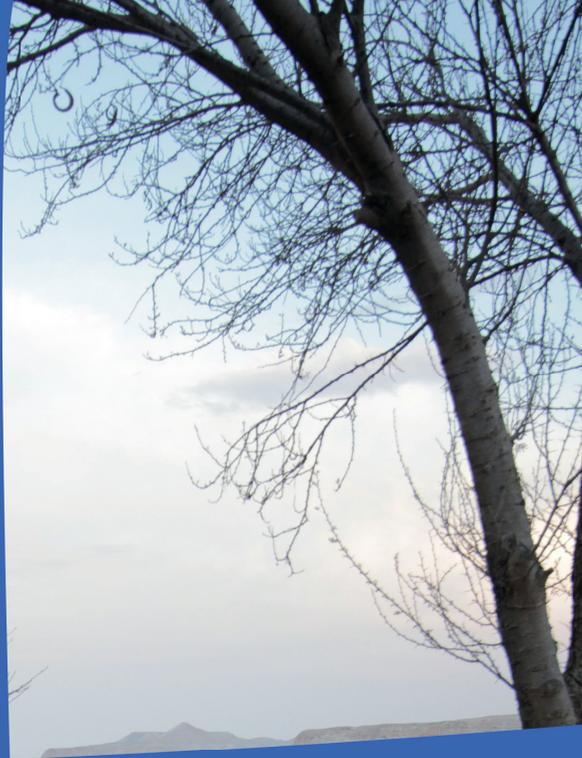




Let Justice Flow
Giving answers to
the question
of justice and rights
for Christians including
Palestinian rights.

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Produced by
Prayer for Israel.



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I have been asked to write on the question of justice and rights for Christians including Palestinian rights. That is a tall order and one can only begin to raise various points concerning the issue.

GOD OF JUSTICE

Clearly God is concerned about justice and righteousness. He is the God of justice and the very foundation of His rule is one of justice and righteousness. (See Psalm 97:2.) When Jehoshaphat appointed judges he remarked: *“Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgement... the Lord will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or taking of a bride”* (2 Chronicles 19:6-7).

God later rebuked Israel by saying, *“let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream”* He made it clear He wasn't even interested in their worship until they put this matter right; indeed their worship was offensive to Him because their justice and righteousness was corrupted.

While we note that Israel was a theocracy, the New Testament also shows that God is concerned about justice and righteousness. In, we see that believers should pray for those in authority that the nation might experience godly authority and reverence. Equally, Paul makes the point that *“there is no authority except from God”* and that such authority is “a

minister of God”. (See Romans 13:1-4.) We have to add, however, that we get the government we deserve and that Israel suffered from bad government and even terrorism when it turned away from the Almighty (e.g. Judges 6:1-3). Nevertheless, God is a God of justice and righteousness and, therefore, God is concerned about justice. Consequently, we can make our appeal to Him when there is injustice in the land, or Christians suffer unfairly.

CHRISTIANS & HUMAN RIGHTS

We have seen many cases in Britain where Christians have been treated unfairly. Lillian Ladele, who was a registrar before civil partnerships came into being, was forced out of her job because she was not happy about officiating in civil partnerships. The owners of a Christian guesthouse in Cornwall were fined for not allowing two homosexual men to share a double room although the guesthouse website clearly stated that only married couples could book a double room.

These are two examples among many which one could cite. Those were not just and righteous verdicts. It is right to protest at such injustice and to pray that such wrongs might be righted. I notice, however, that even in Israel's theocracy justice was not always upheld as we have already seen. Habakkuk complained: *“justice is never upheld, for the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted”* (Habakkuk 1:4). When Habakkuk complained about violence God informed him that the violent Chaldeans (Babylonians) would occupy the land. That was God's judgement on a sinful nation.

We can go further and recognise that in one sense we Christians have no rights. We have surrendered our lives fully to the Lord. All Jesus could promise was that in the world we would have tribulation. It's almost as if we live on a different planet, as Christians have different standards and live by the law of God while at the same time trying to respect the law of the land. The first Christians very early on came into conflict with the authorities and were told not to preach in the name of Jesus.

For them it was a case of obeying God rather than man. (Acts 5:29) I sense that, in the end, our final appeal and vindication will be by the eternal Judge at the return of the Lord of glory: *"Shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:7,8). Perhaps it is this last matter that we, as believers, need to consider most of all. Clearly the emphasis of the parable is not so much on justice, but on the need to pray that we may not lose heart – see v1.

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

What about justice for the Palestinians? There are two issues here. First of all, one of the things that occupies the minds of some 'Christians in the occupied territories' is the theology known as liberation theology. Here salvation is seen to be deliverance from oppressive regimes. It was prevalent in South Africa and parts of South America. That finds no place in Scrip-

ture. Salvation is deliverance from sin, the power of the evil one, and hell. Jesus never promised deliverance from the oppression of Rome, rather that the Jews should *"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's"* (Matthew 22:21). So liberation theology should find no place in the mind of the true Palestinian believer.

Secondly, the crunch issue is whose land is it? The answer to that is God's as indeed the whole earth belongs to Him. Yet we note that God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham to give it to him and his descendants as we can see in Genesis 17:7f. Circumcision was given as a sign of the covenant regarding the land. Ishmael is ruled out of this covenant and when it is repeated to Isaac and Jacob, Esau is excluded. Clearly, it is given to the descendants of Israel not to the Arabs. We must never forget, however, that God has purposes for them too, but the promise of the land was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as an eternal covenant. The question of the land has been settled in perpetuity by heaven.

THE WEST BANK & GAZA

The question comes: what about the 'West Bank' and Gaza? It rightly belongs to Israel. It was given originally as literally "the Promised Land". In 1922 the League of Nations gave exactly the same land to the Jews as their homeland as the Israelites seized from the Canaanites. In 1967, Israel occupied exactly the same territory in the Six Day War. So three times over it has been given to them, although Britain under the Balfour Declaration

also gave the land which now comprises modern Jordan. That, however, did not have the weight of an international agreement as the 1922 League of Nations decision. It seems to me that

God has confirmed who should occupy the land. The problem for Israel, however, arises if the Palestinian people are included in Israel proper, then because of the population and their future growth, the Arabs would outnumber the Jews. It seems to me that only God has the answer to this problem, but we cannot overlook it.

What about the issue of Palestinian rights and justice? Do they not have rights? Yes, they do. We have to say in many ways they are suffering as a result of the conflict. Border check points and restrictions are a cause of frustration and considerable inconvenience. In places, the fence or wall, as it is referred to, has been built on 'disputed land', but it would never have been built, nor would some of the restrictions been put in place had it not been for suicide bombers coming into Israel.

PROPER CARE FOR STRANGERS

The Old Testament does teach that the Jews must treat the alien amongst them with kindness and generosity. Israel often treats the Palestinians in Israeli hospitals, but if these two peoples could live at peace then there could be so much more in mutual respect, help and kindness. The major problem is Islam whose theology wants not simply to wipe Israel off the map, but to wipe the Jews off the face of the earth! However, we should remember to pray for the Palestinians

that Israel will treat them fairly but wisely, considering Israel's own security. We need to pray that the Palestinians will eventually be delivered from Islam and find faith in Christ.

What about the Palestinian's right to the land? We cannot, as believers in God's Word, accept that they have any part of the so called West Bank or Gaza. What bothers me is that a conference, known as 'Christ at the checkpoint', has encouraged Palestinian Christians to embrace Liberation Theology and their right to the land. Both are false! Unfortunately, people like Stephen Sizer and others are now taking their viewpoint to evangelical Christians in the USA.

Recently, a lady shared with me how one opponent of Israel had been leading a Bible Study. He took his Bible and tore it in half and said you don't need that half (the Old Testament). I am not surprised that this man, therefore, has no understanding as to whose land it is. We cannot abrogate the promise of God by removing the sacred page. It stands in perpetuity! It was an everlasting covenant! God is bringing the Jews back to the land not simply to keep covenant, but to reveal Himself to them as is so clear in [Ezekiel 36](#).

Let me try to sum up. God is a God of justice, so we can appeal to Him for justice. We should bear that in mind for the Palestinians, but in particular that true Christians among them might understand God's purposes. We need to remember, especially God's prophetic word in viewing all these matters. There is a place for human

sympathy for both the Palestinian and Israeli people in the problems which they face, but in the end the Word of God is our guide.