

Peace in Middle East appears impossible

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Call me a dreamer but I believe that there will be peace in the Middle East. Lest you think that I am proclaiming "peace, peace" when there is no peace, I believe that there will *ultimately* be peace in the Middle East.

Before we examine the factors that will bring about peace, let's look at some factors that create conflict in the Middle East.

Notice the following three factors.

Family conflict

Conflict in the Middle East can be traced back to a famous family.

God promised national blessings through Abraham (called Abram at that time) and his family (Genesis 12:1-3).

After Sarah (called Sarai at that time) convinced Abraham to father a child with Hagar (Genesis 16:2-3), God gave Abraham a prophecy about the child, Ishmael (verses 11-12).

When Abraham later had a discussion with God about the promises coming through Ishmael (Genesis 17:18), God told about the coming birth of Isaac (verse 19).

God told Abraham that the seed of Ishmael would become great (Genesis 17:20), but that the covenant would be established with the seed of Isaac (verse 21).

Hence, much of the conflict in the Middle East goes all the way back to the promises made to Abraham and to his children.

Territorial rights

When we look at the history of war, we can see that many battles among nations involve ownership of land and territory.

Let's go back to the time when Jephthah battled the Ammonites.

In Judges 11:12 Jephthah sent messengers to the king of Ammon and asked: "Why are you trying to start a war?"

In verse 13 the king replied: "Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt."

In verses 14-22 Jephthah gave the history about how the Israelites had avoided Moab and Ammon and about how they ended up with the Amorite land.

In verse 26 Jephthah stated: "For 300 years, Israelites have been living in Heshbon, Aroer and the nearby towns along the Arnon River gorge. If the land really belonged to you Ammonites, why did you wait so long to try to get it back?"

People have a long memory when it comes to their claim of owning land.

Fighting for God

In the same account about Jephthah and the king of Ammon, we see another important reason for conflict.

In Judges 11:23 Jephthah told the king of Ammon:

"The LORD God of Israel helped His nation get rid of the Amorites and take their land. Now do you think you are going to take over that same territory?"

In verse 24 Jephthah continued: "If Chemosh your god takes over a country and gives it to you, don't you have a right to it? If the LORD takes over a country and gives it to us, the land is ours."

When nations feel that their God is involved in their fighting, they are committed and zealous.

Solution is coming

By recognizing these three factors that are creating conflict in the Middle East, we can see why this problem is not likely to go away soon. In fact, the conflict is not likely to go away until Jesus Christ returns.

- God (through Jesus Christ) will bridge the gap between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac.
- God (through Jesus Christ) will establish the territorial rights and privileges of all people.
- God (through Jesus Christ) will assert His supremacy and sovereignty.

After a lifetime of conflict in the Middle East, there will finally be peace.