

41 - Preparation Questions for North Korea

Opening

by Ben Torrey

This sermon explores biblical principles of ownership and their implications for North Korea, encouraging listeners to seek God's answers to questions regarding land claims and ownership.

Duration: 8:23

Scripture: Genesis 1:27, Exodus 20:15, Leviticus 25:23, Deuteronomy 19:14, Proverbs 13:11, Matthew 22:21, Acts 2:44-45

Topics: "North Korea"

Description

In this sermon, Ben Torrey discusses the importance of preparing for the opening of North Korea through the Prepared People Organization. He emphasizes the need to understand the differences in perspective and assumptions between North and South Korea, as well as how to effectively share the Gospel in a way that can be understood. Torrey also highlights the concept of ownership, stating that as God's creations, we belong to Him and should live our lives in obedience to Him. He further explores the teachings of his father, Father Archer Torrey, on Biblical economics, land, and justice, drawing on the understanding of land from economist Henry George and applying Scripture to all areas of life.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey back with you again. Last week I spoke about the Prepared People Organization as a vehicle to prepare for the opening of North Korea, a way for people to band together and think strategically about what to do and what their personal and group response to the opening will be. Tonight I would like to begin a series examining questions that we need to consider as part of that preparation.

Since beginning the Fourth River Project, we have frequently spoken and written about the critical importance of learning all that we can about North Korea. We need to understand the difference in perspective and assumptions between North and South. We need to know how to best share the gospel so that it can be understood.

We need to understand how to build a just and righteous society based on biblical foundations. We need to understand what aspects of current North Korean society and culture we can draw on to express and live the gospel. Anyone acquainted with the teachings of my father, Father Archer Torrey, is well aware of his concern over biblical economics, land, and justice.

My father drew on the 19th century American economist Henry George for his fundamental understanding of land. He then built on that through his study of scripture and his desire to apply scripture to all areas of life. Out of this, he developed his biblical understanding of land and its place in the economics of human society.

His teachings on this are readily available. However, I will explain the concepts briefly, then look at some questions they raise in relation to North Korea. The basic principle concerning ownership is that the maker or enabler of a thing is the owner of that thing.

If someone creates an item through his own effort and skill, that thing belongs to him. If someone pays for an item to be created, it also belongs to him as the enabler, the one providing the resources, the money needed. Even if he didn't actually make it, he is hiring someone else's effort.

This principle, which is expressed in scripture in various places, means that since God made us, we belong to him. As our creator and owner, he has given us freedom to live our lives as we desire, although he wants us to live them in obedience to him. He has also given us principles for organizing our society that we, as his creatures, may thrive.

This basic principle of ownership is extended to us in our society in that whatever a person creates or raises, crops or livestock, belongs to that person. God requires of his covenant people that they give a tenth to him, our tithe. We understand this to be a reminder of his fundamental ownership of us, yet he allows the person to do what he wants with the remainder.

This concept of ownership is the basic principle that supports free market capitalism. The critical factor that takes this concept into a different direction from most capitalistic economics is how it is applied to land. The fundamental principle is that land belongs to its creator, God, and that any value that it gains in the marketplace is the result of collective, as opposed to individual, human effort through the community.

A piece of land that has little value or a low price in the market at one period may acquire a great value expressed by a high price at a later time. The land has not changed, but because of its location in relation to other things, it is considered to be more valuable. For example, when our family first came to Korea back in the 1950s, the land south of the Han River was all farmland divided up among various owners, most of whom lived in small villages.

However, in the years since, the limits of the city of Seoul have moved to encompass this area. Streets have been built, transportation provided, new developments of all sorts carried out, schools and churches created, and so forth. The collective effort of society, not just any one individual.

Now, as we all know, the value of land in this area, Gangnam, has increased greatly, becoming some of the most expensive land in the Seoul area. Because the land belongs to God as creator, and its value derives from society, it should not be owned by individuals. Private ownership of land leads to speculation and artificially elevated land values, with the owner gaining a great benefit by doing nothing except holding his land while he waits for the price to go up.

In the Bible, the land of Israel was distributed by God among the tribes and clans of Israel. It was given to them as an inheritance from God. It could be leased, but not sold permanently.

The modern application of this idea, that the land is given by God to the community, is to recognize that since the value of a piece of land is derived from the community, the community should receive the benefit

of that value through receiving rent for it. Since the government in a democratic society represents the community, it would charge the rent. This is sometimes called a land value tax.

Georgist economists hold that a thoroughgoing land value tax system would eliminate the need for sales taxes, income taxes, or any other type of tax. The collective result of all this would be a strong, healthy, and steadily rising economy with no land speculation that utilized the resources and voluntary efforts of the members of that society in the most efficient and equitable manner. The price of land, its rent or lease rate, would be kept much lower than current land prices because of the elimination of speculation.

The idea that God the Creator owns the land means that individuals, His creatures, are not to own it. To do so would usurp His place. We recognize that God establishes government among men to regulate society.

He has delegated to human government, even when it does not recognize Him, certain of His rights, specifically, in this case, ownership of the land. By applying God's principles, society will benefit greatly. So what does all this mean in relation to North Korea? There are numerous questions that need to be explored to answer that.

For instance, what should those who continue to hold claims to land in North Korea, especially Christian families and churches, do concerning those claims? Should we seek to apply these biblical principles to the land of North Korea? And if so, how should they be applied? Presently, the communist government of North Korea claims to own both the land and all products of individual effort because it does not recognize individual ownership of anything. What is the biblical approach to this situation, and how should we handle it in the future when North Korea opens? These are just a few of the questions to be answered. We also need to think and pray through how God would have us deal with old claims, people being displaced, enabling workers to receive the direct benefit of their efforts, both past and future, and so forth.

What is the just solution to this situation, especially from a biblical perspective? These are questions that God's people need to explore, seeking His answers to them before the doors to North Korea open. These are questions that we need to be working on now. I will leave you with that thought.

Next week, I will be back with more hard questions. For now, good night.

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