

Response to the 'Inheritance of Abraham Report'

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In light of the recent Church of Scotland's decision to accept the appalling and unscriptural 'Inheritance of Abraham Report' The Church at Stirling wishes to express their continued support for the Jewish communities here in Scotland and across the World and for the Nation of Israel and total disagreement with the Report. As a Bible believing Church, the Nation of Israel is important to us because we believe that the Scriptures teach that Israel remains important to God. We believe that if something is important to God that it should also be important to those who say that they believe and follow Him. For the Church at Stirling therefore, we continue to support and do good to the Nation of Israel and her people as an expression of our faith and trust in Him. We would also like to publically state that there are many Christians, Churches and organisations in Scotland, who have serious concerns both about the content and the general approach taken in this report, and that we remain completely committed to holding out our hand of friendship and support to the Jewish communities here in Scotland and around the world. We continue to pray for The Church of Scotland and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the questions raised in this response.

There are several key points in particular to address.

**1)** Overall this report reads as deeply flawed and extremely biased. The report is deeply biased in its approach and there are serious concerns about the manner in which it has been compiled. There was no interaction with the Jewish community in Scotland in it's compilation nor any effort to seek out and address a differing perspective in attempt to bring balance. The conclusion is almost inevitable from its introduction as being based on earlier reports (Kairos Palestine document) that have been written from the same biased perspective with little to no contextual Scriptural reference.

**2)** With inevitable conclusions the attempt of this report to discuss the three main ways of understanding the Biblical promises' about the land reads at face value to be an academically honest discussion but with the conclusion inevitable from the presuppositions in the introduction there can be no way that this is unbiased. Rather the discussion of the three opinions seems to have only been put in to create a perception of unbiased, impartiality and the false desire to discuss. When considering these points in detail the bias becomes obvious for example when concluding opinion 1 (land as a territorial guarantee) with a list of questions. Of course there are questions and there should remain questions and debate about all of this - indeed this report is quoted as being 'latest reflections on the questions that need to be faced'. But surely in the pursuit of a balanced approach of all the three options one might anticipate a list of questions that follow each statement and theological understanding. However, what we find is this is the only option to have these questions asked.

### **Why is this?**

The lack of questions associated with option two and three demonstrate explicitly the undeniable bias attached to the process of completing this report.

**3)** The approach to understanding Scripture is entirely inconsistent and problematic. On one hand the report states that thoughts on Palestine are not able to be interpreted from the New Testament Scriptures because it is a post-biblical concept. However, the same filter is not used in addressing Zionism. For example under the criticism of Zionism (option 1) paragraph 4 there is a criticism of our theology being affected in the 18th and 19th Centuries by the "*mores of the colonial and imperial age that pervaded all aspects of life including the Church of Scotland*"

Surely if a 'colonial and imperial age filter' is the wrong filter to apply to scripture then equally a 'post – colonial' or 'post modernism' filter' is also at least equally problematic or an equally wrong approach scripture?

### **Why is there this inconsistency?**

Using the wrong filter to interpret scripture leads to all kinds of wrong interpretations and absolutely unscriptural conclusions. For example as seen in the conclusion of 'the Challenge of a New Kingdom' - bottom of page 8, where it reads

*Promises about the land of Israel were never intended to be taken literally, or as applying to a defined geographical territory. They are a way of speaking about how to live under God so that justice and peace reign, the weak and poor are protected, the stranger is included, and all have a share in the community and a contribution to make to it. The 'promised land' in the Bible is not a place, so much as a metaphor of how things ought to be among the people of God. This 'promised land' can be found - or built - anywhere.*

### **'Never'? Does everlasting no longer mean everlasting?**

This report moves one stage further from the theological position that after Jesus the promises made to Abraham and his descendants are not about land anymore to stating that it was never about land!

### **How is this concluded with a Scriptural understanding?**

Ultimately this report and its acceptance has moved the Church of Scotland and its policies ever farther away from the contextual truths about Israel; the land and the Jewish people that can be read in the Scriptures.

The Church of Scotland speaks for approx. 42.4% of the population of Scottish society (2001) with what should be a voice motivated by scriptural love and truth. However, there are questions now to be answered by them as to the scriptural validity of decisions made and expressed now with the acceptance of The Inheritance of Abraham report. It would appear, in an attempt to thwart dwindling attendance figures the Kirk is making decisions and interpreting the Scriptures regarding Israel in attempt to appease a minority group with a particularly aggressive and hate filled voice (see Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign who Rev. Steven Sizer is linked with) rather than standing for harder Biblical truths of literal

translation of the Jewish right to the land of Israel as given by God. Renouncing the Jewish right to the land does not help bring about peace in this situation but clearly shows how far removed the Kirk has become from what the Scriptures teach and clearly state. This is not the vision that the core founder, John Knox held.

**How much further is the Church of Scotland willing to compromise on Scripture?**