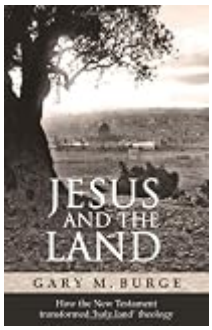
JESUS AND THE LAND

Posted on June 27, 2010 by Eddie

Category: Reviews



Gary M. Burge's Jesus and the Land: How the New Testament transformed 'holy land' theology is a short book, only 130 or so pages, but its value far outweighs its size. This is a truly excellent book and one which anyone who is interested in questions about the political and theological status of the land of Israel.

A recurring theme of this blog is that we need to read the whole of the Bible, including the Old Testament, if we are to truly understand the nature of God's mission to the world. Burge makes the opposite point that we need to take a serious look at the New Testament if we are to understand the place of the land of Israel in Biblical theology. The book consists of eight thorough, but easy to read chapters which take a detailed look at the background to the New Testament before examining what the main authors have to say about the land. The chapters are:

1. The biblical heritage
2. Diaspora Judaism and the land
3. Jesus and the land
4. The Fourth Gospel and the land
5. The book of Acts and the land
6. Paul and the promises to Abraham
7. Developments beyond Paul
8. Land, theology and the church

The last paragraph of the book is worth citing in its entirety.

> *When Christian theology serves at the behest of political or historical forces in any generation - be it ancient crusades, religiously fueled nationalism, or the call of Christian Zionists - it loses its supreme mission in the world. Such theologies immediately neglect he centrality of what has transpired in Christ, they compete the ideologies of the world that strive for power and control, and finally the become unfaithful to their Lord. The drama and success of the New Testament message is that it was able to speak a prophetic word in a world little different from our own. Amidst calls to reclaim holy land, to reconquer territory in the name of God, to assume religious privileges for one tribe and not another, the New Testament says: No. Jesus called for faithfulness that abandoned such things, that envisioned a different era, a different kingdom, where old territorial claims backed by religious privilege were no more.*

This book provides an excellent, biblically based antidote to much of the inadequate teaching about the place of the land of Israel in history and prophecy which is so common in the Christian world

today.