

Session 1

Biblical Understanding of the Importance of Land



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Biblical understanding of the importance of land

Why Biblical Teaching for Land Policy Today?

- Proposals for land reform derive from profoundly different ideological frameworks



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Why Biblical Teaching for Land Policy Today?

Judaism, Christianity and Islam – The material world was created good; our material bodies are likewise essentially good since we were designed and created in God's image. Though spoiled by sin and subject to corruption and death, there is the possibility of eventual resurrection and glory.



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Why Biblical Teaching for Land Policy Today?

Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism – the material world and the human body were not the direct creation of the supreme deity, though they emanated from that supreme deity. They were the creation of some lesser god with the result that matter is undesirable, if not positively evil. Human beings should therefore try to escape from the negative pull of the material body by striving on an upward path of spirituality until they enter nirvana



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Why Biblical Teaching for Land Policy Today?

- a source of God's instruction and wisdom
- a moral & relational framework, going beyond economics
- in some respects, compatible with African worldviews on land



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How to apply biblical land teaching today

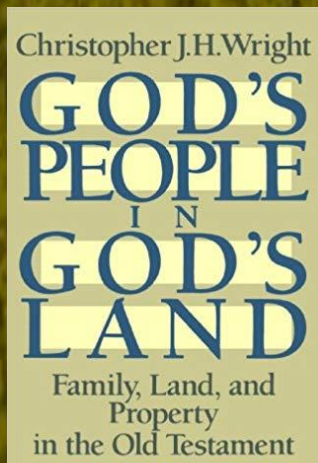
- Understand (overall purpose, specific context, the underlying intention of specific laws)



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The land was not just a neutral stage on which the drama of His people unfolded. Rather, the OT narrative shows that the land was a fundamentally theological entity, and part of Israel's redemption story



Christopher J.H Wright



Biblical understanding of the
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The Land as Divine Gift



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The Land as Divine Gift

The people of Israel were promised a
land of their own by God



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The Land as Divine Gift

- declaration of Israel's dependency on God
- declaration of God's dependability
- proof of the relationship between God and Israel
- the gift of land depended on God's covenant relationship
- generated individual household property rights
- violation of the gift principle - condemned



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The land under divine ownership



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The land under divine ownership

God retained the ultimate right of ownership and therefore moral authority over how it was used

Lev 25:23-24



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The land under divine ownership

23 “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.

24 And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.

Lev 25:23-24 (ESV)



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The land under divine ownership

All property was therefore ultimately received as a gift

Gen 17:8; Ex 20:2-3; Dt 8:7-10



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The land under divine ownership

Illegal to sell food grown on land to make a profit

³⁷ You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit

Leviticus 25:37



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The land as spiritual thermometer



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The land as spiritual thermometer

If the people obeyed the covenant and were careful to follow what the Lord had commanded, they could expect the crops of their land, and the livestock to be fruitful and blessed

Leviticus 25:18, 19; Dt 28:1-6



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The land as spiritual thermometer

Famine and pestilence on the land were a sure sign of God's judgement

e.g. Amos 4:7-10; Mal 3:6-12



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The land as spiritual thermometer

**Rebellion against the Lord eventually led
to Israel being ejected from the land**

Jeremiah 25:4-11



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Jubilee principles of rural land ownership



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Jubilee Year

- Personal Liberty for both master and servants
- Restitution of property (overshadowing “in the restoring of all that which in the course of time was perverted by man's sin”)
- Rest and living simply



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Jubilee principles of rural land ownership

- God is the ultimate owner of all land - **Lev 25:23**
- the ideal of every family having long-term roots in land - **Lev 25:8-11, cf 1 Kings 21:1-3**
- the goal of 'land equity' between ethnic groups and between extended families - **Num 33:54**



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Jubilee principles of rural land ownership

- importance of maintaining 'co-location' of relatives (**Lev 25:35-37**)
- the ideal of financially independent secure households (e.g. **Micah 4:4**)



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Jubilee principles of urban land



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Jubilee principles of urban land

freehold can be sold on a
permanent basis

Lev 25:29-31



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Reflection and Discussion



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