

President recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital: "This is a game-changer"

by Bob Vander Plaats

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Many presidents have promised to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but today I and The FAMiLY LEADER applaud President Trump for finally fulfilling the promise. I told Donald Trump to his face that I would both cheer him on when he does right and be a voice of accountability when he does wrong, and today is a day for cheering.

For Jerusalem is the heartbeat of the land of Israel, her designated capital from thousands of years past, and key to the Bible's promises to the Jewish people. Furthermore, there are good reasons the U.S. Congress voted overwhelmingly to recognize Jerusalem as the capital in 1995: We cannot truly honor Israel as a sovereign nation if we deny its choice of capital, and to be afraid to recognize Jerusalem for fear of backlash is only to bow to terror.

Instead, President Trump chose to lead from a position of strength. He made a promise and, in fulfilling it, sent notice to the world that he will do what he says. This alone is a game-changer. His now demonstrated resolve puts both President Trump and the U.S. in an even stronger position for negotiating peace in the future. What's more, it takes the "Jerusalem as capital" chip off the negotiating table, opening the door for more genuine peace talks to commence.

Only a few months ago, I visited a Knesset member in Israel who would enthusiastically support Trump's decision. Yet I also met with the president of Egypt and king of Jordan, who have opposed it over real concerns about how this move will impact the Middle East, where violence and war hang on a hair trigger.

Which is why I would call on all Middle East leaders with a heart for peace to respond to President Trump's bold leadership with bold leadership of their own. I agree with their calls for regional stability and desire to defeat terrorism, but what the Middle East needs most is for its regional and religious leaders to exemplify peace and lead toward it. Those who would seek to do Israel harm need to hear from their own people, their leaders, and their neighbors, calling upon the best of their faith – instead of stirring the worst of humanity – to pave the way for peace.

I don't pretend this will be easy. Doing what's right rarely is. And for Christians like me celebrating today, we must also recognize our calling to have compassion on all people in the region, including the Palestinians. Jesus' love extends to all, and so must ours. So therefore, I encourage us all to pray for Jerusalem, for peace and safety. And to pray for Middle Eastern leaders, that they might lead with courage their people toward peace.

“Pray for the well-being of Jerusalem ... may there be peace within your walls, security within your fortresses” – Psalm 122:6-7.

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