

Theological response to the Evangelical Fellowship of Honduras

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I have read the statement on the website of [Confraternidad Evangelica de Honduras](#) (Jan. 24 2019) celebrating the trilateral agreement between Israel, US, and Honduras, and I propose the following response to it. I was invited to give a theological response to it as a Palestinian, from a theological Christ-centered position.

The only Bible verse quoted in the Statement (the promises to Abraham) talks of God's promises to Abraham that he would make him a great nation through which all the nations of the world would be blessed, and states that God will "bless those who bless thee". That text poses three questions:

1. Who are the Seed of Abraham today? Who are the inheritors of the promise of blessings given in Genesis to the Father of all believers?
2. What actions contribute or constitute a "Blessing" for the seed of Abraham?
3. What Blessings does God grant to those who bless the seed of Abraham?

The statement on the website implicitly gives the standard Christian Zionist response to all three questions: 1) The modern state of Israel is the inheritor of those promises made in Genesis. 2) Supporting politically the State of Israel against its enemies and voting with it in the United Nations, and cooperating with it at all levels, regardless of the details of those positions is what is needed to obtain the coveted blessing. 3) Material benefits in the form of trade, agriculture, markets, scholarships and progress will flow as enumerated in the Trilateral Agreement.

With all due respect and humility, we would like to offer another, and, we believe, more biblical interpretation of the text:

1. The issue of the Children of Abraham was specifically addressed by Jesus during his time on Earth. He rebuked and rejected those who claimed to be children of Abraham stating that God can make from these stones children for Abraham (Matthew 3:9). He also stated that racial and ethnic bloodlines do not provide any guarantee of God's favor or blessing. Even in the Old Testament, Moses himself was not allowed to enter the Promised Land when he was not fully in harmony with God's will. In John 8:39, Jesus said that "If you are Abraham's children you would be doing the works Abraham". Galatians 3:29 states "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to the promises." In fact, Jesus ran into problems in the synagogue in Nazareth precisely because he rejected the ethnic "special status" of Jews, and stated that God's salvation plan was open to all mankind. "To his own he came and his own received him not, therefore to all those who believed him he gave the power to be children of God, that is those who believed in His name" (John 1:11). In Ephesians 2: 11-13, Paul specifically tells the gentile Christians that they are now, in Christ, the inheritors of the Promises given to Abraham.

More importantly, St. Paul specifically addressed the issue of the "Seed of Abraham" by stating that the Genesis text refers to the seed "in the singular: that is Christ" (Galatians 3: 29). So Jesus, the early apostles and the New Testament itself totally rejects the notion that the Jewish

nation or the biological descendants of Abraham (much less the modern state of Israel) are the inheritors of the promises. It is Jesus, the Seed of Abraham, who is made a great nation, and through Jesus all the nations of the world are blessed. It is no wonder that Christianity today has a community of the People of God from all nations and races coming from the East and West to sit in the bosom of Abraham (Mathew 8:11) . Therefore, on the first issue alone, the statement is biblically incorrect and needs to be reconsidered.

2. It is fully understandable that God's people in Honduras and elsewhere are thirsty for God's blessings. These blessings are obtained by following Jesus' commandments, not by giving unqualified support and allegiance to any earthly kingdom or political structure, including their own. The New Testament has many promises of Blessings that should be sought: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus outlines many of them in the Beatitudes Matthew 5:6-11). He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers", "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (justice)", and "Blessed are you if you are persecuted for the sake of righteousness (justice)". The work that the confederation of Evangelicals in Honduras does on migrants is a perfect example of work that brings God's blessings. We are not called upon to enter into political alliances of convenience for benefits and profits, though that has always been the temptation for Christians throughout the ages. The key to God's blessing is in obedience to his Word, and in walking in faith with him.
3. Out of 75 different references to "Blessings" both in the Old and New Testament, only a few can be seen to refer to blessings for nations or countries in the form of material blessings and victory over the enemies. In the Old Testament, those are also always linked to obedience to God and God's laws, and are combined with threats of withholding blessings for acts of disobedience. In the New Testament, however, there is a different dynamic altogether: Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The central collective body is "the Kingdom of God", not the ethnic "People of Israel". The blessings that are granted therefore tend to be spiritual rather than material. They include the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22) and God's approval for a race well run (2 Timothy 4:7). We long to hear "Blessed are you , good and faithful servant"(Mathew 25:23) .
4. We firmly believe that God's blessing does not come as a *quid pro quo* for political support of one country, as in the countries of the world who bribe, punish, and reward political support, but from obeying God's commandments and having a proper position based on justice and care for the poor and needy and showing God's love and working for peace and justice. Even blessing the Jewish people cannot come at the price of oppressing the Palestinians or denying them rights and equality. It has to be compatible with blessing all the nations of the world, including Palestinians, "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16).

As Palestinian followers of Jesus Christ, we call on our evangelical brothers and sisters in Honduras to carefully study the Bible with us, and to share with us their views before taking positions that may be politically dangerous to us, to the ministry of the Church, and to the general intent of advancing the kingdom of God on Earth.