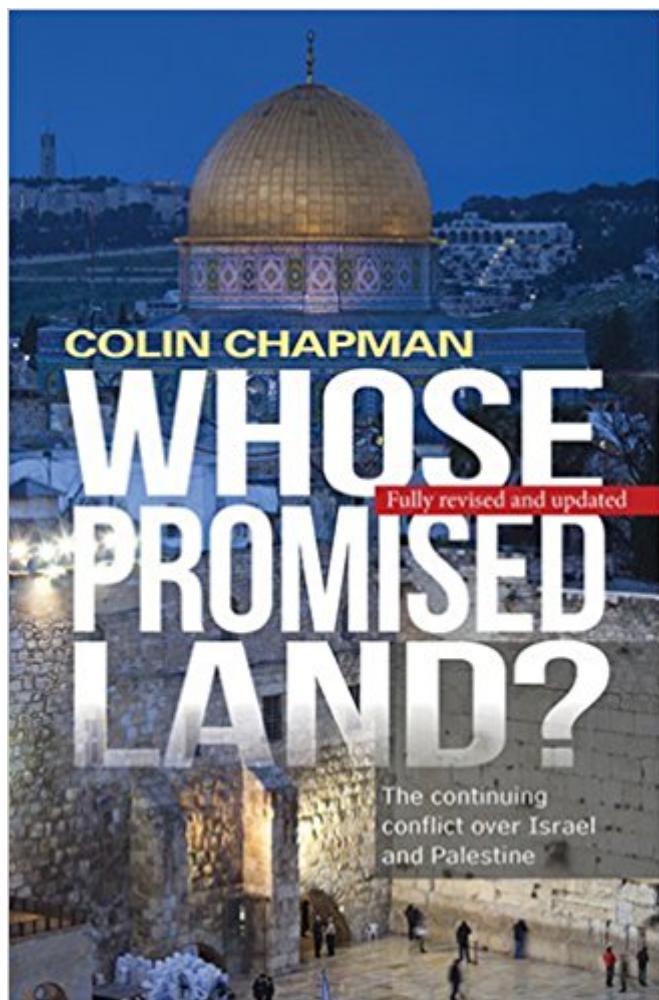


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Whose Promised Land?: The Continuing Crisis Over Israel And Palestine



Synopsis

A new and fully updated edition includes the history of the area since 9/11, the impact of the Gulf wars, the building of the security wall, and the increased importance of Hamas. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has profoundly affected the Middle East for almost 70 years, and shows no sign of ending. It remains a huge political and humanitarian problem. Writing from the perspective of someone who has lived and worked in the Middle East at various times since 1968, the author explains the roots of the problem and outlines the arguments of the main parties involved. He also explores legitimate and illegitimate ways of using the Bible in relation to the conflict.

Book Information

Paperback: 464 pages

Publisher: Lion Hudson; 5th Revised ed. edition (December 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0745970257

ISBN-13: 978-0745970257

Product Dimensions: 3.8 x 1.4 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #330,859 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #289 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Middle East #398 in Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine #650 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Middle Eastern

Customer Reviews

"Highly illuminating and gives an excellent analysis (with thought-provoking questions) of both sides of the problem." — Christianity Today

Colin Chapman is a former lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon. He is the author of Christianity on Trial, The Case for Christianity, and Islam and the West: Conflict, Coexistence or Conversion.

The first edition of Whose Promised Land? came out in 1983, and numerous revised versions have followed. Colin Chapman has now brought it up to date again with this 2015 revision. I know of no

book that covers all of the issues involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in such a comprehensive fashion. In Part 1, the author begins by tracing the history of the land starting with Abraham and running through the Gaza War of 2014. He follows that history with commentary from various sources. By extensively quoting many writers Chapman enables the reader to understand how Zionists, Arabs, Israelis, Palestinians, and other Jews view the conflict. He then concludes this part by adding an entirely new chapter on the crucial issues that need to be addressed today. What about Israel's occupation of the West Bank? What about Gaza? What happened to the peace process? Is the one-state or two-state solution to be preferred? Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic? What is the role of Islam? And why do Christians have such different responses? In the second part of the book, Chapman takes up Biblical issues. What is the Old Testament's teaching about the land? How does the New Testament approach the same subject? And what does the Bible teach about truth, justice, suffering, repentance, and reconciliation? Two appendices to the book take a careful look at the issue of Bible prophecy and how it should be interpreted. Part 3 builds on the two previous parts by looking at areas where hope for some kind of resolution might be discovered. He explores present-day Zionism, Christian Zionism, Islam, and international politics. American evangelicals will find his discussion of Christian Zionism and the role of the United States to be particularly thought-provoking. Chapman wraps up with fifteen pages that summarize the conclusions that he has reached. This analysis by someone who has lived in the Middle East for many years and who has carefully studied all the facets of the conflict is worth the price of the book by itself. Any Christian who wants to learn more about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot find a better place to go than with this latest edition of *Whose Promised Land?* The sober and calm spirit of the book, the breadth of research behind it, the comprehensive nature of its coverage, and the examination of the pertinent issues make it an indispensable resource toward forming a Christian perspective on the subject.

For numerous reasons I have during the past fifty years studied issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My library contains already a long shelf-full of books on the subject. This one is, without doubt, the most complete, the most objective and the most practical of those books. It is not a book to read in a week and put away. It is a study, a reference, a companion whenever we need to think again about this problem. Its organization enables us to focus, one at a time, on the various aspects of a complex situation. Part One: Understanding the History Chapter 1: The Land in History Step by step this chapter relates the bare facts from Abraham to the end of the Gaza war in August, 2014, with maps to show on-the-ground changes. Then the chapter concludes with

alternating statements, Jewish and Arab, interpreting these facts. At this point, the reader will begin to see the two narratives that live side by side, each based on some truth, while appearing to contradict the other.

Chapter 2: The Seeds of Conflict Chapman uses many voices (calling them witnesses), quoting historians, politicians, princes, soldiers, diplomats, poets, journalists, Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Christians, Zionists, American and British leaders to tell a story of how one group of homeless and persecuted people aspired to find a safe home by taking a land which their ancestors believed had been promised to them by God. That land was already occupied and had for 13 centuries been the home of another people group. These many voices provide depth and richness to this study. The reader begins to see the complexity of the issues, the multitude of players, the conflicting hopes, the many errors and wrongs by the Jews, the Arabs and western countries that created an ongoing, seemingly unsolvable conflict.

In the conclusion to this chapter Chapman identifies ten instigating factors or complicating roles which must be recognized.

Chapter 3: Critical Issues Today Chapter three raises the questions that plague us now and must be answered if there is to be peace in the Middle East. Most of these questions are political, such as: can a country be both Jewish and democratic? And what are the rights of refugees? The final critical issue involves different Christian responses to Zionism and Israel.

Part Two: Interpreting the Bible For both Christians and Jews and perhaps all religious people this section is essential. Chapters 4 and 5 give us the significance and status of the land before the coming of Christ and after Christ. These chapters are especially important to American Christian readers, because our interpretations of scripture and our resulting attitudes have been a major factor influencing the course of events.

In Chapter 6 Chapman deals with the spiritual dimensions of the problem, bringing out biblical themes directly relevant to Jewish relationship to the land and its people, balancing the promises to Abraham and his offspring with the requirements of God’s law. This clarifies the obligations and ethics of the Jews as God’s people and, at the same time, speaks profoundly to Christians in ways that are applicable to conflict over the Holy Land and other life circumstances. Consider this quote from Denys Baly: “Repentance is not merely an act: it is an attitude of mind. It is a passion for the truth, an urgent desire to know the worst and the best, a readiness to begin again in a new way, a constantly proceeding examination of one’s way of life and with it all an ever remade decision to put right what is wrong.” Chapman not only reminds us of helpful scriptures but in one instance rewrites a story from the life of Jesus to give us a modern version, helping us to see the wisdom of objectivity. This clarifies a Christian duty to find the underlying issues of the problem and have something to say to every party in the conflict. He enables us to see the devastating truth that our

prejudices are an obstacle to peace. Using again the technique of listening to many voices, the author leads us toward the application of prophetic concerns for justice, the meaning and relevance of the Suffering Servant and Jewish-Gentile relations in the land before and after Jesus. At the close of this section, Chapman draws eleven conclusions, all guiding principles based on biblical truths. Part Three: Finding Ways Forward Chapter 7: Realities and Possibilities Seeking grounds for optimism, Chapman delineates (as always through quotes from a broad spectrum of thinkers) the ideological and theological foundations that are producing perpetual strife. He exposes assumptions, failures, weaknesses, tragedies and hopeless dreams. He challenges all players to see the viewpoint of the other, accept the flaws in their own thinking and to find openings and motivation for coming together. Conclusion: Whose Land? Until this final chapter the reader has heard the opinion of everyone but Colin Chapman. He has enabled us to hear a multitude of voices before telling where he has arrived after considering all of the expressed facts and opinions. By this time readers will know that this is a scholarly and spiritual conclusion. To reveal here those conclusions would be like reviewing a murder mystery and announcing the name of the guilty character. But this reviewer can assure the reader that the author's conclusions are firmly based on all the preceding content and that you and I, thinking citizens of the world, are part of the solution to a problem that has already produced a multi-faceted catastrophe for the world and has the potential for much more. Few will agree with every point; all will be informed and challenged. If we have the courage to respond, the cause of understanding and peace will be served.

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