

# WHOSE PROMISED LAND

## Questions For Discussion

### Episode 1 The Bible and Politics

1. How much do you already know about the background to this conflict? How have you picked up this information and these ideas - from your parents, friends, church teaching, the media, books, travel, or...?
  2. Do you begin with a bias in favour of one side rather than the other? If so, why?
  3. How easy do you find it to balance history and politics with the Bible and theology in relation to this conflict?
  4. Where do you think is the best place to begin? Does it matter where we begin, provided there is a constant interaction between our understanding of the Bible and our understanding of history and politics?
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### Episode 2 The Promise of the Land

1. What are the four strands of the covenant that God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 and 17:1-8)?
  2. Is the promise of the Land in a different category from the promise about the nation, the covenant relationship and the blessing? Or are all the strands related to each other in such a way that the Christian interpretation of each one is linked to the interpretation of the others? shua's conquest today?
  3. What are the special problems for Christians in reading and interpreting the story of Joshua's conquest today?
  4. If Jesus is seen in the New Testament as 'the new Joshua', how should this affect the way Christians think about the story of Joshua's conquest today?
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### Episode 3 The Land in the Old Testament

1. Why did the Exile create such a problem for the Jewish people?
2. How did the prophets help people to cope with their disappointment and despair? How did they explain why God had allowed the Exile? What hopes did they hold out for the future?
3. Is it right for Christians to believe that the return of Jews to the Land in the 19th and 20th centuries should be seen as a further fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies about a return from Exile in Babylon?

## **Episode 4 Jesus and the Land**

1. What were the Jews hoping for at the time of Jesus? How did they describe their hopes and longings for the future? What was the place of the Land in these hopes?
  2. What does Jesus have to say about the Land? If the only clear references to the Land are Matthew 5: 5 and the predictions about judgment on Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of Man, how do we explain this comparative silence?
  3. Luke 21:24 is an important text in the discussion about the fulfilment of prophecy. Is it appropriate to relate it to the recapture of Jerusalem by the Jews in the war of 1967? Does the Old Testament background in Isaiah 10:12-14 suggest another interpretation?
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## **Episode 5 The Turning Point**

1. What were the ideas in the minds of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus about what Jesus was going to achieve? How did Jesus respond to their disappointment? What new ideas did he try to teach them about what he as the Messiah had actually achieved?
  2. What did the disciples understand about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel when they put their question to Jesus? How did Jesus respond to their hopes and expectations? Did he accept the assumptions underlying their question or did he challenge them? Which of the two interpretations of Acts 1:7-8 seems more convincing?
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## **Episode 6 The Apostles and the Land**

1. Is there any suggestion that Peter, John, Luke and Paul continued to look forward to the establishment of a Jewish state as the fulfilment of Jewish hopes based on the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament? If they didn't, how did the coming of Jesus force them to reinterpret these hopes?
  2. Is there a danger of building an argument on silence? Could it be that the Apostles didn't write about the Land only because they assumed that the Old Testament promises and prophecies were still valid and would one day be fulfilled literally? Or does their use of ideas associated with the Land show that they had begun to understand these promises and prophecies in a new way?
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## **Episode 7 The True Victims**

1. Is there anything new to you or anything that is surprising or shocking in this survey of the events leading up to the establishment of Israel?
2. If so, is it related to the basic facts of what happened, or the different interpretations of these facts by both sides?

3. Does this seem to be a fair survey of the history? Is it a fair summary of the way that Jews and Arabs interpret the history?
  4. Will it ever be possible to know 'what really happened'? Or do we have to be content with listening to both sides and trying to work out a balance between the two interpretations of the same events?
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### **Episode 8 Israel**

1. Why was the War of 1967 so important? Why was it so significant for Israel?
  2. What was UN Resolution 242, and why do the Palestinians constantly refer to it?
  3. What has Israel done on the West Bank since 1967? How does Israel justify its actions? What were the feelings of the Palestinians which led to the Intifada in 1987?
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### **Episode 9 Intifada**

1. What was the significance of the first Intifada beginning in 1987, and the second Intifada in 2000?
  2. What are the reasons given by Israel for its continued occupation of the West Bank?
  3. Is it possible to sum up what is the basic political problem at the heart of the conflict at the present time?
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### **Episode 10 How to Interpret Prophecy?**

1. Why is the passion for truth so important in dealing with this conflict?
2. What are the demands of justice - both for Jews and Arabs and all who are involved in this conflict?
3. What was God's ultimate goal in choosing Abraham and his descendants?
4. Can Paul's words in Romans 9 - 11 be related to anti-semitism in the modern world? If so, how?
5. Could there still be reconciliation between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs? Why is it important for Christians to hope and work for reconciliation in this conflict?

## **Episode 11 Israel and the Church**

1. Why is it important to define our understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church?
  2. What is the Dispensationalist understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church?
  3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
  4. How does Covenant Theology understand this relationship? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
  5. How does this discussion affect the way Christians think about the Jewish people and the state of Israel today?
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## **Episode 12 A Biblical Response**

1. How should Christians today interpret Isaiah's prophecy about the highway linking Egypt and Assyria (Isaiah 19:23-25)?
  2. How should Christians today understand the Old Testament visions about water flowing from the Temple in Jerusalem down to the Dead Sea (e.g. Ezekiel 47:1-12)? Should they be understood literally, or is there another way of interpreting them?
  3. Is it possible to summarize any basic principles to determine the way in which we interpret Old Testament prophecy?
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## **Episode 13 A Literal Interpretation**

1. What is the reason for insisting on a literal interpretation of everything in the Bible?
2. How do the writers of the New Testament interpret these important ideas in the Old Testament concerning the promise about David's descendants, the Temple and the Aaronic priesthood? Could these be described as literal interpretations? If not, what does this show about the way Christians should understand the Old Testament?