

God cares about people, not what you call the West Bank

## **A US House committee will now use the biblical names Judea and Samaria. The point is to frame a political conflict as a religious war.**

by [Fares Abraham](#)

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Century illustration

Brian Mast, the Republican congressman from Florida who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, directed committee staff on February 26 to refer to the West Bank exclusively as Judea and Samaria, according to an internal memo obtained by [Axios](#). While not an official shift in US policy, the directive signals growing support among lawmakers for Israel's annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory. Critics

argue that this shift to biblical language will embolden extremists on both sides and make a negotiated peace even more elusive.

This isn't just about renaming a territory. It's about framing a political conflict as a religious war. It reduces a 76-year conflict to a simplistic battle between good and evil, rather than seeking to understand its true root causes. This is both reckless and delusional. It justifies an illegal occupation and demonizes the victims.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been about land disputes and human rights. But Christian Zionists like Mast are intent on rewriting it as a biblical struggle between God and God's enemies. Once you frame a conflict that way, compromise becomes impossible: How do you negotiate with someone who claims divine entitlement?

You don't. And that's exactly the point.

Mast's directive is not just political posturing. It is a calculated move that weaponizes the Bible for ideological gain, distorting scripture to justify political expansionism. Instead of promoting biblical names, policymakers should be advocating for biblical principles—peace, reconciliation, and justice. If Mast and his allies actually treated the Bible as more than just a political prop, they would be advocating for human dignity, not doubling down on policies that dehumanize a whole population. The Bible is not a political land deed or a justification for nationalist expansionism. Scripture calls us to be peacemakers, not provocateurs; to seek justice, not erase an entire people from their land.

This is the same Brian Mast who stood on the House floor in 2023 and made [this now-infamous statement](#): "I don't think we would so lightly throw around the term 'innocent Nazi civilians' during World War II. It is not a far stretch to say there are very few innocent Palestinian civilians." He said this while blocking humanitarian aid—while doctors in Gaza were performing amputations on children without anesthesia and entire families were being buried under rubble. To Mast, the very idea of innocent Palestinians is apparently offensive. This is the man now lecturing us about biblical history.

Jewish people have the right to live in peace and security in their ancestral homeland, just as Palestinians have the right to dignity and self-determination in theirs. A just peace requires honoring both of these rights—not selectively enforcing one at the expense of the other.

But this brand of religious nationalism isn't just dangerous—it's a theological perversion. The same politicians who claim to champion religious freedom ignore Palestinian Christians who have lived in this land since the time of Christ. Where is their outrage over the destruction of Gaza Baptist Church, where my wife grew up? Where is their concern for Christian families sheltering in Gaza's churches? Where is the outcry over Israel seizing and auctioning off Armenian Church properties in Jerusalem—owned for 1,700 years—over a tax dispute? And where is their alarm over the fact that Christianity is disappearing from the very land where it began?

And what about the Jewish voices they ignore? Because here's another truth Mast refuses to acknowledge: many Jewish Israelis reject this religious-nationalist vision. Organizations like Peace Now, B'Tselem, and Rabbis for Human Rights have warned for years that weaponizing religion to justify occupation threatens Israel's future. Prominent Israeli authors like Amos Oz and David Grossman have called the settler movement a betrayal of Jewish values. Beyond traditional Jewish circles, even many Messianic Jews—who hold both Jewish heritage and faith in Jesus as the Messiah—advocate for reconciliation and coexistence rather than religious nationalism. Yet these voices are drowned out by extremists who define Jewish identity not by faith or ethics but by territorial expansion.

When Israel's leaders assert divine ownership over Palestinian land, it fuels Islamist groups' propaganda, reinforcing their claim that this is not about borders or human rights but a holy war between Islam and the West. This kind of rhetoric strengthens extremists, erodes diplomatic solutions, and makes coexistence more difficult. Mast isn't weakening Hamas—he's strengthening their propaganda, handing them the very talking points they use to recruit and radicalize.

This is not leadership; it's reckless provocation. As followers of Jesus, we must reject religious nationalism and embrace Christ-centered biblical principles. True peace isn't achieved by renaming land or rewriting history—it comes through justice, humility, and the radical love Jesus demonstrated. Until leaders like Mast grasp this, they won't merely be on the wrong side of history. They'll be standing in opposition to the gospel of peace.