

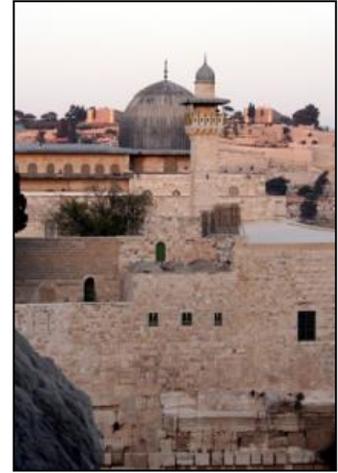
Who Owns the Holy Land?

By Tyrone Cropper

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The whole world is being drawn into the current conflict over the Holy Land. Two ancient peoples are at the center of this controversy, the Arabs and the Israelites. The Arabs call the land Palestine. The Israelites call it by its ancient name, Israel.

There are unique and extraordinary circumstances which cause much misunderstanding by most people today. The Israelites, commonly called "Jews" today, most believe are descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The Arabs are descended from Abraham through Ishmael and Esau.



God chose Abraham's line through Isaac and Jacob to be the recipients of several covenant promises that established them as his special representatives on earth. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:6:7)

God declares to whom and why He is going to give the Holy Land, "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, **It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord ...' And then, "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. ..." (Ezek. 36:22-26)

The Bible clearly shows that God is going to give "His Land" to Israel. Not because they deserve it, but because His great name is at stake – God cannot break a promise.

In order to accomplish these purposes, God made **conditional promises** to Israelites that involved them keeping his commandment which in return made them a unique nation with an everlasting title deed to a specifically defined land. If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Historically, because of the dispensationalist misunderstanding of the land promise, most people today believe the title deed to the land is **unconditional**. This created a view of Bible prophecy that has smoldered and burst into flames at various times in history.

Contrary to this belief however God forewarned the Israelites through Moses that their nation would be plucked from off the land which they go to possess if they did not obey his commandment "You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. "And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known-- wood and stone. (Deuteronomy 28:62-64)

But if you turn away and for sake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, Then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all people (2 Chronicles 7:19-18)

This was literally fulfilled, beginning with the Roman destruction of Israel and Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Zec. 14:2; Jeremiah 5:19; Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:20-24. For failing to obey Him. The second destruction would be far more severe than the first – the people would be scattered throughout every nation under heaven. They would be persecuted and have no assurance of life.

There is another huge problem with this interpretation. The Bible also says that the Israelites were "tenants". "The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.. (Leviticus 25:23) As tenants there were things they were to do and not to do. Look at what Jesus said about the tenants (Jews) of the land of (Israel).

"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. (Matt 21:33-45)

As can clearly be seen the Jews lost their lease and much more. There are two different attitudes toward Israel's right to statehood in the Holy Land among Christians. One group interprets the Bible at face value in what God has promised the Israelites in prophecy and says that Israel forfeited its covenant rights when it rejected Jesus as Messiah. (Matt 21:33-45)

Then there are those Christians who simply focus only on the land. Because of the dispensationalist misunderstanding of Bible prophecy the secular world, especially the United States sees the state of Israel as a special people who holds a inheritance to the land. Therefore, it is considered their holiest place. They all focus on the present Arab-Israeli conflict, and say God's promised Abraham's descendents the land.

So they mostly side with the Jews for economic reasons.

Note that God says, "My Land." But if you turn away and for sake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, Then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all people (2 Chronicles 7:19-18) The Muslims don't own it, neither do the Jews – God owns it. He gives it to whom He chooses and not on the basis of human merit. ((Ezek. 36:22-26)