

Palestine, Israel, and the Promised Land

(Genesis 12:1-3)

- Introduction:
1. It's difficult not to hear about the present conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis.
 2. I am about the most unqualified man to speak on world politics and foreign policy, so I am going to leave that to you and the powers that be.
 3. However, I can clarify some biblical misconceptions regarding Palestine, Israel, and the Promised Land.
 4. Ills. Of recent comments.
 - a. An anchor on a national news broadcast said that Americans who do not support Israel in this conflict need to read their Bibles.
 - b. While I was preparing this lesson, I received a phone call from someone who told me that Israel's becoming a nation in 1948 is proof that Jesus is coming soon.
 - c. Another news personality encouraged all to obey Psalm 122:6, for in praying for Israel, we will be blessed.
 5. Let's attempt to examine these thoughts and put them in their proper context.

I. A Brief Historic Overview

- A. God promised to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:8).
- B. The Israelites, after a 40-year-long wandering in the wilderness, under the leadership of Joshua, crossed the Jordan and began taking possession of the land (Joshua 1).
- C. As time passed, they were deported from the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians due to God's discipline.
- D. This was followed by Greece and Roman control of this land.
- E. From the 16th century till World War I, this land belonged to the Ottoman Empire.
- F. In 1917, Britain took control of this land and issued the Balfour Declaration, making this land a national home for Israel.
- G. Then, in 1948, the United Nations declared this land to have two states, one for the Jews and another for the Arabs.
- H. Since this time, there have been frequent wars over the possession of the land.

II. Clarifying Some Misconceptions

- A. Does Israel have a right to this land today?
 1. The land promise to Abraham and his descendants was fulfilled (Joshua 21:43-45).
 2. Continued possession of the land was conditional (Deuteronomy 28:21; Joshua 23:11-16).

3. Israel's disobedience forfeited any Biblical rights that they had to this land.
- B. Will God curse us if we don't take sides with Israel?
1. (Genesis 12:1-3).
 2. This blessing and curse were pronouncements concerning a time when Israel had a rightful claim to the promised land.
 3. Again, they forfeited their right by their disobedience.
- C. But wasn't the land promise an "everlasting covenant?"
1. (Genesis 13:15).
 2. Yes, if we understand what is meant by the word, "everlasting."
 3. While the word can mean "eternal" or "forever and ever," it can also mean "a long, indefinite period of time."
 - a. The law of Moses was an everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24:5).
 - b. The Passover was an everlasting ordinance (Ex. 12:14).
 - c. The sons of Aaron were an everlasting priesthood (Ex. 40:15).
 - d. The day of atonement was an everlasting statute (Lev. 16:29).
 - e. Sabbath observance was an everlasting ordinance (Ex. 31:17).
 - f. Circumcision was an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:13).
 - g. The temple was an everlasting house (1 Kings 8:13).
 4. These passages demonstrate that everlasting frequently doesn't refer to something that is "unending."
- D. Doesn't God have a special purpose for Israel?
1. Well, yes, he once did. They were to bring the Messiah into the world (Genesis 12:1-3).
 2. And he did come and fulfilled his purpose in coming (Hebrews 2:9).
 3. However, now the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles has been broken down (Ephesians 2:11-17).
 4. Now, all men, regardless of nationality can come to salvation through Jesus.
 5. That's not to say that God no longer has a special people, for he does, those who obey him (1 Peter 2:9).
 6. Unlike the in the past when God's chosen people was determined by lineage, today anyone, from any lineage, who trusts in Jesus can be his own special people.
- Conclusion:
1. What our posture should be toward Israel and Palestine is a matter of politics and foreign policy.
 2. It is not a matter of mandates from God's word.
 3. What we can do is pray that murderers can be thwarted and brought to justice so that not only we, but all can live their lives in peace (1 Timothy 2:1-3).
 4. But the most important peace is peace with God and comes through Jesus (Romans 5:1).