

Sermon – Friday 3 September, 2010
Who Owns the Promised Land & Why it Matters

Every day we hear stories about fighting in the Middle East

- We hear that Palestinians have committed a terrorist act
- That Israeli rockets have been launched
- That houses are demolished
- Walls are built
- Peace is as elusive as ever.
- What is this fight all about?
- It's about WHO OWNS THE LAND.

Now Why Would This Really Matter?

- Because so many people have an opinion
- And because they listen to our opinions too
- As Christians, what we think about Israel and Arabs has a big effect on the gospel

If Israel Attacks Arabs with Rockets

- And we are supportive of this because we believe they own the land
- Arabs interpret this as Christians supporting action against Muslims
- Then when we tell them that God loves them and sent His son to die for them
It doesn't make sense because we support actions against them that kill them

OR If Palestinians attack Israeli people

- And Jews are killed
- But we believe that the Palestinians really own the Land and that they have a right to defend their land
- Are we suddenly cursed for not supporting Israel
- WHAT WE THINK AND SAY ABOUT ISRAEL IS IMPORTANT

First of All – According to the Bible – What is the Promised land

- In Genesis 15:18-21
- From the Great River in Egypt to the River Euphrates
- The land of various tribes
- Show Image from Wikipedia

Today this land is occupied by the following countries

- Show picture of middle east today

Genesis 12:1-7

- Verse 7 – “to your offspring I give this land”

Genesis 15:17-18

- “To your descendants I will give this land.”

Who Was God Giving the Promised Land

- To the children of Abraham

So Who are the Children of Abraham

- How many children did Abraham have?
- Ishmael – the father of the arabs
- Isaac – the father of the jews
- Others – Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, Shuah

Genesis 25:18

- His descendents settled in the region from Havilah to Shur

Who else is the Children of Abraham

- **John 8:31-41**
 - o Jesus said that the Jews who did not trust in Him were illegitimate children
 - o Jesus said that character and obedience determine our relationship to God
- **Gal 3:6-9**
 - o Those who have faith like Abraham are his children
 - o They will inherit the same blessings as Abraham

So Physically

- Are Abraham's descendents in the land?
- YES – Arabs, Jews & Others live there

So Spiritually

- Are Abraham's descendents in the land?
- YES – Believers in Christ live there

So What is the Big Fuss?

- It's not a matter about who owns the land
- It's a matter about what is right and wrong
- It's a matter of how a Christian should live

We Should Not Support Evil Because of False Beliefs

- If you Israel as a political state has God's stamp of approval to be there
- Think again – who owns the land – the children of Israel
- Which includes arabs, Christians, jews and others
- We must love righteousness and peace

In Closing – Some Final Points

Abraham was Looking for something

- **Hebrews 11:8-16**
- Abraham received a physical promise
- But he was really looking for something else
- He didn't find that

There is a Cryptic Hidden Clue in the Bible

- The land that the Bible speaks of is really symbolic of much greater promises
- And these are to Abraham's Children
- And THAT is why Abraham's Children are those of faith

Let us Close with some Promises from Christ

- The Beatitudes
- Here is "the land"
- God promises beauty to his people

And the second last one is for peacemakers

- People who make peace
- People who don't keep the peace but are willing to make amends and make things right
- Peace doesn't come by demanding what is yours – it comes by forgiving and serving
- If the people of the Middle east, jews, arabs and Christians would be peacemakers – peace would easily come.

In Conclusion:

- The land is a promise for Good things better than a small piece of middle eastern land
- The land is promised to descendents of Abraham
- Those descendents are those who believe – US
- In the middle east – what matters is not who owns the land, but what is right and wrong
- Christ came and taught us to love our enemies and to love what is right
- If Christ is in us, we should love all people regardless of race and hate inequity and justice against anyone.
- We should be peacemakers. This is not talking about resolving conflict between others, it's talking about making things right between us and others. WE MAKE THE EFFORT TO MAKE PEACE WITH OTHERS IN OUR LIVES.