. When considering the nation of Israel and the four elements of nationhood, the reader is asked, could this preoccupation with the physical land in Israel represent a misunderstanding or misapplication of the words and teaching of Jesus, who prioritised the spiritual over the physical, and universality over tribalism? What are the implications? What do you see the purpose of the Nation of Israel as? What is your relationship to the Nation of Israel?
6. How does a focus on future fulfillment of the Kingdom cause us to dissociate from the now? What are the dangers of this? Are we not also (and even more so) taught to look around at the needs of our communities, of our societies?
7. Jesus teaches us to transcend earthly empire, to be agents of social justice and change, and to be immune to the dog whistles of 'national pride', 'nation first', 'keep them out'. So, if we are to transcend empire, is it likely that Jesus himself will come as another imperial aggressor (albeit a truly benevolent one)? Are there alternative views? Could we find encouragement and inspiration in considering more nuanced ways to think about the coming kingdom?

8. Does focusing on prophecy and the signs of the times cause us to think in ways that compromise Jesus and Paul's message of universality, of an end to nationhood playing a key role in the destiny of the world?
9. How could a less nation-focused perspective help us to live lives as effective ambassadors for Christ while still maintain an excited anticipation of the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' kingdom promises? How do you balance these two contrasting ideas?
10. In what ways could you personally reexamine your attachment to old assumptions and comfortable traditions and consider whether these ideas are right and helpful in our role as ambassadors of Jesus? What shifts could be made as a spiritual community?