

WAS JESUS A PALESTINIAN?

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This past week, the New York Times and Ilhan Omar, the Democrat Party's congresswoman made a statement saying that Jesus was a Palestinian.

To be fair the NYT later issued a correction that said:

“Correction: April 26, 2019

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to Jesus’s background. While he lived in an

area that later came to be known as Palestine, Jesus was a Jew who was born in Bethlehem.

Read the full article here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/19/reader-center/jesus-images.html>.

Omar is not the first to make such a claim, in the past, Palestinian leaders such as Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas and others in the Arab world have made the same statement.

Most of us would dismiss such statements as foolish ramblings and inconsequential but actually there is something more behind it.

A World at War

Most of us don't realize it but we are living in a war zone; the Bible tells us so:

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12 NKJV)

This tells us that there is a war going on that we cannot see because it happens in the spiritual realm, it says we are fighting against “powers and rulers of this age”. This means it is more than just the devil bring difficulties into our personal lives it far greater and more strategic than the individual believer, even individual churches or denominations. It is a war for the mind-set of people. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says that our weapons are mighty to the tearing down of arguments that holds itself against the knowledge of Christ. Thus the battlefield is the minds of people. This is very evident today where in some places if a person born physically male believes he is actually a female he/she can use the women's restroom, compete in sports against women etc. As they say “it's all in the mind”.

Our adversary, Ha Satan as he is known in Hebrew, or Satan in English has only one weapon, a weapon he has used since he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden; lies. Jesus himself called him the father of lies (John 8:44). So fake news and lies are his domain and the weapons he uses to control the world.

So what is the significance of this statement?

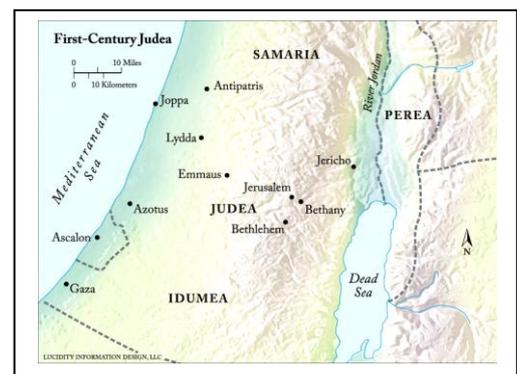
1. It causes people to doubt the accuracy of the Bible. Some believers who are not well grounded in the Bible will begin to doubt its authenticity and accuracy because the statement seem true since the Palestinians claim that they are native to the land.
2. It is aimed at separating the person of Jesus from Israel and thereby the church from her roots in Israel, because if Jesus was Palestinian as they claim then we today have no connection with the land and the people of Israel. At the same time it seeks to undermine the church's support for Israel.
3. By changing the identity of Jesus they try to validate their claim to the land implying that they have been there at least two thousand years.

The History of Palestine

Ancient History

There is a theology that has been taught since the second century by our early church fathers that says that since Israel rejected Christ, God is finished with them and no longer has a place for them in the redemption of the world. It is called "Replacement Theology". It is wrong, the Apostle Paul himself declared that God still loves the Jewish people and they have not lost their calling (Romans 11:25-30). However replacement theology has so impacted the church that many Bibles have maps at the back with the title "Palestine in Jesus' Day" or "First Century Palestine" or something similar. This is not true; there never was a Palestine in Jesus Day!

The land that Jesus lived in, was called Judea, a province of the Roman Empire. Pontius Pilate was appointed by the Emperor Tiberias, as governor of that province. (Luke 3:1) You may notice in the map in the column on the left that Bethlehem and Jerusalem were all part of that province.



Things changed after the Great Revolt of 70 AD when Jewish zealots tried to free Israel from Roman rule. Roman army crushed the rebellion, destroyed the temple and evicted the Jews from Jerusalem. Then after a second rebellion, called the Bar Kochbah rebellion, from 132-136 AD the Jews were chased out of the land. Then the Romans renamed Jerusalem; Aelia Capitolina and the land was renamed "Syria Philistina" after the ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines who had disappeared since the days of King David. It also must be noted that that the Philistines were invaders who came from Greece and settled in South Western Judea.

Christians, particularly preachers and teachers of the Bible need to be careful and not use this term which is historically and Biblically incorrect.

Modern History

Throughout history until 1988 there was never a state in the world called "Palestine". In November 1988 Yasser Arafat unilaterally declared it. The people living in the land when Israel was given statehood in 1948 were Arabs, not "Palestinians". Jerusalem and other parts of the land were controlled by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In fact until today, the Temple Mount area is controlled by the Jordanian Mufti.

The fact that there was no state called Palestinian is easily proven. In all the wars that Israel fought, they never faced a Palestinian army:

In 1948, the War of Independence; Israel fought against Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq

In 1967, the Six Day War; Israel fought against Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

In 1973, the Yom Kippur War; Israel fought against Egypt and Syria.

In all these wars there were fighters who called themselves Palestinians but not an official Palestinian army because there was no state called Palestine.

Therefore there is no way that Jesus could have been Palestinian. Now let's turn to Jesus.

The "Jewishness" of Jesus.

Let us take a look at Jesus' life and see whether this claim is true.

He was born in Bethlehem, now the Palestinians would say "aha!" because Bethlehem today is under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Bible history however tells us something different.

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, **Though you are little among the thousands of Judah**, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me **The One to be Ruler in Israel**, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2 NKJV)*

The prophet describes Bethlehem as being part of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, he also says that the one who is coming, Messiah, will be ruler of Israel. Nowhere is Palestine mentioned here.

The gospel of Matthew tells us that he was a descendant of King David, the greatest king of Israel, in fact Matthew traces His lineage back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Palestinians of today are Arabs who are descendants of Ishmael.

Jesus because He was/is Jewish regularly went to synagogue on the Sabbath or Shabbat (Luke 4:16). In this chapter we also see that Jesus was given the scroll to read and exhort from the reading, this was an honour given to visiting teachers and only to Jewish teachers. Had he not been Jewish they would not have extended that honour to him. In fact if one reads the gospels we find Jesus regularly in the synagogues on Shabbat, sometimes challenging the Pahrisees.

We also see in the gospels that he kept the Feasts of the Lord; we see him in Jerusalem many time in the gospel at Passover, in fact He and the disciples were observing the Passover when they had the Last Supper. We also see Him at the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7).

When He was crucified, Pontius Pilate declared that He was Jewish by placing a sign over his head saying "King of the Jews".

Finally, the church was born Jewish. Our "parents" are Jewish:

*"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to **Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you**; (Isaiah 51:1-2 NKJV)*

Isaiah speaks to people who follow righteousness and seek the Lord, i.e. Christians saying Abraham is our father and Sarah our mother.

All the disciples were Jewish, particularly from Galilee (Acts 1:11, 2:7)

All those who heard the disciples at Pentecost were Jews (Acts 2:5) thus the first church was Jewish.

Apostle Paul says that Jesus broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile and made us one in Him. (Ephesians 2:11-16).

Just as in a human family we are not given a choice as to who our siblings will be, similarly in God's family we were not given a choice. God bound us with Israel and though some are still astray, we pray for the day when like the prodigal they will return.

So finally, remember that God has grafted us not into a Palestinian tree, but a Jewish Olive tree, we get our nourishment from that tree, i.e. The Word of God. Don't allow the world to deceive you.

God bless you