


ISRAEL MY GLORY



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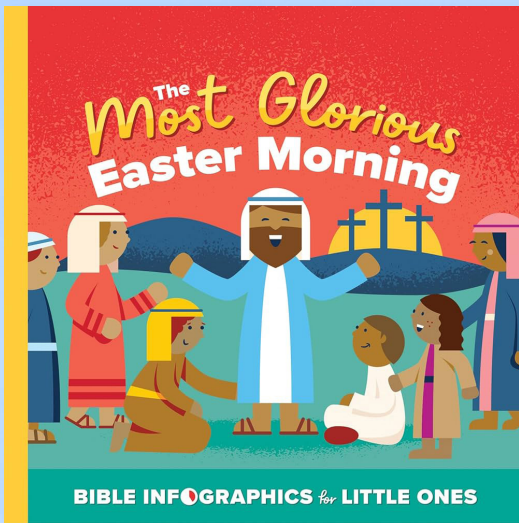
SIN'S REACH, DEPTH, AND REMEDY

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THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN

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THE GREAT FORGIVER

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THE WAY BACK TO GOD

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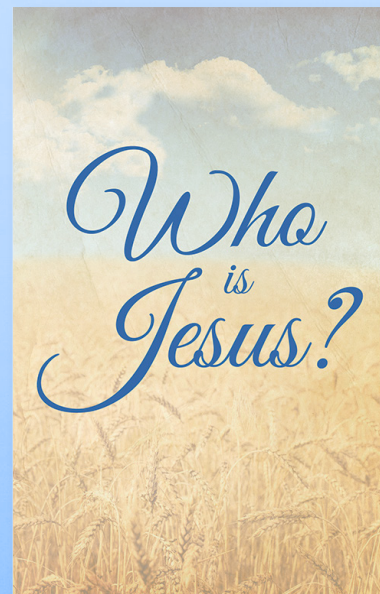
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Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for \$22.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, PO Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0908.

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FROM THE EDITOR

I disobeyed my parents many times as a child. They were habitually gracious in their admonition. But on one occasion, I misbehaved so severely that my father told me I needed a serious punishment.

Having always received gentle correction, I felt terrified when he pulled out a belt to discipline me. In a soft, measured tone, my dad explained what needed to happen.

“You’ve sinned,” he said, “and someone must take the punishment for your sin.”

I was already crying, fearing the pain I deserved. But instead of inflicting pain on me, he handed me the belt. I cried harder when I realized what he was doing. A price had to be paid for my sin; and because he loved me, he was willing to pay it for me despite doing nothing wrong. With few words spoken, my dad taught me a lesson I’ll never forget about sin, atonement, and mercy.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, humanity became infected with the terminal disease of sin. Sin corrupts and destroys, drawing us away from the God who loves us more than we could ever deserve or comprehend. Sin is deep-rooted, and we cannot uproot it ourselves.

But because God lavished His grace and mercy upon us, we have an infallible cure: Jesus Christ, God’s one and only Son. Because Jesus became man, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead, He paid the penalty for our sins. When we believe in Him and accept His gift of eternal life, God counts our faith as righteousness (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 4:5).

God’s gift of saving grace comes by faith, not by our works (Eph. 2:8–9). Without Jesus’ righteousness, we could never escape the consequences of our sin. “For the wages of sin is death,” the apostle Paul explained, “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

This issue of *Israel My Glory* examines sin’s reach, depth, and remedy. We are all born sinners with no means of redemption or reconciliation with God the Father apart from Jesus. But our holy God “demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8).

As you consider how hopelessly lost we are in sin, I pray you will stand in awe of Jesus for giving His life to secure yours in Him forever.

*In His service,
Jesse King
Managing Editor*



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Printed in the USA by Waveline Direct.

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October 7, 2023, was a wake-up call for many Christians unfamiliar with Israel's role in God's plan of

redemption. Those who think God has replaced Israel with the church, a belief called Replacement Theology, have trouble explaining Hamas's inhumane massacre of innocent Israeli families. What could drive one group of people to treat another so abhorrently?

Replacement Theology lacks a spiritual explanation for the historical hatred of Jewish people, and it misleads Christians to make false moral equivalencies between Hamas and Israel. Many Replacement theologians believe Israel is responsible for all Middle East conflict. They feel if Israel didn't exist, we would have peace.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry has helped Christians understand the spiritual dimension to Hamas's brutal attack and hatred of the Jews. This war is more than a political conflict. It's a spiritual battle between God and Satan that takes shape in the human realm.

When the apostle Paul exhorted us to put on the whole armor of God, he reminded us, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Hamas terrorists want to eliminate Israel because they are carrying out the will of their father, Satan. He knows the Son of Israel, Jesus the Messiah, will come to rescue Israel and destroy him and his forces with the sword of His tongue (Zech. 12–14; Rev. 19). Then, Jesus will ascend to the throne of His ancestor David and restore God's Kingdom on Earth.

To prevent his own destruction, Satan seeks to eliminate the conduit through which his downfall will come. The spiritual battle Satan wages with God spills over in the affairs of men, which explains more than 3,000 years of antisemitism stretching from generation to generation.

This hatred manifests itself in the book of Esther, where wicked Haman endeavors to eliminate the Jewish people in one day. It plays out in Psalm 83, as God's enemies plot to rise up against Israel, "that the name of Israel will be remembered no more" (v. 4). Nazi Germany tried to eradicate the Jewish people from the earth. And had Hamas been able, it would have continued killing until every Israeli was dead.

God promised that unless the sun, moon, and stars cease to



*
Second day of the attack on Israel

exist, Israel will endure (Jer. 31:35–36). Historically, those who sought to annihilate Israel have disappeared; but the Jewish people remain to this day. God preserves them because He loves them and because His plan to redeem the world flows through Israel.

Wake up, Christians! We must choose a side in this spiritual war. We either stand with Israel or Satan. There is no middle ground. To oppose Israel is to side with God's adversary.

When God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham, He promised to bless those who bless Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). God did not tell Abraham He would bless him only if Abraham blessed others. We must first bless Israel, then God will bless us.

When Jesus returns to Earth, He will judge the nations based on how they treated Israel (Mt. 25:31–46). Those who bless Israel, helping the Jewish people in their hour of need, are righteous and will enter the Kingdom of God. Those who fail to bless Israel will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Though this judgment concerns those who survive the end-times, it also guides us today.

Each of us must choose what to do with Israel. We either bless Israel or fail to do so, and God will judge us accordingly. Choose wisely.



by **Jim Showers**,
executive director and president of The Friends
of Israel Gospel Ministry

ONE STEP CLOSER TO FREEDOM

BY CHRIS KATULKA

Following Hamas's October 7 massacre in southern Israel, pro-Palestinian demonstrators took to the streets in major cities around the world hurling anti-Israel and antisemitic slurs. They waved Palestinian flags, ripped down posters of abducted Israelis, and praised the barbarism of Hamas as they celebrated the brutal deaths of more than 1,200 Israelis.

To justify their elation, they've convinced themselves that Hamas operatives aren't terrorists; they're fighters engaged in a noble struggle for freedom and independence. To these demonstrators, Hamas and the Ukrainian military share the same mission: fighting for their land and freedom.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, I've often heard it said, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." *Freedom fighter* has a positive tone. As Western-minded individuals, we believe in the tenets that uphold independence and freedom from tyranny.

But what happens when the "freedom fighters" violently attack the country that has offered them freedom, peace, and independence time and time again? It's hard to justify their struggle when their enemies repeatedly offer them freedom.

Freedom and independence were offered to the Palestinian people from modern Israel's inception. In 1947, the United Nations approved the partition plan that guaranteed land for an Arab state next to land promised for a Jewish state. The provisional Jewish government accepted the partition plan, including the creation of this second Arab state (Jordan being the first); but the Palestinians and surrounding Arab nations refused. Upon declaring independence, Israel was attacked by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

After Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in June 1967, the Jewish state offered to leverage its regained land to negotiate peace with its disgruntled neighbors. Two months later, Arab leaders, still reeling from their defeat, gathered in Khartoum, Sudan, where they developed the Khartoum Resolution, better known as the "three nos": no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel.

In the early 1990s, the Oslo Accords were designed

to establish peace between the Israelis and Palestinians and lead to an independent Palestinian state. The pact gave the Palestinians autonomy to govern their people in their own territories through the newly established legislature, the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The Oslo Accords provided an opportunity to build trust and secure freedom and independence for Palestinians. Sadly, PA President Yasser Arafat used it to continue the struggle against Israel, which increased Palestinian terrorist attacks in the region.

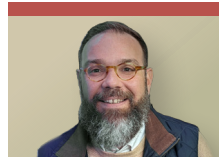
In 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton brokered a peace deal between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, which carved out 97% of the West Bank (biblical Judea and Samaria) and 100% of Gaza for a Palestinian state. Yet, Arafat rejected the deal.

In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally granted Palestinian sovereignty over the Gaza Strip, eventually removing every Israeli citizen from the region. Since then, Gaza has become a launching pad for terrorism into Israel, which gave rise to the October 7 massacre.

Finally, in 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered nearly the entire West Bank to create a Palestinian state; but Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, like Arafat, said no.

Hamas operatives aren't freedom fighters; they're terrorists whose goal is to eradicate the Jewish people and destroy Israel. For more than 75 years, Israel has endeavored to move toward peace, independence, and freedom for the Palestinians. The freedom Hamas and its supporters claim to fight for is really what they fight against.

The real freedom fighters are among the ranks of the Israel Defense Forces. These young men and women risk their lives in Gaza to defend the Jewish state and help those innocent Palestinians eagerly awaiting the end of Hamas tyranny—because the end of Hamas will move them one step closer to freedom.



Chris Katulka

is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry and the host of *The Friends of Israel Today* radio program.

YEMEN'S HOUTHIS TARGET ISRAEL

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen are posing a growing threat to Israel. Since the October 2023 outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war, the Houthis—known as *Ansar Allah* (supporters of Allah) and whose official slogan states, “Allah is the Greatest, Death to America, Death to Israel, Cursed be the Jews, Victory to Islam”—have declared war on Israel. They have launched a barrage of long-range missiles and attack drones at the Jewish state and hijacked Israeli-linked cargo ships in the Red Sea.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree recently threatened to prevent all Israel-bound cargo ships, regardless of national origin, from passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a strategic chokepoint that divides the Middle East from the Horn of Africa and connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, one of the world’s busiest maritime routes.

Israeli officials have told the Biden administration that Israel is prepared to act against the Houthis if the international community fails to do so. “Israel is giving the world some time to organize in order to prevent this, but if there will not be a global response, because it is a global issue, we will act in order to remove this naval siege,” Israeli National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi said.

In recent months, U.S. Navy warships have intercepted cruise missiles and drones launched by Houthis toward Israel and Israeli-linked commercial vessels; and a French warship destroyed Houthi attack drones that were fired from the coast of Yemen. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have also intercepted ballistic missiles fired from Yemen toward Israel.

Iran has denied any involvement.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has claimed that the Houthis “act independently and spontaneously based on their interests and that of their people.” Houthi leaders, however, openly admitted that they coordinate their

attacks on Israel with the Axis of Resistance, a network of armed groups created, funded, and operated by Iran.

“We are in complete coordination with our brothers in the axis of jihad and resistance,” Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said. “If the Americans intervene directly, we are prepared to participate in missile bombardment, marches, and military options.”

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan noted that Iran is supplying the weapons the Houthis are using against Israel. Still, the Biden administration has been reluctant to directly confront the Islamic Republic because it fears escalating the conflict in Gaza with Iran’s Middle East proxies.

Compared to Hezbollah, another Iranian proxy, Houthi capabilities to strike Israel are relatively limited. Nevertheless, Houthi attacks divert Israeli military resources away from the campaign against Hamas. “Combined with attacks from Hezbollah and from Iran-backed Iraqi and Syrian militias, it is clear that Iran and its proxies are trying to spread out the IDF’s forces and create enough global pressure to stop the Israeli



ground incursion into Gaza to prevent Hamas’s decimation,” Middle East analysts Bradley Bowman and Ryan Brobst wrote.

The Red Sea, with its connection to the Suez Canal, is of vital global geopolitical and geoeconomic importance. More than 30,000 vessels transit the Gulf of Aden annually, and 12% of global trade passes through the Suez Canal each year. If the Houthis disrupt shipping in the Red Sea, vessels heading for Europe and Asia would need to circumvent the Suez Canal and take the longer route around the southern tip of Africa, adding 20 to 30 days and costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. According to Brobst, “Houthi attacks on commercial shipping are likely intended to increase calls for a ceasefire by inflicting economic damage on countries that would otherwise be uninterested in the Gaza conflict.”



by Soeren Kern,
a writing fellow for
the Middle East Forum

A LIFE CHANGED BY JESUS

Every day, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry's (FOI's) field representatives actively develop relationships with people around the world to share the love of Messiah Jesus. Often these relationships lead to meaningful conversations about the gospel. God uses our workers' acts of kindness and friendship to change lives and awaken hearts among His Chosen People.

Recently, Tetiana Kritenko, our field representative in Kyiv, Ukraine, shared a wonderful story of a life changed for God's glory.

Tetiana has spent years serving a woman named Kateryna. Kateryna loves books, but her eyesight has deteriorated in recent years. So, Tetiana reads to her. Often she reads passages from the Bible.

As Kateryna's eyesight worsened, Tetiana's reading became an increasingly valuable gift. This genuine demonstration of Christian love connected the two women. Recently, Kateryna underwent eye surgery to improve her vision, though her recovery has progressed slowly.

One day, as they read together, Tetiana asked Kateryna if she could pray for her recovery and health. As always, Tetiana closed her prayer in the name of Jesus. Kateryna showed particular interest in Tetiana's use of Jesus' name and asked her why she prayed this way. As a Jewish woman, Kateryna was accustomed to addressing her prayers to God.

"At that very moment I realized the Holy Spirit had drawn her attention to Jesus," Tetiana shared. "Though we had talked about Jesus many times, now she wanted to know more about Him."

Beginning with Jesus' instructions to His disciples to

pray to the Father in His name (Jn. 15:16), Tetiana shared the gospel with Kateryna. With tears in her eyes, Kateryna came to understand that Jesus was her Messiah and the God of Israel, that He died to save her, and that He rose from the dead.

Though her physical eyes still did not function effectively, the eyes of Kateryna's heart were opened to the truth that set her free from sin. Tetiana and Kateryna rejoiced and thanked God together for His great gift of Messiah Jesus and the sweet communion shared between them, Jew and Gentile, through Him.

If you would like to support our Ukrainian team and other FOI ministries like this around the world, visit foi.org/INToutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayer and financial support.

* Kateryna (left) with field representative Tetiana Kritenko



PIZZA AND PROVIDENCE IN PITTSBURGH

FOI field representative Jeff Berg and his wife, Arlene, have spent decades serving the Jewish people. They regularly volunteer at a Jewish nursing facility and assisted-living center, teach Yiddish clubs, and host Honor Israel nights to show their love for the Jewish people and the Jewish homeland of Israel.

Recently, the Bergs enjoyed a wonderful visit with their friends Rebekah, Miriam, Rabbi Joseph, and Karen. God's direction was evident in their meeting.

Jeff and Arlene had supported Rebekah, a devout ultra-Orthodox woman, during a significant trial in her life. Rebekah missed their company; so she made the trek from her home in Cleveland, Ohio, to spend time with the Bergs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Bergs arranged for their local Jewish friends Miriam; Rabbi Joseph; and his wife, Karen, to join them. They met at the nearby Jewish senior-living center, where they noshed on kosher pizza and cookies.

During their conversation, Jeff and Arlene spoke about their commitment to raise funds to send an ambulance to Israel through Magen David Adom, the nation's emergency-response agency.

The depth of the Bergs' love and support for Israel astonished Miriam and Rebekah, who mentioned that they had never encountered anyone quite like Jeff and Arlene. Rebekah told them they were "not normal," a sentiment Jeff and Arlene attributed to the transformative power of their faith in Messiah Jesus.

"The One in whom we believe has changed us and given us this love," the Bergs told their friends.

For some time, Rebekah had pondered what set Jeff and Arlene apart. Once more, the Bergs pointed her toward the source of their love for the Jewish people, explaining that it was their unwavering faith in Jesus that made all the difference.

After the group finished the pizza and cookies, the Bergs eagerly shared their passion to teach Christians, particularly children, about the Jewish roots of their faith. When Jeff mentioned that he blows the shofar, a ram's horn, in



churches, Rebekah wanted to learn more.

Her curiosity was palpable. The intersection of Judaism and Christianity was unfamiliar to her, as her perception of Christianity had been skewed by stereotypes that failed to encompass the genuine love and respect the Scriptures compel Christians to have for the Jewish people.

In the end, their meeting was a testament to the sovereignty of our great God. Please pray that God will bring more Christians into the lives of Rebekah, Miriam, Rabbi Joseph, and Karen and open their eyes to the truth of the Messiah.

If you would like to support Jeff Berg and others like him serving in North American Ministries with The Friends of Israel, please visit foi.org/NAMOutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayer and financial support.

The Specter of Right-Wing Antisemitism

Tamara Berens fled her home in the United Kingdom for two reasons: (1) to escape the growing antisemitism there and (2) to join the American conservative movement she had long admired as welcoming to Jewish people like her.

Berens came to the United States in 2019. At first, she was pleased by her reception among conservatives in Washington, DC, where, she said, “One of the main attitudes that united them was their support for Israel and the Jewish people.”

Recently, however, Berens has watched as the once-fringe antisemitism of the alt-right has moved into political acceptability. In her essay “From Coy to Goy” in the June 5, 2023, issue of the conservative Jewish magazine *Mosaic*, Berens wrote,

Had I not stayed quiet when a friend voiced his sympathy for Kanye West in October of 2022, after West had tweeted to 30 million followers about going “death con 3 on Jewish people”? Had I not politely laughed when, at a holiday party for a conservative magazine in New York, an editor mocked Upper East Side Jews for acting like Bernie Madoff, complete with too many pairs of tacky shoes? Had I not stared back in silence when a classmate referred to Ben Shapiro as a “super Jew” in a sarcastically adulating tone?

Such experiences led Berens to sound the alarm on the mainstreaming of antisemitic views and rhetoric on the political right.

Whereas right-wing, neo-Nazi antisemites of bygone years seemed insular and contained, the new generation is spreading its tentacles using technology and outrage culture to promote itself and its anti-Jewish messages.

Known for entertaining conspiracy theories and making outlandish comments, Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene has speculated that “space solar generators,” funded by the Jewish Rothschild family, may have caused the 2018 wildfires in California.

The Georgia Republican also has spoken at far-right political conferences and falsely claimed that liberal financier George Soros, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor,

was a Nazi sympathizer. Soros, Greene stated, “turned in his own people over to the Nazis” and is a “Nazi himself trying to continue what was not finished.”

More alarming is the fact that Greene is “the most politically powerful of the far right’s new figureheads,” Berens noted. Greene serves on two House committees and advises former President Donald Trump.

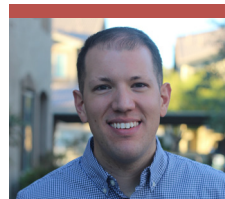
That someone like Greene, who traffics in conspiracy theories about the Jewish people and regularly makes incendiary comments about the Holocaust and Nazis, has significant influence on prominent Republican leaders is frightening.

Greene is hardly alone in her antisemitic behavior. Figures like white supremacist Nick Fuentes and others who believe in the Great Replacement Theory are gaining traction on the political right. The theory purports that a cabal of elite Jewish people is conspiring to facilitate mass immigration and open U.S. borders to extinguish the “white race” and ensure liberal politicians stay in office.

Berens worries that, in the future, right-wing politicians will view friendship with Israel and the Jewish people as a political handicap, not as a badge of honor. “Anti-Semitism,” she wrote, “even as it remains both officially and pretty widely denounced, is less likely to be a point of weakness on the right in 2024 than it is a weapon.”

Evangelicals, a dependably conservative voting bloc, must take seriously the mainstreaming of right-wing antisemitism. We can no longer assume that a self-proclaimed conservative candidate is a friend of the Jewish people.

No matter our political convictions, our supreme allegiance is to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will bless His people’s benefactors and judge their enemies (Mt. 25:31–46).



by Ty Perry,

Field Ministries manager and Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Michigan

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Find free resources
at foi.org/passover



WHY DO YOU LOVE ISRAEL?

**SIX GERMAN BIBLE STUDENTS SHARE WHY
THEY LOVE AND SUPPORT ISRAEL.**

BY STEVE HERZIG

Picture this: A Jewish man who has embraced Jesus as his Messiah waves the flag of Israel and sings Israel's national anthem, "Hatikvah," with 200 other Jews and Christians while standing in the courtyard of a synagogue in Germany. They are protected by German police in a town the Allies bombed during World War II that is now 60% Muslim.

There I was, showing solidarity with Israel only days after Hamas brazenly infiltrated the Jewish state and raped, kidnapped, and slaughtered innocent men, women, children, babies, senior citizens, and Holocaust survivors.

As I stood among the crowd at the rally, gazing at the Star of David displayed on the synagogue entryway, my mind flashed to my late father. A member of the Greatest Generation, he was a World War II veteran who fought the Nazis and antisemitism. I couldn't help but wonder what it would have been like to stand in that German courtyard during those Nazi years.

♡ I Stand With Israel ♡

Attending the rally was an unexpected honor. I traveled to Germany because the Bibel-Center Breckerfeld had invited me to speak at two conferences and teach a course. Founded in 1956 with the motto *Winning souls for the Lamb*, the Bible-centered, Israel-loving school holds conferences throughout Germany. Following Hamas's October 2023 attacks on Israel, the two conferences we attended were advertised this way:

In the midst of the circumstances and events in and around Israel we have consciously focused on the biblical perspective of God's land and people. Because to stand up for Israel is not a current trend but a biblical commandment with eternal validity. . . . We as the Bibel-Center Breckerfeld stand firmly at the side

of Israel and would like to encourage you to pray intensively for everyone involved. Genesis 12:3.

To begin each conference, attendees sang "Hatikvah" while holding a card that read "Ich Stehe Zu Israel," meaning, "I Stand With Israel." On the back of the card were five Bible passages that teach love and support for Israel and the Jewish people: Genesis 12:3; Psalm 122:6–8; Isaiah 49:16; Zechariah 2:12; and Romans 11:1–2.

At the Bibel-Center, I taught four sessions on the city of Jerusalem. I was thrilled to interact with these German students of the Word. My father would have been amazed to hear and see what I heard and saw. His generation did not fight in vain.

These students know their country's dark history—several have fathers or grandfathers who were in the Nazi party. But today, they are making a difference as believers who love Jesus, Israel, and the Jewish people. I asked six of them why they chose the Bibel-Center and why they love Israel.

♡ Simon ♡

Simon seeks to impact other young people with the truth. While healing from injuries sustained in a car accident, he contemplated whether life's purpose was only to gain money and fame or to serve God. Evidently, he came to the right conclusion. He learned there is no other country like Israel and its existence proves God's promises are coming to fruition.

♡ Sarah ♡

Sarah serves on the Bibel-Center's staff. She grew up in a Christian home and pursued a business career after high school. Along the way, she asked God to strengthen her relationship with Him; and He directed her to the Bibel-Center. She said it "blew [her] mind" to see how little she initially knew of the Bible and was excited to discover so much.

"I learned about Israel and saw how God invested His Word in the Jewish people and His plan for them," she said. "It seemed God had more to say to Israel than the church; and at first, this annoyed me. I could not understand. The Bible showed me the significance of Israel in the past, present, and future."

She was apprehensive about traveling to Israel as per the school's curriculum; but God placed her with a roommate who had already been to Israel and longed to go back, and she relieved Sarah's fears.

Her trip was a game-changer. The Bible went from black and white to color. "I now pray for Israel regularly and give to Christian groups that support Israel," she said. "Since you have come to Germany, I began listening to *The Jew and*



* Bibel-Center conference attendees stand for Israel

Gentile Podcast [a Friends of Israel podcast Steve hosts with Chris Katulka, host of *The Friends of Israel Today* radio].”

♡ Tatiana ♡

Tatiana was an *au pair* for a Christian family in London but didn't know what to do with the rest of her life. Her father suggested she attend the Bible school. She agreed to go for one semester but loved it so much she stayed three years. She loves Israel and the Jewish people because she knows they were chosen by God. “It is His land, given to them,” she said. She speaks German, English, and Spanish and wants to use these languages in the field of international relations.

♡ Claudia ♡

Claudia's parents were saved in their 30s and realized Israel's significance through reading the Bible. She was raised to love Israel and the Jewish people. After high school, she moved to Israel to work as an *au pair* in Kiryat Shmona. “I don't know any Jewish people in Germany; but I know of them from the Bible, and I know what God thinks of them and how important they are,” she said. “I love the Bible-based teaching at the school. It is a privilege to read the whole Bible and see how the Old Testament and the New Testament are one book.”

♡ Lucas ♡

Lucas is married with three children. When his best friend attended the Bibel-Center, Lucas visited many times. He said,

Every time I came, I learned so much about the Bible. It was not on my mind to be here; but inside, I was being directed. I prayed and talked to my wife; and we prayed together for half a year that if God wants us to come, we will come. It was difficult to leave my church family and my mother, who is a widow. Balancing my family, my budget, and school is very hard. Multitasking is not easy. Free weekends are few now; but we are receiving support

from churches, friends, and family. I am learning more about Israel and how it affects my own faith. My home church does not emphasize Israel, and now I see how important it is. When the war broke out, my wife and I began to pray every day for Israel.

♡ Lea ♡

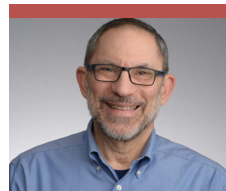
Attending the Bibel-Center was not part of Lea's plan, but God drew her there. She said,

My pastor's wife had many talks with me about the foundations of the Christian faith. Her husband went to the school, but they never told me to go. But I knew how much they know about God and the Bible, so I began to think about it.

I am in my last year, and I am praying about my future. I went to Madagascar for my internship and helped missionaries with practical things to help them focus on their ministry. My family would rather me do a normal job first but are not upset that I came.

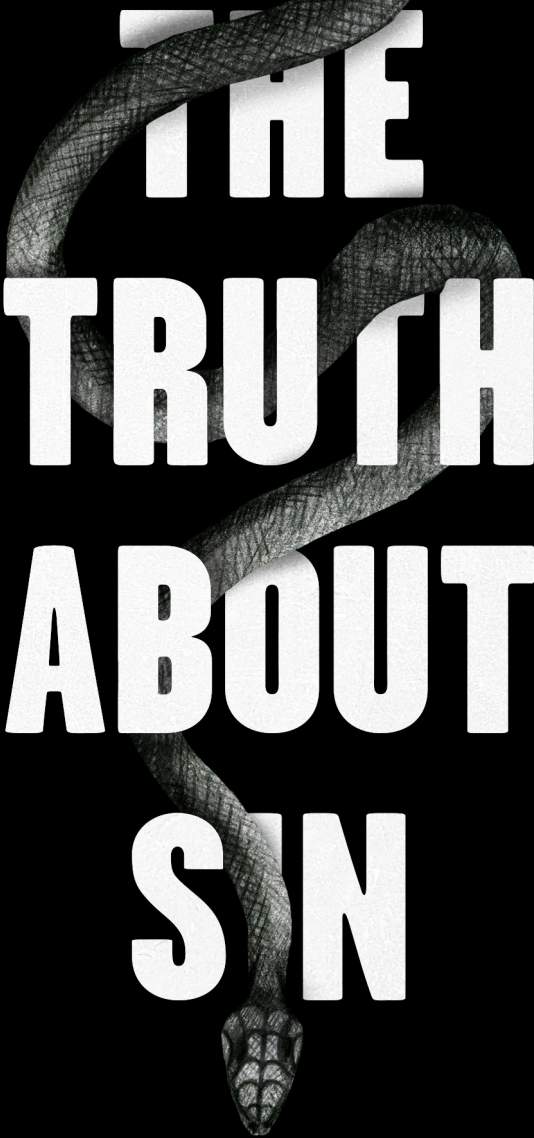
I am excited to go to Israel. It is a dream, and I hope the war will not prevent it from happening. I have made long-lasting friends at the school, and I want to do social work; so my next step will be university.

The students I encountered at the Bibel-Center Breckerfeld want to be influencers for God's Word. They are believers who love and support Israel and the Jewish people in Germany, of all places, where a madman once made it his goal to annihilate God's Chosen People. All glory goes to the Lord, who brought these things about, “not by might nor by power, but by [His] Spirit” (Zech. 4:6). ★



Steve Herzig

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THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN

**SNEAKY.
INSIDIOUS.
DESTRUCTIVE.
DEADLY.
THAT'S THE NATURE OF SIN,
AND NO ONE ESCAPES ITS REACH.**

BY RICHARD D. EMMONS

The world is filled with iniquity. The evil we see overtaking the world today proves yet again the truth of Scripture: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9).

Sin is everywhere. “There is no one who does not sin.” So said Israel’s King Solomon when he dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 8:46). So said the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 59:2), and so said the apostle Paul (Rom. 3:23).

We all are born into sin, separated from God. Have you ever wondered why? The story starts at the very beginning—actually, before the beginning.

PREVAILING SIN

The first human sin occurred in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3, the tempter (Satan) prompted Eve to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” which God had placed off limits (2:17):

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (3:6).

The New Testament adds that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not. This act of disobedience precipitated what we call the fall of man and brought sin and death into God’s perfectly ordered creation. The apostle Paul described the fall this way:

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . . Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him [Jesus] who was to come (Rom. 5:12, 14).

Paul indicated that all mankind received Adam’s sinful nature. The fact that everyone experiences death indicates that everyone is a sinner. Universal death evidences universal sinfulness.

PERVASIVE SIN

This fact helps explain Solomon’s observation: There is no one who does not sin because there is no one who is exempt from Adam’s sinful nature. The Bible teaches that every person born on this planet (except Jesus) is a sinner on three levels:

1. *By nature (inherited sin).* We all receive Adam’s sin nature. No one has to teach his children how to sin. It comes naturally.
2. *By association (imputed sin).* Paul’s use of the indicative active verb (“all sinned,” Rom. 5:12) indicates that, in some manner, we all participated in Adam’s disobedience.
3. *By deed (individual sin).* Our own sinful actions make us sinners.

These three components are sometimes referred to as *total depravity*, though the term does not mean everyone has sinned as horribly as possible. Bible scholar Charles Ryrie explained:

Positively, total depravity means (a) that corruption extends to every facet of man’s nature and faculties; and (b) that there is nothing in anyone that can commend him to a righteous God.

Total depravity must always be measured against God’s holiness. Relative goodness exists in people. They can do good works which are appreciated by others. But nothing that anyone can do will gain salvational merit or favor in the sight of a holy God.¹

So, what is this sin that is so devastating? Where did it come from?

Based on the account in Genesis 3, we might define sin as man’s disobedience to God. However, the definition seems insufficient, considering the fact that some people die as babies before they are capable of disobedience.

J. Oliver Buswell explained sin this way: “Sin may be defined ultimately as anything in the creature which does not express, or which is contrary to, the holy character of the Creator.”² Such would be true of our nature even before we are capable of obeying or disobeying.

The result is that every person born of Adam is thrice condemned as a sinner by inherited nature, by imputed sin, and by individual acts of sin. Therefore, every one of us is as bad off as the worst sinner who ever lived—not necessarily as bad, but as bad off—equally condemned and equally cut off from God. The penalty for this sin is death, both spiritual and physical, for those who persist in it.

PRETEMPORAL SIN

How did this universal devastation come to be? Sin actually predates Adam and Eve.

Before God created the universe, Lucifer, perhaps the highest created angel, rebelled against God. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 describe this event:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:12–14).

These verses indicate that Lucifer determined to make himself “like the Most High,” to make himself equal with

God, rather than accept his creaturely position. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God declared,

You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.

You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you (Ezek. 28:12–17).

God gave His angels the ability to choose, so their worship would be meaningful. But the responsibility rests with the creature: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (v. 15). Ezekiel’s statement is as much as the Bible lets us see regarding the origin of sin.

Sin originated with the magnificent angelic being Lucifer, who was discontented with his creaturely nature. Filled with pride (v. 17), he refused to serve in his designated station, determined to elevate himself to the same level as his Creator.

In its essence, this was the choice he presented to Eve in the garden; and this was the choice one third of the angels made when they followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God (Rev. 12:4).

OVERCOMING SIN

What could be done about this cosmic problem?

When God created the material universe, He designed another race of creatures in His image (humans), placed them in the Garden of Eden, and gave them the opportunity to respond to His glory without knowing all the details of their situation.

Adam and Eve didn’t know about Satan and his angels. The test is always whether men and women will trust God without knowing all the details of their circumstances. That is why the Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). Every choice we make either glorifies God or glorifies the Evil One.

The solution to our sin problem is Jesus. Born without a human father, He had no sin nature (inherited sin), did not

participate in Adam’s sin (imputed sin), and never committed sin of His own (individual sin). So, unlike the rest of us, Jesus was not as bad off as the worst sinner.

Rather, Jesus was sinless in every aspect and, therefore, qualified to be the perfect, spotless “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). No one else in all of history was qualified to die for the sins of others. He alone can say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (14:6).

Paul wrote, God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

One day, following a final deception, Satan and all his followers (angelic and human) will be destroyed (Rev. 20:7–15). Sin’s devastating effects will be removed (chaps. 21–22), and Jesus and all His followers will enjoy eternal life and blessing forever.

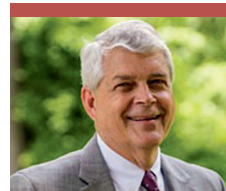
Sin is the universe’s ultimate problem. And Jesus is God’s ultimate answer. Those who confess their sinfulness and place their faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin receive forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. God also grants the power to live a life pleasing to Him.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:12–14).

God gives us the ability to “walk in the Spirit” so that we do not “fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). Walking in the Spirit helps us flee from sin and draw close to the God who loves us. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999), 253.
- 2 J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), 1:264, cited in Ryrie, 212.



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PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



Why Blood?

by Jim Showers

Today we don't associate blood with cleansing. In fact, bleeding is often the result of an injury or disease. So, it's natural to wonder why blood sacrifices are important in the Bible.

To understand, we need to go back to the beginning. Man was not created in sin. God had declared everything good until Adam, the first man, made the fateful choice to join Satan's rebellion against God (Gen. 3). From the moment Adam disobeyed, he brought all of humanity under the curse of sin because we all descended from Adam. In that sense, in seed form, we all participated in Adam's fall (Rom. 5:12).

Interestingly, in the same passage of Genesis, God revealed the price He demanded to cover sin: blood. Animal blood was shed to clothe Adam and Eve physically and to cover their sin spiritually (Gen. 3:21). This concept of blood providing a cover for sin is further developed in God's covenant relationship with Israel.

At the first Passover about 3,400 years ago, God delivered from judgment the firstborn male in each Jewish family only if the blood of an unblemished lamb was smeared on the lintel and doorposts of the home, precisely as God instructed (Ex. 12). The sacrifice of unblemished animals to cover sin became encoded in the Mosaic Law God gave to Israel.

In Leviticus 17:11, God explained why He requires blood sacrifice: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." An equivalent statement in the New Testament is Hebrews 9:22: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (NASB).

It is God who determined that blood be the requirement to cover sin. This lesson was so important that almost everything was purified with blood according to the Law.

The Law also taught that only a close relative—a kinsman—could redeem, or pay the

purchase price (Lev. 25). Animal sacrifices were not sufficient to restore a person's relationship with God because animals are not related to mankind. Although animal blood covered sins under the Law, that covering was temporary because the sacrifices had to be repeated continually. They had no lasting effect.

To be cleansed of our sins and restored in our relationship with God once and for all, we needed to be redeemed by the unblemished blood of a kinsman who was willing to pay the price—one who was related to us, a son of Adam.

God promised to send the Son of a woman to crush Satan's head (Gen. 3:15). This Son of promise, the Messiah, is the only one qualified to pay the blood price for our sins. He was unblemished by sin and willing to shed His blood to redeem us.

One of the greatest testimonies of God's love for us is found in the Old Testament book of Isaiah:

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (53:4–6).

God's promised Son paid the blood-redemption price for our sins to atone for our souls so that we could be forgiven and have a relationship with God. It is a price we could never pay with our good deeds. ★



It is God who determined that blood be the requirement to cover sin.





ISRAEL'S RECONCILIATION

BY JIM SHOWERS

**GOD PROMISES TO RESTORE HIS KINGDOM AND
PLACE HIS SALVATION IN ZION "FOR ISRAEL MY GLORY."
BUT HE ALSO REQUIRES A FEW THINGS FROM ISRAEL.**

Scripture places much emphasis on Israel's reconciliation with God through faith in His promised Son. Beginning in Genesis 12, we see God working His redemptive plan exclusively through the nation of Israel.

God promised to send a Messiah to redeem the nation, after which He will restore His Kingdom on Earth. To this end, He made covenants with Israel and Israel alone (including the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New). These divine promises ensure the Jewish people's centrality to God's redemptive plan for all mankind.

Just as salvation flows through Israel, so, too, does the restoration of God's Kingdom. The covenants teach us that God raised up the Jewish people, through whom He would (1) provide salvation for humanity via His promised Son, the Messiah of Israel, and (2) provide a ruler, the Messiah, who would restore His theocratic Kingdom.

When Jesus came to Earth, He declared Himself to be the Son of God and the promised One, the Messiah, who would take away the sins of the world. Before He ascended back to heaven, He promised to return someday to restore God's Kingdom.

The founders of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry understood this truth in 1942 when they published the first issue of *Israel My Glory*. The magazine's name comes from Isaiah 46:13: "I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory." They explained their purpose in choosing it:

*We are naming this periodical Israel My Glory to call attention to the fact that God is not through with the Jewish people. . . . In naming our quarterly Israel My Glory, we desire to remind ourselves of God's irrevocable promises to Israel and of His benevolent purpose in choosing them to be the human channel through which Christ should come and the channel also of future blessing to the world."*¹

Our future blessings—God's full blessings to the world—depend on God placing His salvation in Zion. According to the Jewish prophets, when Israel will face its most desperate time, the nation will cry out to God for help; and God will not disappoint. He will send Jesus back to Earth to fight for His people (Zech. 14:1–5). Speaking of Israel, God said, "They will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn" (12:10). That is when Israel will finally recognize and accept its Messiah and believe in Him.

Jesus will descend from heaven to rescue the nation, defeat His adversaries and Satan, judge the nations for their sin, and restore God's Kingdom on Earth. Sitting on the throne of King David, Messiah Jesus will rule and reign over Israel and the world from Jerusalem, "a priest on His throne" (6:13).

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE

After Messiah's resurrection and ascension into heaven in the 1st century AD, the Jewish apostle Peter preached to an exclusively Jewish audience on the Temple Mount (Acts 3:17–21). His message was simple:

1. Christ fulfilled all that the prophets foretold about His suffering (v. 18).
2. They needed to "repent . . . and be converted" (v. 19). In other words, they needed to repent of (regret and turn away from) their rejection of Jesus and convert (change their minds) concerning His Messiahship.
3. If they did so, God would blot out their sin (cleanse them), send to Earth the "times of refreshing . . . from the presence of the Lord" (v. 19), and send Jesus Christ to Earth

for the “restoration of all things” (vv. 19–21). This is what the prophets spoke about for centuries.

Peter taught that Jesus will not return to Earth to restore and refresh God’s Kingdom to its prefall condition until, and unless, Israel repents of its rebellion against God and believes Jesus is the Promised One who saves. Peter drew his message from the Old Testament prophets.

But was Peter talking about individual or corporate cleansing of Israel?

Actually, it was both. In the future, wrote the prophet Zechariah, as Israel’s enemies lay siege to Jerusalem and Israel has nowhere to turn, God will pour out His Spirit of grace and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (12:10). This action is both corporate (house of David) and individual (inhabitants of Jerusalem). Zechariah even repeated this promise of grace for sin and uncleanness (13:1).

It is because God pours out the Holy Spirit that the people of Israel will have a change of heart and look on Him (the Messiah) whom they pierced. They will recognize He is the true Messiah and see their error in rejecting Him at His First Coming. Zechariah prophesied a time of great mourning, as each family mourns alone. He even listed family names: David, Nathan, Levi, Shimei, indicating corporate repentance.

But he also said men will mourn by themselves “and their wives by themselves” (12:12–14), pointing to individual repentance. Other prophetic passages also relate to Israel’s repentance and acceptance of the Messiah (Jer. 31:31–37; Ezek. 36:25–32).

Both aspects of repentance, corporate and individual, are important because, for Jesus to ascend to David’s throne, the Jewish people must accept Him individually as their Messiah and King. A king cannot rule over people who are in rebellion.

Likewise, Jesus must be recognized nationally as the rightful heir to the throne. He must rule over both individual hearts and the nation of Israel before He can restore God’s Kingdom and usher in the times of refreshing on Earth. That is the point Peter made in Acts 3.

A SIGN OF HOPE

The apostle Paul also believed a time would come

when “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). Being Jewish himself, Paul had a heartfelt burden to see Jewish people come to faith in their Messiah.

In Romans 11, he explained that God loves Israel and is using Israel’s rejection of its Messiah in a positive way: to bring salvation to the Gentiles (v. 25). Why is He willing to delay Israel’s individual and corporate salvation? Because Israel’s salvation ushers in the restored Kingdom, and the gospel would not go out to the world. Gentiles would be lost in their sins. Sharing the gospel with the Gentiles is a fulfillment of God’s promise that, through Abraham’s Seed, He would bless all the nations (Gal. 3:8).

But in a sign of hope, Paul emphatically declared, “Certainly not!” to the question “Has God cast away His people?” (Rom. 11:1). When God completes bringing to faith all the Gentiles He has predetermined, then all of Israel will be saved (v. 26). Paul quoted from the prophet Isaiah: “The Deliverer will come out

of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” (vv. 26–27; cf. Isa. 59:20–21).

Eventually, God will bring an end to His great gospel outreach to the world and turn His attention back to Israel. That is when all Israel will be saved, and God will send His only begotten Son from heaven back to Earth to deliver Israel and restore His theocratic Kingdom.

Today, Jewish people around the world are coming to faith in Jesus; but they constitute a mere remnant. Because their numbers are few and there is no evidence of widespread, corporate repentance, their salvation is not sufficient to be seen as a fulfillment of the words of Zechariah and Peter. That fulfillment lies in the future, and then the Lord will richly bless the world. ★

A KING CANNOT RULE OVER PEOPLE WHO ARE IN REBELLION.

ENDNOTE

1. Dr. Joseph Taylor Britan, “An Introduction, Explanation, and Appeal,” *Israel My Glory* 1, no. 1 (December, 1942), 3.



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The Mystery of Salvation for the Gentiles

by Jim Showers

When Jesus was on Earth, He told His disciples, “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles. . . . Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 10:5–6).

When a Canaanite woman implored Jesus on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!” (15:22), Jesus replied, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (v. 24). Yet the woman’s faith was so great He healed her daughter immediately (v. 28).

Jesus, of course, was the Messiah of Israel. So, where did that leave the Gentiles?

Salvation for Gentiles was a mystery to Israel, and even the prophets who spoke of the coming salvation studied the prophecies to try and ascertain the circumstances and timing of Messiah’s coming (1 Pet. 1:10–12). Though the Holy Spirit moved them to write the prophecies, they still pored over them intently to understand their meaning.

The Hebrew Scriptures hinted that God’s redemption would be shared with the world: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh [Messiah] comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people [Hebrew, *amim*, nations]” (Gen. 49:10). He will rule over all nations, not Israel alone. Through the prophet Isaiah, God declared,

It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6).

God’s prophecies, however, painted two seemingly conflicting pictures of the Messiah: one of a suffering Servant (Ps. 22; Isa. 53) and one of a conquering King (Ps. 2; 110; Dan. 7; Zech. 9). How could Messiah be both?

What the prophets didn’t easily see was the Messiah’s two advents and the period in between, the Church Age, when salvation would be shared with the world. It was a mystery; and even Jesus’ disciples, who spent three years under His

teaching, struggled to understand that the gospel was also for the Gentiles. But there were hints.

The covenant God made with Abraham and extended to Isaac and Jacob provided for widespread salvation when God promised to bless all the families of the world through Abraham’s Seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). In Galatians, the apostle Paul affirmed that the Scriptures foresaw God declaring the Gentiles righteous by faith through Abraham’s Seed (3:8, 16).

Because salvation was to be shared with the Gentiles, Isaiah could say, “The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isa. 60:3).

Jeremiah spoke of a time when Gentile nations will come to the true God (Jer. 16:19–21). And Zechariah saw a day when “many nations shall be joined to the LORD” and will become His people (Zech. 2:11). Even Malachi referred to God’s name being “great among the Gentiles” (Mal. 1:11).

All these passages presume Gentiles will come to faith in the God of Israel through its Messiah and participate in the restored theocratic Kingdom. But that can only happen if God’s salvation is taken to the world. Salvation does not make Gentiles part of the unique Jewish nation; but it makes them part of God’s family through adoption, enabling them to reap spiritual blessings through the covenants God made with Israel.

This mystery wasn’t fully revealed until after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Today, the church is the vehicle of God’s salvation, a fulfillment of God’s revelation. But a time is coming when God will remove His church in the Rapture and use another method to proclaim His salvation during the most troubling time on Earth. ★



The Hebrew Scriptures hinted that God’s redemption would be shared with the world.



A SPECIAL TYPE OF FEAR



by Les Crawford

**Fear is a powerful emotion. It can provoke, and it can paralyze.
But the right fear can make you a friend of God.**

Most people fear something. Some fear heights, others fear wild animals, and others fear spiders or snakes or sharks. In Australia, where I live, you can experience all these fears, considering Australia is filled with all these things.

Sometimes fear can be so overpowering it controls our lives. Some people, for example, won't swim in the ocean for fear of sharks. Others can't enjoy walking in the countryside for fear of snakes.

The Bible frequently speaks of fear. From the days of Joshua (Josh. 1:9) to the prophets in the divided Israelite kingdom, God commanded His people not to fear human threats. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah repeatedly challenged Israel not to be afraid of foreign attacks or oppression (Isa. 40:9; 41:10, 13–14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8; 51:7; 54:4, 14; Jer. 30:10; 42:11; 46:27–28). God's promise of His presence and protection whatever the circumstance can counter fear and enable us to overcome it (Isa. 41:10).

In the New Testament, God told the priest Zacharias and the Lord Jesus' mother, Mary, not to fear (Lk. 1:13, 30). Jesus told His disciples to have no fear (Mt. 10:26–33). Likewise, the Lord told the apostle Paul, "Do not be afraid . . . for I am with you" (Acts 18:9–10) and told him the same thing again during a life-threatening storm (27:24). If not overcome, fear generated by adverse circumstances can prevent God's people from fulfilling God's will for them.

But the Bible also mentions another type of fear, and this one leads to godliness and a closer relationship with the Lord.

A UNIVERSAL COMMAND

The Bible commands all humanity to fear God (Ps. 67:7). King Solomon wrote, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (Eccl. 12:13, NIV).

Jesus taught, "Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power

to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Lk. 12:5).

The writer of the book of Hebrews stated, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31); and later, "our God is a consuming fire" (12:29).

The apostle Peter wrote, "Fear God" (1 Pet. 2:17) to the dispersed believers in Jesus as they faced persecution for their faith. The early church walked "in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31) and multiplied as a result.

Paul exhorted the Philippian believers, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), knowing that God was working within them for His good pleasure (v. 13).

So how does this fear of God differ from normal human fear of circumstances? People tend to avoid bad situations, recoil from them, and flee to safety. Should people recoil from God? Does fear of God provoke or paralyze? Why is it necessary? And what does it look like for God's people?

A LOOK AT BOTH SIDES

It is worth considering what happens when people do not fear God. Paul described the consequences:

Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim. 3:2–5).

“

For believers, fearing God is a characteristic of our relationship and an appropriate response to God's absolute authority and peerless power over all creation, including us. Supernatural fear of God involves awe, reverence, and respect.

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God’s love for sinners conditions His wrath so that we can approach the holy and powerful God of Israel with the expectation that He is able to meet our needs.

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(Mic. 6:9), evangelistic motivation (2 Cor. 5:11), and progress in holiness (7:1).

Clearly, fearing God reaps much benefit for us. Such positive associations suggest its distinction from the fear of danger or harm.

A CONSUMING FIRE

So, how do we learn to fear God? Through exposure to His Word (Dt. 4:10; 17:19; 31:12–13).

The Bible provides the knowledge of God, His moral standards for humanity, the consequences of transgressing them, the solution for such failure, and the blessing of a restored relationship with the Almighty.

Experience also helps us learn to fear God. Jeremiah wrote that, at a future time, the nations “shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity” that God provided (Jer. 33:9).

Ultimately, the fear of God in His people is a spiritual reality that is not manufactured by external factors. Jeremiah prophesied that God Himself will give Israel “one heart and one way, that they may fear [Him] forever, for the good of them and their children after them” (32:39).

God said, “I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land [Israel], with all My heart and with all My soul” (vv. 40–41).

Fearing God is a good thing, keeping us close to the Lord. This fact is also true of church saints, who are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) through spiritual renewal (Eph. 2:1–10).

The fear of God restrains human wickedness. Without it, people run rampant—a truth the psalmist captured when describing the activity of the wicked man (Ps. 36:1–4) who has “no fear of God before his eyes” (v. 1). This truth also surfaces in the book of Romans (3:18).

However, fearing God produces the opposite effect. It restrains human sinfulness and prompts obedience to God’s commands. It is associated with friendship with God (Ps. 25:14), salvation (85:9), fulfilled desire (145:19), divine pleasure (147:11), prolonged life (Prov. 10:27; 19:23), sound wisdom

For believers, fearing God is a characteristic of our relationship and an appropriate response to God's absolute authority and peerless power over all creation, including us. Supernatural fear of God involves awe, reverence, and respect.

A child, for example, has a healthy fear of a loving father's discipline; and believers should regard their heavenly Father in much the same way, recognizing that God hates sin and addresses it in them through loving discipline, to which they submit (Heb. 12:5–11). But even words like *awe*, *reverence*, and *respect* fail to project the intensity of the biblical meaning.

Sin carries serious consequences (Gal. 6:7–8). Knowing God's goodness in dealing with sin and His grace and mercy in providing a place for us in His Kingdom prompts us to worship Him, as expressed by Hebrews 12:28–29: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

Fearing God does not drive us from God but, rather, draws

us to Him, knowing that (1) if we have no faith in Jesus, He will punish us for our sins for all eternity; and (2) if we have faith in Jesus, He has removed the threat of eternal judgment and provided full acceptance for us in Him (2:17–18; cf. 4:14–16). God's love for sinners conditions His wrath so that we can approach the holy and powerful God of Israel with the expectation that He is able to meet our needs.

The very attributes (God's absolute authority and power) that produce godly fear in us also give us confidence in Him. So, let us seek Him alone with full assurance of His greatness and goodness (10:19–22). ★



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THE BEREAN BOX

WAS JESUS IMPECCABLE?

Theologians hold two positions on the nature of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1–11). One position teaches that Jesus was *impeccable*, the English version of a Latin word meaning "not capable of sinning or liable to sin," thus making it impossible for Jesus to sin when tempted. The other position teaches Jesus was *peccable*, or able to sin, when He was tempted but chose not to sin. Both views teach that Jesus never sinned while on Earth.

Those believing Jesus was peccable teach that if He was impeccable and could not sin, none of the Devil's temptations were real for Him.

But the Devil genuinely tempted Jesus, even though it was impossible for Christ to sin. The Spirit of God led Jesus "into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (v. 1), but God never tempts any man to sin (Jas. 1:13).

Matthew's use of the names *Jesus* (speaking of His humanity; Mt. 4:1) and *the Son of God* (a title given before His incarnation; v. 3) indicate Christ was tested not only as a Man or as God but as the God-Man, a whole person. Therefore, the Devil legitimately tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (apart from sin; Heb. 4:15). He possessed a sinless nature and did not sin in thought, word, or deed. Without a sin nature, He could

not succumb to sin, even though He faced genuine temptation. To better understand impeccability, think of a man in a small rowboat who tries to sink a battleship with a bow and arrow. The attack and intent to sink the battleship are real, but the attacker cannot possibly sink a battleship with a bow and arrow.

Jesus' attributes as the God-Man support His impeccability:

1. Jesus is *omniscient*. He knew all the Devil's motives and methods to tempt Him to sin while in the wilderness but did not succumb because it is impossible for the God-Man to sin.
2. Jesus is *omnipotent*. He has complete sovereign power and authority over the universe (Mt. 28:18). Since Jesus the God-Man possesses all power and no weakness, He cannot sin.
3. Jesus is *immutable*. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). His divine nature always overruled His perfect human nature in His decisions while He was on Earth (Jn. 6:38–40). He remains unchangeable forever.

God allowed Jesus to be tempted to prove that Jesus was impeccable, incapable of sin, even when tempted.

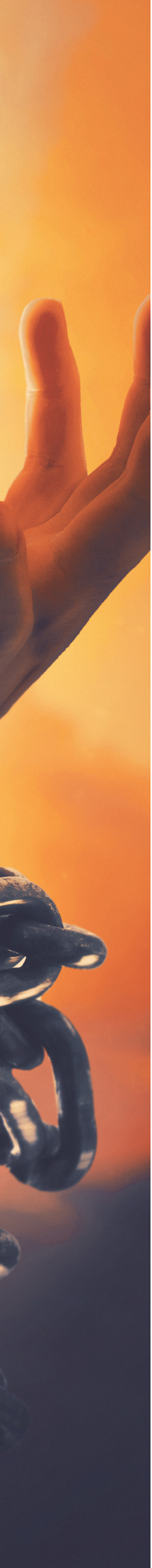
by David M. Levy



**A LOOK AT HOW GOD BALANCES
JUSTICE AND MERCY—AND HOW
THIS BALANCE AFFECTS US ALL**

THE GREAT FORGIVER

BY BRUCE SCOTT



Corrie ten Boom couldn't believe what she was seeing. It was 1947, two years after World War II had ended; and Corrie just finished talking to an audience in Germany about forgiveness. As everyone filed out of the room, a man walked toward her. Corrie recognized him immediately. He had been one of the most vicious Nazi guards at the Ravensbruck concentration camp where she was imprisoned during the war and where her beloved sister Betsie died.

Corrie acted like she didn't see him, but he came directly to her. He complimented her on her speech and its topic. And then, to her surprise, this evil man extended his hand and told her, "I have become a Christian.

"I know," he continued, "that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did [at Ravensbruck], but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. *Fraulein*, will you forgive me?"

Corrie knew forgiving this man would be one of the hardest things she would ever do, but she also knew she must do it. Slowly, she extended her hand and grasped his. With tears in her eyes, she said, "I forgive you, brother! With all my heart."¹

Knowing what she suffered at Ravensbruck, some people might wonder how she could forgive someone who had committed such heinous acts. The answer is that Corrie knew God had forgiven her sins through Christ, and that was why she could forgive someone else.

WHAT EXACTLY IS FORGIVENESS?

God is just, and "every morning He brings His justice to light" (Zeph. 3:5). Since we are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27), with a conscience that can distinguish between right and wrong (Rom. 2:15), we have an innate sense of justice. If you don't believe that, just stand in line for an hour at a theme park to get

on a ride and notice how you feel when someone cuts the line to get on before you. Your innate sense of justice will quickly rise to the surface.

Justice demands payment for wrongs. That payment can be in the form of punishment or restitution. Either way, a wrong must be made right. Injustice, therefore, implies an indebtedness. The one wronged is owed something by the one who inflicted the wrong.

When someone mistreats us, there are two ways we can respond: We can either make the person pay, or we can forgive.

In the Jewish Scriptures, the Hebrew words often used to translate the concept of forgiveness mean "to take away" or "to cover." For example, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven [taken away], whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1).

Another Hebrew word in the Old Testament closely resembles the Greek word for "forgiveness" in the New Testament. Both carry the idea of releasing material or moral debt. When you forgive someone, you release that individual from the obligation to pay you back.

For example, in the Jewish Scriptures, God directed the Israelites to release people from material debt every seven years:

When you forgive someone, you release that individual from the obligation to pay you back.

At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD's release. Of a foreigner you may require it;

but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother (Dt. 15:1-3).

In the New Testament, Jesus told a parable to illustrate forgiveness. He spoke of a "certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents" (Mt. 18:23-24).

Ten thousand talents would have been the equivalent of 60 million denarii. A denarius was the average pay for a day of labor (20:2). Therefore, for this servant to pay off his financial debt would have taken him almost 165,000 years! The debt was insurmountable. That's why the text says, "He was not able to pay" (18:25).

“The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt” (vv. 26–27). So, the servant was released both physically and financially from his obligation to pay. He was forgiven.

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

The parable illustrates perfectly what God has done for us spiritually. We owed God an insurmountable moral debt that we could never repay. We wronged Him. We offended Him. And we were completely unable to make things right.

The Bible refers to that debt as sin. The payment God requires for that debt is death: “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). And no one is guiltless: “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Eccl. 7:20). “Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12; cf. 3:23).

But God is the great forgiver. If He weren’t, all of us would be doomed to hell: “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Ps. 130:3–4). As a forgiver, God has made a way to release us from the obligation to pay Him back.

This does not mean the debt won’t be paid. The debt must be paid by someone. God is just, and justice demands a payment. The question is, who will pay it?

The answer is amazing. Although God is the one owed, He is also the one who paid the debt! He did this through the promised Messiah, Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, He died in our place. Jesus was both the payer on our behalf and the payment: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10; cf. Rom. 3:24–26).

When Jesus died, taking the punishment we deserve, God’s justice was satisfied. No more payment needs to be made. But because Jesus also died as our substitute, God’s forgiveness was also satisfied. “Now where there is remission [forgiveness] of these, there is no longer an offering for sin” (Heb. 10:18).

But God didn’t stop there. By raising Messiah Jesus from the dead, He ensured that all those who put their faith in Him alone would be forgiven and saved forever: “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10).

God is the ultimate forgiver. Through His Son, He not only has released us but taken our debt completely away:

This does not mean the debt won’t be paid. The debt must be paid by someone. God is just, and justice demands a payment.



And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements [the Greek means “certificate of indebtedness”] that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:13–14).

The payment for our sin has been made. But if we reject it, the only recourse is to pay the debt with our own lives. In that case, nothing but eternal punishment awaits us: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (Jn. 3:36).

After considering what God has done for us through His Son, we can attest that God is ready and willing to forgive anyone who comes to Jesus in faith. Have you done that? ★

ENDNOTE

- 1 Corrie ten Boom, with Jamie Buckingham, *Tramp for the Lord* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 1974), 55–57.



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I'm Forgiven—Now What?

by Bruce Scott

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you may be wondering about the practical implications. There are at least two:

Forgiving Yourself. Although believers rejoice in the forgiveness God has given them, many sometimes find it difficult to forgive themselves. The ravages and scars of sin often haunt their memories. That is when the Devil accuses them of being unworthy of forgiveness or of not having been forgiven at all. The Devil truly is the prosecuting attorney of the brethren, accusing them day and night before God (Rev. 12:10).

If you struggle with forgiving yourself, try to remember these three things:

- God is the judge—not the Devil, not your friends, not even you (Ps. 50:6; 1 Cor. 4:3–4).
- God has provided your defense attorney, “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1).
- God, the Judge, has already ruled in your favor: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). If God no longer condemns you, there is no need to condemn yourself.

Forgiving Others. As hard as it may be to forgive yourself, it is sometimes harder to forgive others who have hurt you. Sadly, there are too many stories of followers of Jesus Christ who have carried grudges for years.

But an unforgiving spirit can lead to a torturous cycle that (1) feeds on itself; (2) grows like a cancer until it consumes you (not the offender); (3) uses God to justify your behavior; and (4) leaves you bitter, paranoid, and alone.

Based on our position in Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to forgive in the same way God in Christ forgave us: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). How do we do that? Here are some tips:

- If a relationship appears damaged or

broken due to an offense, don't wait for the other person to take the initiative. Take it yourself and try to restore the relationship (Mt. 5:9, 23–24; 18:15; Rom. 12:18). You are not responsible for the other party's response. You are responsible for at least attempting reconciliation.

- Assume the offender is innocent until proven guilty (Gen. 3:11).
- Ask the offender if you misinterpreted what he or she said or did (v. 11).
- Make your forgiveness limitless (Mt. 18:21–22).
- Dispense forgiveness freely after the offending party repents (Lk. 17:3–4; 1 Jn. 1:9).
- Be willing to forgive even if the other party has not repented (2 Sam. 13:39; 14:33; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- Do not base forgiveness on feelings. It is an act of the will (Mt. 18:28–30).
- Remember, true forgiveness comes from your heart, not merely your lips (v. 35). Nevertheless, it is important to say, “I forgive you” to bring closure to the matter (cf. 9:2).
- Don't retract your forgiveness. Stop trying to make him or her pay for wronging you (Heb. 10:18). Forgiveness is to be forever and final (v. 17).

Forgiveness can reconcile relationships (Gen. 50:15–17, 21). It sees God's providence in all things, even in the hurts and offenses of life, and believes God can turn what seems bad into something good (vv. 19–20; Rom. 8:28–29).

Ultimately, forgiveness means freely granting a release to someone who doesn't deserve it. After all, isn't that what God did for us in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7)? ★



If God no longer condemns you, there is no need to condemn yourself.





THE WAY BACK

Few believers in Jesus Christ will deny that we have been swept up in a period of chaos and confusion that threatens the survival of our nation. Sadly, history gives evidence of the decline and fall of great world powers that have made the same blunders.

How do we stem this tide of destruction? The answer is found in one source alone: the reliable, indestructible Word of God. What Scripture brings to light is twofold: (1) the universal attributes of sin and (2) the redemption only God could achieve and offer freely to those who repent.

SIN INVADES CREATION

God's instructions to Adam were specific: Enjoy eating from all the trees in the Garden of Eden with one exception, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17).

The tree possessed no inherent defect but, rather, symbolized obedience to the sovereign Creator. When tested, the man disobeyed; and the result was catastrophic. Sin invaded the whole of humanity. That we are born in sin is not an empty cliché. It is a universal reality.

That fact assails us in the account of Adam and Eve's firstborn, Cain, who murdered his brother, Abel. Though we may plead innocence regarding the degree of sin we bear, we must acknowledge the truth as the apostle Paul summarized it: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Scoffers may ridicule the Genesis account, but the evidence is inescapable. Sin dogs this planet, generating evil, oppression, suffering, and death.

SIN TOPPLES NATIONS

It doesn't take long to find confirmation of sin's damage. As early as chapter 11 in Genesis, the men of Shinar (Babylon) already were rebelling against God: "And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth'" (v. 4)

The phrase *let us make a name for ourselves* stains the pages of history, embodying mankind's desire to replace God. That desire runs like an evil stream, bringing down empires and nations. Yet, godless Babylon will meet its demise, as is vividly depicted in the book of Revelation: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" (18:2).

Even God's chosen nation, Israel, succumbed to temptation and chose rebellion and sin over obedience to the Lord. The prophet Samuel had warned the Israelites of the dire consequences of choosing a man to rule over them as the king, as opposed to letting God be their King:

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge



DOES THIS WORLD GET YOU DOWN? IF IT DOES, YOU'RE NOT ALONE. BUT TAKE HEART. GOD HAS A PLAN THAT CAN SATISFY YOUR SOUL.

BY ELWOOD MCQUAID

TO GOD

us and go out before us and fight our battles.” And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. So the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed their voice, and make them a king” (1 Sam. 8:19–22).

So, God gave them what they asked for—to be like the heathens surrounding them. The Israelites wanted to emulate a culture steeped in rebellion against the Lord, His Word, and His people. When sin takes hold, it turns nations away from their Creator.

GOD MAKES A PROMISE

But God made a promise; and it was to be delivered in a completely unexpected fashion: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” (Isa. 9:6).

Who would fulfill that promise? God vowed to send His own Son as a final sacrifice for our sin (Jn. 3:16).

And so the story of Jesus begins. It is simple yet overwhelming. In fact, we stand in wonder before it. That Jesus would come to die for me—and potentially every human being on the face of the earth—is beyond comprehension. And how God chose to manifest His Son’s credentials is, to say the least, unique.

The sin-bearer stepped down from heaven, clothed Himself in flesh, astonished the religious establishment by choosing lowly fishermen as His companions, brought

healing to the blind, ate in the company of despised tax collectors and people branded as notorious sinners, rescued an accused adulteress from being stoned to death by religious zealots, and sat with multitudes who flocked to hear Him teach as He offered the Bread of Life.

All these events prefaced His move toward a hill at a place called Calvary, where He would lay down His life for you and me—a triumph over sin. Jesus became our final sacrifice. He took the punishment we deserve, satisfied God’s righteous wrath, and arose from the dead. All that is left for us to do is repent and believe.

OUR FRIEND JESUS

Over my years of ministry, I often preached in rescue missions and jails. Whenever we gave people the opportunity to sing a favorite song, they inevitably requested “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” written by Joseph M. Scriven in the 1800s. Why this hymn? Because it embodies a heartfelt cry for deliverance, bathed in simplicity and hope:

What a friend we have in Jesus, / All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry / Everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit, / Oh, what needless pain we bear

All because we do not carry / Everything to God in prayer.

These people had lost everything in life that mattered. They lived in jail cells or on the street. And they found seats in rescue missions that offered them a meal and a bed. But when they heard the message about Jesus, they received much more than food and shelter. They received eternal truth about the soul-satisfying Bread of Life.

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) are not complicated. They teach us of God the Father's love for us in words and depictions we can all understand. Consider the story of the prodigal son in Luke's Gospel.

The young man demanded his inheritance, skipped off to a faraway country, and "squandered his estate with loose living" (15:13, NASB). Eventually, he hit bottom.

Thinking his father's servants were better off than he was, the young man decided, "I will arise and go to my father" (v. 18). Returning, he expected well-deserved chastisement and servitude. "But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (v. 20). His father had been watching and waiting for his son to return; and when his boy came home, he welcomed him with unrestrained love.

THE CROSS

Inexplicably, it was the religious leaders who consorted to force the Son of God to the cross. The appointed guardians of the faith became murderers.

However, more was transacted on that grim occasion than what they understood. Jesus expressed what the cross was all about: "No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:18).

Jesus' enemies thought they were putting an end to Him. Instead, they were igniting a flame—one that would burn for millennia and will stay lit throughout eternity. To His disciples, Jesus had provided an assuring word:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (14:1-3).

Then He added, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (v. 6).

Thankfully, Jesus is coming again to call to His side those of us who belong to Him; and we will be by His side forever. We have this assurance because He hung on a cross; shed His blood as the final sacrifice for sin; and became the "propitiation [satisfaction] for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17), declaring, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30).

HIS SUFFERING, OUR DELIVERANCE

The evangelist was Dr. Hyman Appelman, a Jewish lawyer who had become a believer in Jesus. The meeting was in a large auditorium in downtown Detroit, Michigan, where people from all over the area gathered to hear him speak. My wife, Maxine, and I were there with my father, who was concerned for our spiritual welfare.

The subject was "The Three Crosses." Dr. Appelman explained the events leading to the Messiah's trial and to Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate declaring Him guiltless. Yet, Pilate acquiesced to the demands of corrupt religious leaders who demanded a guilty verdict leading to Jesus' crucifixion.

On the cross, Jesus hung between two notorious criminals. It was at this juncture that Dr. Appelman made his appeal. He began with these verses:

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Lk. 23:39-42).

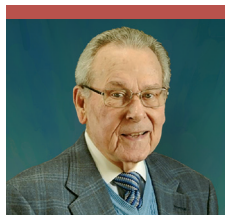
"Every person here tonight stands on one side of the cross or the other," Dr. Appelman said. "You must ask yourself the question, 'On which side of the cross am I?'"

I asked myself if I was on the side of the criminal who blasphemed or the one who believed. I didn't leave the meeting that night as a Christian, but I understood my need and God's provision.

For approximately six months, the image of that cross bore into my mind until, one spring evening, my resistance dissolved into repentance. I fell on my knees before a loving Christ who endured the torture of crucifixion for me so I could be set free.

I believed! Immediately, my life changed course; and I have never turned back.

My experience is in no way unique. In fact, it is representative of all who have come before and after me. Nothing compares to the experience of receiving new life in Christ. We are all born in sin. But through Jesus, we have a way back to God. ★



Elwood McQuaid

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How to Become Right With God

by Jim Showers

“**H**ow do I become right with God?” is neither a Jewish question nor a Gentile one. It is a human question. And the answer is neither Jewish nor Gentile. It is universal. However, it is through the Jewish people that God provided the way for us to have peace with the Almighty.

Many people believe God accepts them as they are because they do good deeds and try to be good people. But God sees us as sinners. The prophet Isaiah said, “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you” (Isa. 59:2).

We all need to restore our relationships with Him but are incapable of doing so on our own. In his prayer of penitence for Israel, the prophet Isaiah declared, “We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses [good deeds] are like filthy rags” (64:6).

This is the human condition. We literally are “polluted” (in Hebrew) with sin. Even our good deeds cannot cleanse us. Pouring clean water into polluted water doesn’t make the polluted water clean. It simply makes the clean water dirty.

God condemns everyone as sinners:

There is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one (Ps. 14:1–3; cf. 53:3).

King Solomon, the wisest of men, observed, “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Eccl. 7:20).

God’s standard for righteousness is perfect sinlessness. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord says, “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:20).

The New Testament reaffirms the Hebrew Scriptures. The apostle Paul quoted from Ecclesiastes and Psalms (Rom. 3:10–12) to declare everyone—Jewish and Gentile—sinners; then he added, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v. 23). There is no way to avoid the fact that “the wages of sin is death” (6:23).

This truth flies in the face of human reasoning. We tend to compare ourselves to others and justify

ourselves by thinking we are better than most and, therefore, God will accept us. Our hearts deceive us into believing we are good before Him (Jer. 17:9).

However, we need to see ourselves as God sees us. The Scriptures in both Testaments clearly indict us as sinners who fall short of God’s standard of righteousness and are separated from Him by our sin.

The Bible teaches the only way to restore our relationship is through faith in His only begotten Son—the Redeemer of Israel—who bore the punishment for our sin so that we can escape God’s judgment.

The way of righteousness is the same today as it was in the days of Abraham: faith. Abraham wasn’t restored to God because he performed good deeds but because he believed God. He left his home, followed God to a land he didn’t know, and prepared to sacrifice his son as God commanded. All these actions were driven by his faith: “He believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

Abraham’s standing before God came from his belief in the Lord and His promises. In pointing others to faith in Jesus Christ, the Jewish apostles stated that it was Abraham’s faith, not his works, that made him righteous before God (Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23).

Faith is a personal matter between an individual and God. No church or institution can save a soul from judgment. Only God saves, based on faith in the One who took the punishment we deserve, died in our place, and rose from the dead.

The Lord warned the prophet Daniel that someday He will resurrect the dead to face their judgment, “some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). After we die, our destiny is sealed. There is no further opportunity to repent. The author of Hebrews said it best: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (9:27).

God says the only way to be saved from eternal punishment is through faith in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world, who offers salvation freely to all who believe. ★





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*
The excavation site at Khirbet al-Ra'i

IS THE BOOK OF JUDGES REALLY HISTORY? (PART 2)

➔ The reluctant judge Gideon is one of the Bible's most well-known and colorful characters. Selected by God for the work of a warrior while hiding from Israel's enemies, he learned to trust God through a process since termed "putting out the fleece" to discern His will (Judg. 6). Through Gideon's weakness, the Lord brought Israel victory during the difficult days of the judges (chaps. 7–8). As a result, Gideon is remembered as one of the faithful heroes "who through faith subdued kingdoms" (Heb. 11:32–33).

However, some may be tempted to think the account of Gideon is only a story, not history. Telling stories to emphasize the main message of a scriptural text has become popular in many churches. While storytelling helps listeners retain a passage's central idea, it often minimizes the reality of the people, places, and events that form the account. Archaeology helps recover the past's physical evidence, thereby restoring the Bible's historicity and helping a post-modern generation develop a real faith for daily life.

In 2019 archaeologists unearthed a 3,100-year-old inscription from the site of Khirbet al-Ra'i, a settlement in the southern Judean hills between Kiryat Gat (the ancient Philistine city of Gath) and the central Canaanite city-state of Lachish, which became a Judean city destroyed by Assyrian King Sennacherib (ca. 701 BC). Because Philistine-style pottery was found in the excavations at Khirbet al-Ra'i, the settlement fit well the biblical description of the Philistine city of Ziklag.¹

Radiocarbon dating revealed the date for the site was the 10th century BC, the time when the Davidic kingdom began and Ziklag came under Israelite control. The Philistine King Achish gave David Ziklag, where David once defeated an

invading Amalekite army; and some of the Israelites returned there after the Babylonian exile (Neh. 11:25, 28). However, the city also functioned during Gideon's judgeship, as mentioned in the book of Joshua (15:20, 31).

Archaeologists discovered a potsherd (broken pottery) from a small jug at Khirbet al-Ra'i. The name *Jerubbaal*, which means "May Baal be great," was inscribed in ink. This name, a nickname Gideon received after tearing down Baal's altar (Judg. 6:31–32), points more clearly to the biblical judge than the more popular biblical name *Gideon*. The potsherd is dated around the time (ca. 1100 BC) when many biblical scholars believe Gideon lived.

This discovery marks the first time an inscription of the rare name *Jerubbaal* has ever been excavated. Later biblical writers used the word *ba'al* (the second part of Gideon's compound nickname) to refer specifically to the Canaanite warrior god Baal, but the Israelites of Gideon's time understood the word simply to

mean "lord" and would have used it in reference to the God of Israel. Preserving this ancient nickname indicates the historicity of the Gideon account because, while this name would be inappropriate for an Israelite of a later period, it fits precisely in the Judges period.

Gideon's legacy as a hero of the faith reminds us that God can and will use anyone, despite his or her fear and limitations, who yields to Him. Gideon is more than just a storybook figure; he is a part of history, along with each of us who believes in faith and trusts in the Lord. As a judge (or "deliverer," or "savior") of Israel, Gideon also reminds us that the Lord intervened in history to conquer sin and redeem all who will trust Him as Savior.

ENDNOTE

1 "Biblical Town of Ziklag May Have Been Discovered," *Bible History Daily*, blog of the Biblical Archaeology Society (September 22, 2022).



Randall Price

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WORDS OF WARNING

PHILIPPIANS 3:1–3

Life is full of warnings. The Internet, TV, and billboards bombard us regularly with warnings, telling us what to think, believe, and do. Likewise, our families, friends, employers, doctors, and governments caution us, hoping to influence our choices. Ignoring these warnings, whether good or bad, can change our lives.

In Philippians 3:1–3, Paul warned the Philippians not to follow false or cultic teachers, especially the Judaizers, who would lead them into major errors in their faith. But before doing so, Paul reminded the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord,” a major theme throughout his letter.

REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS

Paul began by saying, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord” (v. 1). Though it might seem as if the apostle were concluding his letter, Paul used the word *finally* (Greek, *loipon*) to open a section alerting the Philippians to beware of false doctrine. Here, *finally* is better translated “furthermore” or “moreover.”

Before warning the believers, the apostle commanded them, “Rejoice in the Lord.” The word *rejoice*, used numerous times throughout Philippians, is the theme of this short letter. Christians’ joy comes not from ourselves or even other Christians but, rather, “in the Lord.”

Though difficulty is unpleasant, God allows it in believers’ lives according to His will. But by His grace, He equips us to face trials and persecution with joy.

James, Jesus’ half-brother, reinforced this truth when he wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas. 1:2–3). James did not say that trials are enjoyable but that believers should count them as joy.

Paul wrote, “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Believers should “rejoice in the Lord” under the most trying circumstances, even when we do not understand the purpose of such trials.

RECEIVE REPETITIVE WARNINGS

Paul went on to say, “For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe” (Phil. 3:1). He was sounding a warning against the false teachers and evil workers he mentioned previously in his letter (cf. 1:27–30).

Paul said it was “not tedious” (irksome, grievous, or troublesome) for him to do. In fact, it was extremely necessary. Repeating his warning was “safe” for the Philippians to teach them how to stand against false teachers and their erroneous beliefs.

Paul and other biblical authors repeated warnings because repetition improves clarity and helps listeners internalize and retain the truth they hear.

RESIST CEREMONIAL RITUALS

Paul warned the Philippians against false teachers called Judaizers. They taught heresy in the church and passed off such falsehood as the true gospel of Christ.

The word *Judaizer* comes from the Greek word *Judaizo*, which means “to be or to live like a Jew.” Judaizers taught that it was not enough to simply believe in the Jewish Messiah Jesus without embracing the practices of Judaism. They claimed Gentiles who had received Christ must live like Jews by keeping ceremonial Jewish practices, particularly circumcision (Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:2; 6:12–13).

Judaizers tried to discredit Paul’s authority as an apostle. They dogged his footsteps during his missionary ministry, trying to undo his work. Paul exposed the Judaizers’ heretical beliefs and taught that the gospel was not an addendum to Judaism, nor a mere supplement to the Mosaic Law.

EVERYWHERE PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL, THE JUDAIZERS FOLLOWED WITH THEIR FALSE GOSPEL OF SALVATION BY WORKS AND UNBIBLICAL ORDINANCES.

Everywhere Paul preached the gospel, the Judaizers followed with their false gospel of salvation by works and unbiblical ordinances.

Paul strongly denounced these people, saying, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation” (Phil 3:2). The word *beware* (Greek, *blepo*) means “to see” or “look out for.” He warned the Philippians to take heed, describing the Judaizers in three ways:

1. Because of their character, they were “dogs” (v. 2). Dogs in biblical times were not domesticated animals that people treated as beloved pets. Dogs were considered unclean, vicious, flea-bitten scavengers that fed on garbage. They

(Gen. 17:10–14), but He also meant for it to parallel spiritual circumcision of Israel’s heart (cf. Dt. 30:6). Judaizers appropriated this outward sign as a requirement for Gentile salvation. God, however, never demanded Gentile men be circumcised to prove they were saved.

Commitment to outward ceremonial rituals or sacramental observances does not earn salvation. God saves us based on our faith alone in Christ, not based on a symbolic act of physical circumcision. The Philippians needed clean hearts (Dt. 30:6). Paul wrote, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

COMMITMENT TO OUTWARD CEREMONIAL RITUALS OR SACRAMENTAL OBSERVANCES DOES NOT EARN SALVATION. GOD SAVES US BASED ON OUR FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST, NOT BASED ON A SYMBOLIC ACT OF PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION.

fought among themselves and roamed the streets and countryside in packs, devouring other animals, especially sheep. The prophet Isaiah described the false prophets of his day as blind, ignorant, dumb dogs (Isa. 56:10).

2. Because of their conduct, they were “evil workers” (Phil. 3:2). The word *evil* (Greek, *kakos*) means intrinsically worthless or depraved. The Judaizers’ speech and motives endangered believers.

3. Because of their commitment, they were “the mutilation” (v. 2), or the “concision” (KJV), a sarcastic play on the word for “circumcision.” Judaizers required that Gentile Christians be circumcised to prove they were Christians. Paul said mixing that Old Testament Jewish rite with the doctrine of grace to prove a Gentile’s salvation mutilated the gospel of Christ. No one can be saved by mixing the Law with grace (cf. Eph. 2:8–9).

In Galatians 1, Paul condemned Judaizer instruction, saying their teaching “trouble[d]” (v. 7) the Galatians, creating fear and confusion and undermining their confidence in Christ. It also “pervert[ed] [corrupted or distorted] the gospel of Christ” (v. 7), and for these teachers to preach any other gospel was to destroy the truth. Paul said, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (v. 8). Paul’s strong and sobering words are applicable even today.

REMEMBER YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

God instituted the practice of physical circumcision for Israel as a sign of His covenant relationship with the nation

Spiritually circumcised believers are described in three ways:

1. Their practice is to “worship God in the Spirit” (v. 3). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24). God is truth and a Spirit, invisible to man. Man must approach God with a truthful heart in prayer and worship through the indwelling Spirit of God. Our relationship to God is personal, not based on outward ordinances like circumcision.

2. Their purpose of worship is to “rejoice in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:3). The word *rejoice* (Greek, *kauchaomai*) means to “boast,” “exult,” or “glory” in Christ. People can only glory and boast in Christ if they know Him intimately as their personal Savior.

3. Their pattern of service is to “have no confidence in the flesh” (v. 3). Believers must pattern their lives after Christ, not by trusting in the flesh or relying on external ceremonies. They should not place any trust in their corrupt, fleshly nature (Rom. 8:8).

We all need to heed Paul’s words of warning and determine whether we are putting our confidence in the flesh or walking by faith. May we be found faithful!



by David M. Levy,

Bible teacher, author, former pastor, and the retired director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry

PROTECTING OURSELVES FROM THE ENEMY

BY SARAH FERN

I directed a pro-life crisis pregnancy center for several years. My staff members and I began each morning by praying for our patients by name, some of whom never showed up for their free appointments but went straight to the abortion clinic. Our staff recognized the spiritual warfare taking place. It was an active pursuit by an enemy who wanted to destroy the innocent lives growing inside these women.

We once prayed for a woman we thought would skip her appointment. To our surprise, she walked through the door moments later. Our counselor shared with her the hope only Jesus could give. Agitated, the woman admitted she practiced witchcraft and was uninterested in hearing more about Jesus. She then asked for her free ultrasound, admitting she only came to the center to determine how many weeks she was pregnant before keeping her appointment at an abortion clinic the following day.

The ultrasound tech prayed silently as she began the test. Within moments, the woman gasped as she saw the tiny life in her womb almost dance on the ultrasound screen before her eyes. The little one seemed to look directly at her and wave.

“The baby is waving at me!” the mother exclaimed. After a few moments, she said, “Well, this changes everything. I guess I’m going to be a mom.”

That day, a battle was raging in places we could not see. The apostle Paul described this struggle: “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

Who is this powerful enemy? And how can we protect ourselves from his snares?

KNOWING OUR ENEMY

Through several scriptural accounts, we can piece together a clear picture of our adversary, Satan. God created him as an “anointed cherub who covers” (Ezek. 28:14). Many scholars believe he was the chief angel appointed to guard the throne of God.

In that position, he grew proud. God told him, “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted

your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground” (v. 17). So, He cast Satan and one-third of the angels (those who rebelled with Satan) out of heaven (Rev. 12:3–4).

God allowed Satan, the Devil, to seize temporary power over this present age (Jn. 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). Satan is more powerful and intelligent than many of us realize, and he will relentlessly pursue followers of Christ to torment them until he is thrown into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev. 20:10).

Still, many Christians forget about Satan and his followers—just like he wants. The apostle Peter called him “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Like a lion, the Devil wants his prey unaware of his presence.

He can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), bestowing gifts that seem good but are not. I think of the lie many women who choose abortion believe: *I can do anything I want with my body*. This lie comes straight from hell. It pretends to be a balm for the soul but denies the truth that our bodies belong to our Creator and that we should “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1).

INTERACTING WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD

In the Old Testament, God defined clear boundaries regarding human interaction with the spirit world. As the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God warned them to avoid

the practices of the surrounding nations: “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead” (Dt. 18:10–11).

God does not say these mediums and spiritists are impostors; rather, they interact in places where humans should not be. Disobeying this command is an abomination to the Lord (v. 12).

Today, many people openly worship the prince of darkness. According to National Geographic, 1.5 million Americans identify as pagans, more than 10 times as many as in 2001.

As Judeo-Christian values disappear from the West, Satan’s influence will grow; and he will deceive more and more people as he uses society to accomplish his schemes. As believers in Jesus, we must remain vigilant.

PROTECTING OURSELVES

Even though we continually struggle with sin both inside and around us, we are secure in God’s hand (Jn. 10:28). Yet

weapons against the Devil (Eph. 6:13–18), convicts us of sin, leads us to repentance, and empowers us to live blameless and holy lives. When we walk in the Spirit, we can resist the enemy’s attacks.

This is not a trivial, easy war; and no believer in Jesus should fight alone. Christians should stand firm together and encourage, pray with, and confess their sins to one another.

Nineteenth-century English preacher Charles H. Spurgeon said,

Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.¹

Separation makes us vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks. Our job as believers is not to destroy our enemy but to stand against him while we take the beautiful message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, making disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18–20).

I think of the lie many women who choose abortion believe: *I can do anything I want with my body.*

we should be constantly aware of the internal war against our fleshly sin nature and the external war against spiritual hosts of wickedness.

Christians often fall into one of two traps: living so hyper-aware of Satan and his demons that we become obsessed with them, or ignoring and never thinking of them. We must balance these approaches through the Holy Spirit’s working in our lives.

Paul tells us, “Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). Used here as an active verb, the word *stand* indicates a moment-by-moment posture, not a one-time action. We war against a master manipulator who wants to destroy us because we serve God.

Satan wants to dismantle our families, marriages, and churches. He seeks to hurt and kill the innocent. But we serve a Savior who triumphantly told His disciples, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).

Jesus also promised to send the Helper, an apt name for the Holy Spirit (v. 7). The Helper supplies us with the proper

There are many ways we can follow Jesus’ command to make disciples: by sharing with our neighbors the hope of Jesus, traveling to a foreign land to tell others about our Savior, supporting such endeavors through prayer and giving—and even by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus in an ultrasound room at a crisis pregnancy center.

While the Lord tarries and believers await His return for His church at the Rapture, Satan will attack us. But the Holy Spirit strengthens us to stand against him and enables our brothers and sisters in Christ to stand beside us. We know the end of the story, and it is glorious. Stand firm.

ENDNOTE

¹ “Quote by Charles Spurgeon” <tinyurl.com/5n6razfc>.



Sarah Fern

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‘FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA’: A CALL FOR ISRAEL’S DESTRUCTION

BY STEVEN STALINSKY

(JNS)—Less than 24 hours after Hamas launched its October 7 attack on Israel, its Tehran representative, Khaled Qaddoumi, gave an interview to Iran’s Press TV about the “historic event [that] took place in the holy land of Palestine . . . the Al-Aqsa Flood battle to liberate Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea, in order to expel the Zionist regime.”

The following day, he added, “We will witness the liberation of the dear homeland of the Palestinian people from the river to the sea, as well as the destruction of the Zionist regime.”

Though the tens of thousands of anti-Israel protesters worldwide chanting “From the river to the sea” fully understand its true meaning, many insist this phrase is merely an expression of support for the Palestinians, not a call for the destruction of Israel and for killing Jews.

Such antisemites are playing a disingenuous game to hide their true beliefs. For example, antisemites use coded language and symbols to prevent removal or shutdown of their social media accounts, such as the triple parentheses—the so-called “echo”—to highlight the names of individuals and organizations thought to be Jewish. On TikTok, “the Austrian painter” is code for Hitler. New codes are emerging all the time.

On November 3, U.S. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib attacked President Biden in a tweet for his pro-Israel stance and warned that Arab and Muslim Americans would not support his reelection bid. Her tweet featured a video showing scenes of pro-Palestinian marches where participants chanted, “From the river to the sea.”

In response, the House of Representatives censured Tlaib, with some House members labeling the phrase a “call for the destruction of Israel and murder of Jews.” Tlaib claimed the slogan is “an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction, or hate.”

Interestingly, Germany considers the phrase a Hamas symbol and banned it in early November; and countries such as Austria and the Czech Republic followed suit. Online platforms, including X and Etsy, soon began removing posts containing the slogan.

For Hamas and other jihadi groups, the phrase is an ideology and way of life. It is a fundamental part of a May 2017 Hamas policy document setting out the organization’s vision of a Palestinian state:



Hamas rejects any alternative to the complete liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea. . . . Palestine in its borders from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the West, and from Ras Naqura [Rosh HaNikra] in the north to Umm Rashrash [Eilat] in the south is a complete unit and the land and homeland of the Palestinian people.

The Iranian regime and its proxy militias share Hamas’s destructive vision. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that “the only solution” for the Israel-Hamas war is “the establishment of the Palestinian state from the river to the sea.”

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah stated, “Palestine from the river to the sea is the property of the Palestinian people” and that “the elimination of Israel” is “the interest of the entire Muslim world and the entire Arab world. . . . What the Arabs have wanted for 60 years is . . . for the land from the river to the sea to be returned” to the Palestinian people.

“From the river to the sea” is a universal call for the eradication of Israel. It is one of many manifestations of the deliberate misinformation emanating from the anti-Israel camp since October 7 that has deceived the media and other policy shapers into believing Israel is the aggressor in the Israel-Hamas war.

For news about Israel updated daily, visit foi.org/news.

HANG HOPE IN YOUR HOME!

The Gospel Message

This poster illustrates our sinful, helpless condition on our own and the marvelous hope we have through God's grace and provision to save us from our sin.

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THE BAD NEWS: OUR HELPLESS CONDITION				THE GOSPEL MESSAGE				THE GOOD NEWS: GOD'S MATCHLESS PROVISION						
We Are All Sinners	Good Deeds Cannot Remove Sin	Sin Separates Us From God	Sin Brings Death	Assentment Requires Blood Sacrifice and Repentance	God Loves You	Jesus the Messiah Was Punished for Your Sin	The Messiah Came at the Appointed Time	God Can Remove Your Sin	Jesus is Alive	Salvation Comes by Faith				
Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament	Old Testament
New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament	New Testament

BEWARE THE LIES OF THE DEVIL									
Satan's Lies									
There is no God.	The Bible is merely myths written by humans.	I'll get to heaven on my own.	I'm not a sinner; I'm just a person.	Jesus is just a man, no more and no less.	I don't need to go to church.	I'll go to hell as a sinner; I'll be happy in hell.	I don't believe in heaven or hell.	I don't believe in Satan.	We are the result of evolution.
God's Eternal Truth	All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.	Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."	If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.	Jesus is God, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form to save us from our sins.

Lies of the Devil

This chart refutes common lies planted by the Devil with the truth God has promised in His Word.

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Esther in Historical Perspective

This timeline frames the wonderful account of deliverance in the book of Esther within a key era of Jewish history, from captivity to the return to Jerusalem.

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ESTHER IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE									
ASSYRIA FALLS	BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY	BARTELEMEW	FIRST TEMPLE	DANIEL	SECOND TEMPLE	THE PROPHETS	SECOND TEMPLE DESTROYED	400 Silent Years	Begin After Malachi
722 B.C.	586 B.C.	520 B.C.	520 B.C.	520 B.C.	520 B.C.	520 B.C.	586 B.C.	400 B.C.	400 B.C.



The Bridge

This memorable depiction of heaven and hell shows that Jesus' death on the cross is our only hope of an eternity spent in glory with Him.

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*
Zvi Kalisher (left)

PHOTO: THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL ARCHIVE

“They thought they had fooled me, but I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53.

by Zvi Kalisher

Though we seek peace with our neighbors, we know it will not come easily. They call themselves righteous Jews while they tell me to keep quiet. Most Israelis do not believe in the Lord, so we who do believe stand out among them.

Some people who know I follow Jesus found my address and came to my home recently. This has happened often. They came uninvited; and one asked me, “Are you one of those traitors against our God?”

“Take a look in the mirror to find the real traitors,” I told them.

They were not happy with what I said. “We will call the police!” one threatened. “What have we done wrong that you call us traitors?”

I replied, “In our War for Independence, we fought for our lives. We had no water, little food, and not enough weapons. Many of us died. We nearly surrendered to our enemies. You call yourselves faithful to Israel, but where were you when our enemies surrounded us? What have you done for our nation?”

“We read the Mishnah and the Gemara

[rabbinical commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures] in the synagogues,” one said. “That is why we win our wars. Where were you during this time?”

“I was not hiding like you,” I said. “I was fighting in the war.”

“But you have betrayed our God, and you have betrayed our land!” one shouted at me in reference to my faith.

I was outnumbered, but the Lord has said, “Fear not, for I am with you” (Isa. 41:10). “If you can prove that you fought for our land like I did, I will join you,” I told them.

“And if you can prove that you fought in the war, we will all give you money,” they replied.

“I do not want your money,” I said. “But I will show you the proof of my service.” I showed them a medal the army had awarded me, which was signed by the



generals. “Now tell me, who are the real traitors?” I asked. “You say you believe in God, but you believe in false gods because of your studies.”

“You are the traitor, if you believe in Jesus!” one shouted.

These men believe the New Testament is not God’s Word, so they do not listen to its teachings. So I read to them from Deuteronomy 6, often considered the most important chapter in Judaism: “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him. . . . You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you” (vv. 13–14).

These words upset them. “We want to see your prayer book,” one said.

So, I showed them my Bible. “My prayer book is in my heart,” I said. “But your heart is far from God. You do not truly follow God. Deuteronomy 6:14 says, ‘You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you.’ Look around. Whom are you following? The one true God or false gods?”

They shouted at me again; and one yelled, “Do you believe our holy rabbis are not holy enough for you?”

“There is only One who is holy—the almighty God,” I said.

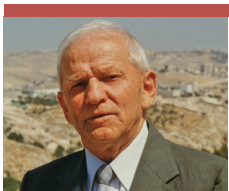
Finally, one man asked, “Can you show us where it is written in our Bible about the One in whom you believe?” I had been waiting more than two hours for someone to ask this question! They thought they had fooled me, but I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53. There, it is written,

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (vv. 5–6).

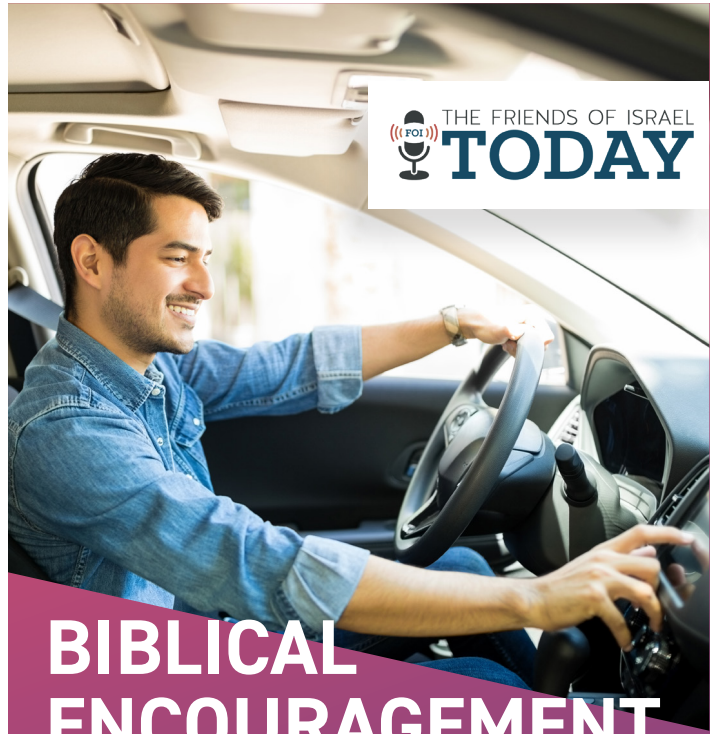
When they read this chapter, they were shocked and asked me why they had never read it before. “It is because your rabbis are afraid to share the truth of this Scripture with you, which clearly speaks about the One in whom I believe,” I said.

Please pray these men will come to know, as I do, the only One who can truly make them righteous through faith.

From The Friends of Israel archives



Zvi Kalisher (1928–2014) was a Holocaust survivor who was known for his unswerving faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry for more than 55 years.



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