

Israel, Arabs, and the Family of God

March 4, 2011 | by: John Piper

Last Sunday I met an Arab Christian who was visiting our church. In a respectful way, he poured out his heart concerning the plight of his people in the Middle East and his sadness at how few American Christian pastors ever say anything positive or hopeful about Arab Christians.

His perception is that Christians in America give *carte blanche* support for Israel. No injustice against Palestinians or Arab Christians elsewhere seems to get a response in American pulpits.

So I thought it would be good to publicly affirm a few positions that I think the Bible mandates:

1. True Christians are citizens of the kingdom of Jesus Christ first, and only secondarily citizens of any earthly nation or state.
2. True Christians are united more closely to each other as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ than we are to any earthly bonds of family or nation.
3. American Christians are more closely united to Palestinian Christians and Arab Christians and Jewish Christians throughout the world than we are to the state of non-Christian Israel.
4. Israel was chosen by God from all the peoples of the world to be the focus of special blessing in the history of redemption which climaxed in Jesus Christ, the Messiah. “The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6).
5. God promised to Israel the presently disputed land from the time of Abraham onward. God said to Moses, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring’” (Deuteronomy 34:4).
6. Israel, like every other nation on the earth, including all Arab states, does not affirm Jesus Christ as God, Messiah, and Savior, and is, therefore, not a covenant-keeping people in relation to God. Rejecting the Son of God is rebellion against the God of the covenant.
7. A non-covenant-keeping people—Jewish or Arab—does not have a divine right to hold the land of promise while they are living in rebellion against the God who promised it to an obedient people. “If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples” (Exodus 19:5).
8. This does not mean that other nations have the right to molest Israel, nor Israel to molest her neighbors. Israel and the surrounding nations still have human rights among nations, though they have no divine right to claim the land while rejecting the Messiah.

9. God has saving purposes for ethnic Israel (Romans 11:25-26), as he does for the Arab nations (Isaiah 19:19-25; Psalm 22:27; Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 3:29-30).
10. The Christian plea in the Middle East to Palestinians and Jews is: “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). This is the path to peace. “Jesus himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14).
11. Until that great day, when both Jewish and Gentile followers of King Jesus inherit the earth (including the promised land), without lifting sword or gun, the rights of nations should be decided by the principles of compassionate and public justice, not claims to national divine right or status.
12. Therefore, all Christians, especially Christian pastors, should speak openly and joyfully of our unity with Arab and Jewish Christians, and should not rank political support for Israel or any Arab nation above our family support for fellow believers.