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Upside Down
The world is in a mess, and few people have enough discernment to assess what’s really going on.
Steve Herzig

The Rapture
Here is a detailed look at what the Rapture is—and what it is not.
David M. Levy

Gone?
Many pastors no longer teach about the Rapture. What happened? Why is this important doctrine being left behind?
Chris Katulka

When Is It?
Pretrib? Posttrib? Midtrib? This article explains why evangelical Christians don’t all agree on the timing of the Rapture.
Mike Stallard

What We’re Spared
Think of the worst disasters in history. They’re nothing compared to what lies ahead—but not for the bride of Christ.
Bruce Scott
When I was a brand new believer many years ago, a wonderful woman in my church invited me to her home for lunch. I knew nothing about Christian doctrine. All I knew was that I was a sinner, Jesus had died for me personally and paid for my sins with His blood, and I loved Him.

She knew a whole lot more. Besides teaching me how to make stewed tomatoes that afternoon, she taught me about the Rapture. She told me that someday all born-again believers will be miraculously transported to heaven in the twinkling of an eye. Our born-again loved ones who predeceased us will be raised from the dead at that time, and we all will meet Jesus in the air and ascend with Him. How wonderful, I thought. God is so incredibly good. And I loved Him even more.

One of my favorite verses is 1 Corinthians 2:9: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

We cannot even imagine the glorious future God has planned. Perhaps that’s one reason fewer people teach about the Rapture these days: They can’t envision it. It’s beyond the understanding of human, finite minds. But it is real and constitutes the grand finale of the Church Age and the resumption of God’s program for Israel.

I don’t know about you, but I’m thrilled God loves us more than we can even imagine and has prepared something as wonderful as the Rapture for His church. As Annie J. Flint declared in her hymn “He Giveth More Grace,”

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

This issue of Israel My Glory is devoted to the doctrine of the Rapture. I hope it gives you much-needed hope and confidence in God during these difficult days and inspires you to serve with your whole heart the Lord who has devised such a wonderful plan for those who love Him.

We’ve also added a new feature this year called “The Berean Box,” where David Levy will answer important doctrinal questions and explain passages in God’s Word that many people misunderstand.

May God bless you abundantly with His matchless love and grace in 2018.

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
A friend recently told me, “When I look at all that is happening in this world, I have to believe we’re getting very close to the end.” He was referring to the end of this age, when God will begin a new time on Earth that will pave the way for the Messiah.

Prior to that new time, the Lord will return to snatch the church out of this world. He will meet us in the air, and we will forever be with Him (1 Th. 4:13–18). This is the blessed hope we are encouraged to keep before us always—the at-any-time return of our Lord and Savior (Ti. 2:13).

This world is in bad shape and getting worse every day. Radical Islam is a growing challenge that world leaders seem inept at handling; and mass Muslim immigration into Europe and, to a lesser degree, the United States further complicates the situation.

For years Israel has been sounding the alarm alone. Now the world is waking up to see Islam’s ambitions go far beyond little Israel. It seeks dominion over Europe and eventually America. Iran is growing into a nuclear power, pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into developing nuclear weapons and spreading terrorism around the world. And Russia is emerging as a major player among key Muslim nations in the Middle East.

The Western civilization that has dominated the world economically and politically for centuries is declining before our eyes. Europe suffers from a leadership void, as many nations face economic crises and immigration problems. They fail to make the changes necessary to preserve their sovereignty and historic culture. Due to an inability or unwillingness to stop terrorist attacks, we continue to witness violence across the continent.

In the United States, the Left is gaining greater ground in its efforts to transform the country. Even though we have a new administration that wants to “make America great again,” America has not returned to what it once was; and we are witnessing the decline of our great nation.

Religion, particularly Christianity, is under direct attack. Leftists seek to eliminate it completely from the public arena. We’ve seen the Ten Commandments, Christmas nativities, and prayer removed from public display; and many want to forbid all public expressions of Christianity altogether.

The Judeo-Christian values upon which this country was founded and that have guided it for much of its 240-plus years are disintegrating. People committed to creating a socialistic, godless America are swaying the younger generations. They want an America that no longer leads the world but, rather, sits idly by the wayside. They embrace globalization, which sets the world up for a one-world government.

Consequently, the obvious question is, “Are we imminently close to the end of this age?” Although events seem to be aligning, we cannot say with absolute certainty the end is near. There have been other times in history when the end also seemed near. Prior to World War II, we seemed desperately close to the brink. Yet it was not the prelude to the end of this age.

I’m reminded that, while Scripture encourages us to discern the times, our calling has not changed. We are to share the life-transforming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will lend an ear to hear it. If the end is near, the need to make the love of Christ known is all the more urgent. So we must continue to preach the truth until the Lord takes the church home.
“AND NOW WE SAY, ‘HEIL HITLER’”

How would you feel if you discovered your third grader marched to the cafeteria giving the Nazi salute? That’s what happened late last year in a Vermont public school.

“The children were standing with their [right] arm[s] out in front of them and the teacher was modeling the position,” District Superintendent Ned Kirsch told parents. “She then raised her arm slightly and said, ‘And now we say, Heil Hitler,’” reported Fox News. The veteran substitute teacher was immediately fired and prohibited from returning to campus.

A few days later, a similar report emerged from Georgia. Parents complained a middle school teacher assigned her students the bizarre task of creating a Nazi party mascot. The assignment read, “The year is 1935 and you have been tasked with creating a mascot to represent the Nazi party at its political rallies. Think about all of the information that you have learned about Hitler and the Nazi party. You will create a COLORFUL illustration of the mascot. Give the mascot a NAME. You will also write an explanation as to why the mascot was chosen to represent the Nazi Party.”

The Gwinnett County School District admitted this homework assignment fell outside the school’s social-studies curriculum and was inappropriate.

Although no evidence has emerged to show these teachers to be Nazi sympathizers, their inexcusable actions reveal an insolent attitude toward the Holocaust of World War II and the 6 million Jewish men, women, and children who lost their lives in this strategically planned extermination of an entire race.

Children are impressionable and must be taught properly. Hitler knew the value of reaching them early. At age 10 boys and girls in the Third Reich entered the Young Folk and later the Hitler Youth. From 1933 to 1936, membership in the Hitler Youth soared from 50,000 to 5.4 million.

Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Do we want our teachers training our children to say “Heil Hitler”? Do we want them assigning homework that connects the genocidal Nazi agenda to a mascot—a good-luck symbol used in sports to promote team spirit and unity? Is this appalling type of instruction the future of Holocaust education in America?

As it stands, the United States has no nationally mandated Holocaust-education curriculum. State and local governments have that responsibility. Today only eight states require proper Holocaust education: Florida, New Jersey, California, Illinois, New York, Indiana, Michigan, and Rhode Island.

A bipartisan bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives commending those states and encouraging more to adopt laws requiring Holocaust education. The good news is more states have made commitments to do so, but there is still a long way to go.

Now more than ever, the United States needs nationwide Holocaust education that is factual, respectful, and relevant. The number of Holocaust survivors is dwindling; and as they die and their personal accounts become secondhand stories, the movement to rewrite history and embrace Holocaust denial grows stronger.

Only a third of the global population today believes the historical accounts of this atrocity, according to the Anti-Defamation League. Yet Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who commanded the Allied forces during World War II and later became the 34th president of the United States, wrote,

The things I saw beggar description. While I was touring the [concentration] camp . . . the visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, [Gen.] George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to “propaganda.”

If we want to train up our children properly, we need a proper Holocaust curriculum in all 50 states; or we may hear many more stories like those coming out of Vermont and Georgia.

by Chris Katulka
PREPARING FOR WAR

As tensions rise along the Lebanese-Israeli border, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman has warned that the next war between Hezbollah and Israel will include Syria. “In anything that transpires, it will be one theater,” he said. “Syria and Lebanon together, Hezbollah, the Assad regime and all of the Assad regime’s collaborators,” he said.

Lieberman added that Israel believes Hezbollah—the Iran-backed, Lebanese Shiite militia—has gained control over the U.S.-backed Lebanese army and signaled that both would be in Israeli sights in any future war. “We are no longer talking about Hezbollah alone,” he said. “We are talking about Hezbollah and the Lebanese army, and to my regret this is the reality. The Lebanese army has turned into an integral part of Hezbollah’s command structure. The Lebanese army has lost its independence and become an inseparable part of the Hezbollah apparatus.”

Israel last fought a war against Hezbollah in 2006. Since then, Hezbollah has increased the size and sophistication of its arsenal and reinforced its positions along the “Blue Line” dividing Israel and Lebanon. Israeli military officials say Hezbollah has built a stockpile of more than 120,000 rockets, including many that can reach far into Israel.

Hezbollah has also gained combat experience, especially in offensive warfare, by fighting alongside Syrian President Bashar al-Assad against an array of Sunni Muslim insurgents. Although many of its fighters have died in the conflict, Hezbollah appears to have emerged stronger and bolder than ever.

Israel has also built up its arsenal and obtained top-of-the-line missile-defense systems, such as the Iron Dome. Israel recently held its largest military exercise in almost 20 years to prepare for a potential war with Hezbollah. Tens of thousands of soldiers from different branches of the Israel Defense Forces—including the army, air force, and navy, as well as intelligence and cyber command—participated in drills in the Golan Heights, simulating scenarios Israel can expect in the next confrontation with Hezbollah.

“Israel will defend itself with the full force of our arms and the full power of our convictions,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a UN General Assembly meeting in New York. “We will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria for its air, sea, and ground forces. We will act to prevent Iran from producing deadly weapons in Syria or in Lebanon for use against us.”

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has warned that any future conflict between Hezbollah and Israel could quickly expand into a larger regional war. “If an Israeli war is launched against Syria or Lebanon, it is not known that the fighting will remain Lebanese-Israeli, or Syrian-Israeli,” Nasrallah said. “This could open the way for thousands, even hundreds of thousands of fighters from all over the Arab and Islamic world to participate—from Iraq, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” he added.

Hezbollah leader
Hassan Nasrallah

How does Russia—a strategic ally of Hezbollah, Iran, and the Assad regime—factor into the equation? Writing in Foreign Affairs, Dmitry Adamsky, one of Israel’s leading experts on Russian strategic thinking, predicted that the Kremlin probably would exploit such a war to improve its position and influence in the wider Middle East: “If conflict breaks out between Israel and Hezbollah, Moscow would probably let Hezbollah and Iran bleed in order to weaken their regional positions. But it would also seek to prevent a total Israeli victory, since it still needs Hezbollah as a strategic actor in the region, and because doing so could demonstrate to Israel the limits of its power. By settling the conflict and restoring the status quo ante bellum, Russia could validate that it matches or exceeds the United States as a force in the Middle East.”

by Soeren Kern,
a senior fellow at the
Gatestone Institute, a
nonpartisan foreign-
policy think tank based in New York City
China—The Chinese government has begun a renewed crackdown on believers attending unregistered churches and Christian parents taking their children with them to church. Chinese law strictly forbids adults to teach children religion and restricts Christian worship to the state-sanctioned Three-Self Church.

ChinaAid, an international Christian human rights organization promoting religious freedom in China, reported that police officers in Guangdong Province in southern China recently visited the homes of local believers attending an unregistered church to warn them not to attend worship services and summon them for questioning.

“The police called me again today and ordered me to stay away from church gatherings,” one Christian reported. “People from the sub-district office went to take pictures of our two church buildings, using inspecting the fire systems as an excuse. People from the religious affairs bureau also called and summoned me for a talk.”

ChinaAid said Chinese officials often use such excuses to raid churches: “The government often uses excuses in order to investigate churches, such as alleging that they need to perform fire-safety checks, and it is likely the government’s so-called suspicions are actually just ruses used in order to sanction the baseless persecution of Christians.”

According to ChinaAid, government officials in Zhejiang Province in eastern China recently prohibited children from attending church services, ordered churches to cancel all activities involving teenagers, and forbade parents to allow their children to attend Sunday services and church events.

ChinaAid reported that Chinese officials inconsistently enforce the law forbidding adults to teach religion to children and that the nation’s constitution does not restrict children from attending church. Article 36 of China’s Constitution stipulates all Chinese citizens have freedom of belief, and its regulations on religious affairs do not forbid children from attending worship services.

The crackdown came in the wake of a recent order from the Henan Provincial Three-Self Patriotic Committee and the Henan Provincial China Christian Council forbidding churches from organizing summer camps for minors and students, citing high temperatures as a possible health risk.

But a Christian in Henan said such camps were permitted in previous years. “The government is trying to control ideology,” a local Christian named Zang told ChinaAid. “During [Chinese presidents] Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao’s time, the government was tolerant toward preaching and missionary work. After Xi Jinping came into power, the government’s grip on religion has strengthened.”

The Nanyang Municipal Religious Affairs Bureau in Henan recently ordered all 20,000 members of house churches in the province to join the state-sponsored Three-Self Church, but many believers refused to compromise their convictions by joining it because of the church’s theology and rampant government censorship.

In Hubei Province, house church members who refused to join the Three-Self Church were beaten by government-hired thugs, reported ChinaAid. The believers were meeting outside after the government had confiscated the church’s chairs and desks when the thugs attacked five or six of them. Previously, they had “shot firecrackers at the Christians, hurled mud at them, and beaten a woman with high blood pressure unconscious, continuing to kick her even after she fainted,” ChinaAid reported.

China ranks 39th on Open Doors’ 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where Christians experience the worst persecution.

by Morning Star News
To read the full report, go to Morningstarnews.org.
The Gift That Gives Back

A charitable gift annuity is a wonderful way to support The Friends of Israel and, at the same time, create a stream of income for yourself and your spouse.

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Surveying the current geopolitical landscape can give me a headache. The world is embroiled in a spiritual battle. Right is made to look wrong; wrong is made to look right; security threats loom large; and if we don’t keep our eyes on the Lord, we can easily be deceived. Here is a glimpse of what’s happening today.

EXTERNAL THREATS

Today we see wars and hear threats of wars. Everywhere we turn, there’s trouble.

**NORTH KOREA.** A May 2017 U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee called North Korea “an antagonistic state actor that remains a critical security challenge.” A May report from the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said, “North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction program, public threats, defiance of the international community, confrontational military posturing, cyber activities, and potential for internal instability pose a complex and increasingly grave national security threat.” In September, North Korea successfully tested a hydrogen bomb.

**IRAN.** The intelligence report said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran remains an enduring threat to US national interests because of Iranian support to anti-US terrorist groups and militants. . . . Iran continues to develop a range of new military capabilities to monitor and target US and allied military assets in the region, including armed UAVs, ballistic missiles, advanced naval mines, unmanned explosive boats, submarines and advanced torpedoes, and anti-ship and land-attack cruise missiles.”

**SYRIA.** As the civil war in Syria drones on, so does the death toll, along with the human misery. To date, some 500,000 are dead. Millions have been uprooted, and hundreds of thousands are now refugees looking for safe havens. This ongoing humanitarian crisis places tremendous stress on countries trying to help and creates huge border risks.

**RUSSIA.** Since Vladimir Putin came to power, Russia has repeatedly denied Ukraine and Central Europe natural gas, occupied and attempted to annex Crimea, destabilized eastern Ukraine, and deployed its military to Syria to prop up the Bashar Assad regime. U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called Russia’s occupation of Crimea an attempt to “redraw international borders by force.” It is clear the Russian bear has no intentions of hibernating.

**RADICAL-MUSLIM TERRORIST GROUPS.** No one can predict when radical-Muslim terrorist groups, such as ISIS, Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, and the Muslim Brotherhood, will strike. These groups are at war with Western civilization and want to destroy it.

Security threats, of course, are nothing new. When Israel faced them 2,700 years ago, Assyria attacked from the north and swept the 10 northern tribes into captivity, leaving Judah and Benjamin in the south. Assyria then hoped to conquer Judah; and Egypt, although in decline, still posed a threat.
God sent the prophet Isaiah to warn Judah not of the external threat but, rather, of His impending judgment due to Judah’s own behavior.

Judah’s condition then mirrors our condition today: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20). What God loved, the world despised; and vice versa. The Jewish people had stopped listening to God’s voice and had rejected His standards, so God sent Isaiah to warn them. We, too, are rejecting His standards.

INTERNAL THREATS

Our families are falling apart. Ungodly, dangerous lifestyles abound. Abortion has become a way of life, and now our children are being told they can decide their gender.

In August, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed into law the Reproductive Health Equity Act, which requires health insurers to fund abortions for anyone who wants one (including non-citizens) excluded from Medicaid. One website hailed the legislation this way: “Good News Alert.”

Health clinics in Oregon are killing unborn babies, requiring Oregonians to pay the freight, and people are calling it good news. Actress Martha Plimpton proudly told a Seattle audience she got her “first” abortion at age 19, and it was her “best” abortion. She told the crowd, “Notice I said first.” The audience burst out laughing.

One in three babies born in the United States will arrive to a home without a father. More than 10 percent of American children have one parent dealing with alcohol problems, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Alcohol consumption is celebrated on billboards, television, social media, and in magazines. However, the reality of drinking is devastating: “In 2012, 3.3 million deaths, or 5.9 percent of all global deaths (7.6 percent for men and 4.0 percent for women), were attributable to alcohol consumption,” the Institute said. In 2014, the World Health Organization reported that alcohol contributed to more than 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions.

When a child begins kindergarten around age 5, there is a good chance his or her curriculum will contain such topics as transgenderism and gay behavior. An August 2017 Toronto Star (Canada) article boasted that the family birthing center at Michael Garron Hospital is LGBTQ inclusive. The accompanying photo showed a married male couple alongside a woman surrogate. Today this is considered a normal family. Things are so haywire that “men” have babies and “women” grow beards.

Society has been turned so upside down that the victims are becoming the enemies. As a young girl in Somalia, Ayaan Hirsi Ali was the victim of genital mutilation (a practice of radical Islamists). She has spoken out eloquently against it. Yet the liberal Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has accused her of being an extremist.

Ironically, the SPLC, headquartered in Alabama, claims it is dedicated to social justice. Ali responded by saying, “These groundless smears are deeply offensive, as I have dedicated much of my adult life to calling out the true extremists: organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS.”

THE UNHAPPY UPSHOT

More than 200 years ago (1787), Edward Gibbon wrote The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. For 20 years he studied the Roman Empire, trying to determine how a nation could be so great and then suddenly collapse. How could that happen? It’s difficult not to think of the United States when reading the five reasons he came up with:

1. Rapid increase in divorce and undermining of the sanctity of the home, which is the basis of society.
2. Higher and higher taxes; people spend money for food and celebrations.
3. The mad craze for pleasure, with sports becoming more exciting and more brutal each year.
4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy lies within; people become decadent.
5. The decay of religion; faith fades into mere form and loses touch with life, becoming impotent to guide it.

Though Judah faced dangerous outside forces, its worst enemy was itself. Regrettably, the Judeans paid the price when Babylon took them captive in 586 BC.

King Solomon said, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). The psalmist wrote, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12). May 2018 bring a revival to us before it is too late. Those of us who know God personally through faith in Jesus Christ must keep our eyes on Him. As hymnist Helen H. Lemmel wrote, “And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”

ENDNOTES

3 Ibid., 23.
5 Ibid.

Steve Herzig
is the director of North American Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.
THE RAPT

WHAT IT IS

BY DAVID M. LEVY
WHAT IT IS
AND WHAT IT ISN’T

• BY DAVID M. LEVY
Confusion prevails, primarily because many churches seldom teach the subject today or lack biblical clarity when they do teach it. In some circles, people even dislike or ridicule the doctrine. Often the Rapture passages are spiritualized, stripping the text of its true meaning.

The Rapture of the church is a major doctrine in Scripture, and it is incumbent on us as Christians to understand the meaning of this important prophetic event.

The word Rapture does not appear in the English Bible. It is a Latin word, raptura, that means “seize, snatch, or be carried away.” The Greek word harpazō does appear in the Bible (1 Th. 4:17) and means the same thing as raptura. Thus the Rapture is clearly taught in Scripture.

Two central passages describe the Rapture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50–54. The Rapture refers to when Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God to gather all true Christians to heaven. Those who already died and those living will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (1 Th. 4:16–17).

The event will happen suddenly, without prophetic signs or warning. When we are transported to heaven, we will be with the Lord forever.

The Greek word harpazō does appear in the Bible (1 Th. 4:17) and means the same thing as raptura. Thus the Rapture is clearly taught in Scripture.
heaven, we will be physically transformed in the twinkling of an eye to receive glorified bodies preparing us for life in eternity. The apostle Paul wrote, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:52–53). Our “corruptible” sin natures will be instantly eradicated, and we will experience perfection in body, soul, and spirit.

Paul said Christ will “transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). Every believer’s body will be refashioned in a resurrected form (but still recognizable), as was Christ’s body. The apostle John assured us that we “shall be like Him” (1 Jn. 3:2).

What was Christ like in His resurrected body? He could appear and vanish (Lk. 24:31); and He could walk, talk, eat, and rise into heaven (Jn. 21:21–25; Acts 1:11). He was not bound by gravity, time, or space; and He could travel at will from one place to another instantly. When we are raptured, we will possess the same abilities in our glorified bodies, but we do not know yet to what extent.

The Rapture refers to when Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God to gather all true Christians to heaven.
THE RELATIONSHIP DESCRIBED

Our relationship with Jesus Christ resembles that of a bridegroom and his bride. John the Baptist first used this analogy in John 3:28–30. He taught that Christ is the Bridegroom, and the church is His bride.

Although the phrase *bride of Christ* is not in the New Testament, the idea appears throughout Scripture (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23–27; Rev. 19:7; 21:9), providing great insight concerning our unbreakable union with Christ. It pictures the intimacy we enjoy with Him, like that of a husband and wife (the most private, personal bond possible in life).

This union is a “great mystery” (Eph. 5:32), something unknowable unless God reveals it. Paul said specifically he was speaking in Ephesians 5:23–29 about more than human marriage; he was speaking about “Christ and the church” (v. 32).

THE RAPTURE DISTINCTIVES

Many Christians associate the Rapture with Christ’s Second Coming. This is a mistake because these events are distinct from each other; and it is important to understand the differences:

1. At the Rapture, believers meet Christ in the air (1 Th. 4:17). At Christ’s Second Coming to Earth, no meeting takes place (Zech. 14:4).

2. At the Rapture, only born-again believers will see Christ come (Jn. 14:3). At the Second Coming, the entire world will see Him (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).

3. At the Rapture, believers are taken to heaven (Jn. 14:3). Unbelievers remain on Earth to endure the Tribulation. At the Second Coming, believers return to Earth with Christ to enter the Millennial Kingdom (Mt. 25:34). Unbelievers who survive the Great Tribulation will never enter the Kingdom; they will be purged and thrown into everlasting fire (v. 41).

The Rapture’s major mission is to deliver the church from God’s wrathful judgment of sinful humanity, which will afflict the entire earth.
4. At the Rapture, Christ returns for His church (1 Th. 4:17). At the Second Coming, His church returns with Him to rule on Earth during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 19:14).

5. The Rapture is imminent. No signs or events must precede it. Many signs and events occur before Christ’s Second Coming (Mt. 24:4–30).

6. The Great Tribulation—when God unleashes His wrath on Earth—will not affect believers because they will already have been raptured (1 Th. 5:9). The Great Tribulation will torment unbelievers, all of whom will be left on Earth (Rev. 6—18).

7. Although the church is mentioned 19 times in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, it is not mentioned again until Revelation 22. In other words, Scripture does not mention the word church when dealing with God’s Tribulation wrath in Revelation 6—18, but it does talk about unbelievers and how they will suffer and die (6:8; 8:11).

THE RAPTURE DELIVERANCE

The Rapture’s major mission is to deliver the church from God’s wrathful judgment of sinful humanity, which will afflict the entire earth. Paul told the Thessalonian church, “Wait for His [God’s] Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Th. 1:10).

After speaking of the Rapture (4:16–17), Paul said, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9). Notice, God did not “appoint” (destine) Christians, who possess salvation, to experience His eschatological wrath. That event is planned for sinners who reject Him. Many ask, “If God is going to pour out His judgment on sinful humanity, and Christians are still sinful even after we have received Christ, why would He deliver only Christians from His wrath in the Great Tribulation and not others?” Because Christ’s sacrifice of Himself was applied as payment for our sin when we accepted Him as Savior; we received Christ’s righteousness: “For He 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). So God sees us as having His righteousness, obtained through faith in Christ.

However, if we reject Him, He does not see us that way, and “the wrath of God abides on [us]” (Jn. 3:36). If we receive Christ as our Savior, Christ’s sacrifice is laid on our account and pays for our sin. We are no longer under God’s condemnation or wrath (Rom. 8:1; 1 Th. 5:9). If we do not receive Christ, we must pay for our sin ourselves, and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

God showers His mercy and grace on repentant sinners and withholds the punishment we deserve. In addition, in His grace, He provides the unmerited favor we do not deserve.

Today we live in the age of grace, or the Church Age. It is so named because Jesus said, “I will build My church” (Mt. 16:18). The Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and will end at the Rapture (1 Th. 4:13–18). But God’s program continues through the Great Tribulation and into the Millennial Kingdom and eternity.

Church saints will return with Christ at the Second Coming, clothed in pure white linen that symbolizes their righteous acts, and they will rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years (Rev. 19:8, 14; 20:4; cf. 2:26–28; 3:21).

What a glorious plan God has established for those who put their faith in Christ for salvation. Have you? *

David M. Levy
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WHY THE RAPTURE DOCTRINE IS BEING LEFT BEHIND BY CHRIS KATULKA
WHY THE RAPTURE DOCTRINE IS BEING LEFT BEHIND

BY CHRIS KATULKA
In his article “Apocalyptic upbringing: how I recovered from my terrifying evangelical childhood,” Hesse looks back on a stormy night in his Iowa town when he was 10 years old and home alone because his parents were running late after being out for the evening. Unsure of their whereabouts, he feared they had been raptured, and he had been left behind.

After grabbing snacks, juice boxes, a knife, and his Bible, young Josiah ran down to the basement. He knew being left behind would mean hiding from the Antichrist and denying the mark of the Beast—a branding that seals your doom. All of a sudden, he heard the sound of his parents returning home, relieving his apocalyptic anxiety. However, Hesse said he carried the same anxiety into adulthood, finally jettisoning the theology of his youth and, sadly, his faith as well.

Josiah Hesse represents a vast number of Christians who, for one reason or another, have abandoned belief in the Rapture of the church—the doctrine that Jesus will snatch His church to heaven in an instant, and only true believers will see Him (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Th. 4:16–17).

What happened to this once-popular theology? Why do so many evangelical Christians reject it today?
Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye’s wildly successful, 16-book series Left Behind introduced eschatology (the doctrine of future things) to a much broader audience by merging popular fiction with premillennial and pretribulational Rapture doctrine. People who are premillennial believe Jesus will return physically to Earth before setting up a literal Messianic Kingdom over which He will rule for 1,000 literal years. People who are pretribulational believe Jesus will rapture His church before seven years of unparalleled tribulation afflict the entire world.

From 1995 to 2007, Left Behind unhinged the Rapture from the confines of a Sunday sermon and made it the framework of suspense novels that Christians and non-Christians alike discussed at the watercooler. Everyone was enraptured with the Rapture.

In the past, books and videos—such as Hal Lindsey’s bestseller The Late Great Planet Earth and the film A Thief in the Night—raised awareness about the pretribulational Rapture. But nothing connected Rapture theology to contemporary pop culture like Left Behind. Seven books from the series rose to number one on The New York Times Best Seller list, selling more than 63 million copies worldwide.

As the Rapture gained exposure in the secular world, it rapidly devolved from theology into theater. 30 Rock, a popular sitcom that aired on NBC, featured a character named Kenneth Parcell, a dedicated NBC page and outspoken charismatic Christian. In one episode, Parcell leaves his job after his pastor tells him the so-called date of the Rapture. When the date arrives, Kenneth dons a shirt with the word Rapture across the front and says his final goodbyes to his friends, only to find out the next day it was all a hoax.

The episode aired shortly after Harold Camping, the late president of Family Radio, spent more than $100 million advertising his particular version of a doomsday event that he said would remove Christians from Earth on May 21, 2011.2 (Camping was neither premillennial nor pretribulational, nor did he believe in the Rapture as taught by The Friends of Israel.)

The national news media waited to see if Christians would suddenly disappear. When May 21 came and went and Camping was still here, the then 89-year-old recalculated his numbers and came up with Oct 21, 2011. Yet again, the day came and went. Unfortunately, many people who could not distinguish between the biblical doctrine of the Rapture and Camping’s unique stance mocked the Rapture all the more.

Christians who believe in the Rapture are often portrayed as escapists who are out of touch with reality and ready to leave this world and all its problems behind. Consequently, this once-beloved teaching has eroded. Some Christians don’t want to associate with a belief that is mocked publicly or abused by date-setters, so they distance themselves from it; and this distancing appears more in the pulpit than in the pew.

In Christian higher education, students are introduced to multiple ways of interpreting Scripture. They learn biblical history, different theological perspectives, and the development of doctrine.

Christian education is definitely worthwhile, yet most Christian colleges today disregard the value of the pretribulational Rapture and view it negatively. Today the Rapture is not taught as biblical doctrine but, instead, as a byproduct of apocalyptic evangelicalism that started with 19th-century British Bible teacher John Nelson Darby. Students who once sat under a pastor who taught about the Rapture from God’s Word become more susceptible to abandoning the doctrine altogether after they graduate from college or seminary.

In a 2016 LifeWay Research telephone survey of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors, one third said they believe in the literal Rapture of the church. However, of those pastors, 60 percent have no college degree. Only 26 percent of those who earned a master’s degree believe the church will be raptured at the appearance of Christ in accordance with 1 Thessalonians 4:17.3 The survey also showed that pastors under 45 are less likely to believe in a pretribulational Rapture and more likely to believe the Rapture will occur simultaneously with Christ’s Second Coming.4
It’s no coincidence pastors under 45 with advanced degrees are forsaking the pretribulational view. Christian higher education over the past 20 years has shied away from treating this doctrine with the seriousness it deserves, and we are reaping the results.

When actor Nicholas Cage starred in the reboot of the Left Behind movie in 2014, Dr. William Lane Craig, research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology and professor of philosophy at Houston Baptist University, said Christians should enjoy the movie but beware of the theology behind it.

According to Craig, the pretribulational Rapture is an unbiblical doctrine held by good Christians who lack the insight to disprove it. “It is astonishing, if I’m correct about this,” he said, “American evangelism is very widely misled, that it has departed from the historic Christian position about the second coming of Christ. That’s really rather sobering, because if we’re wrong about this, what other things might we have misinterpreted?”

When we ask why the Rapture isn’t being taught much today from pulpits, at least two places we can look for answers are pop culture and Christian higher education. Together they have produced an apathy, which trickles down from the pulpit to the parishioner, toward this important end-times doctrine.

Hopefully, the Rapture’s relevancy will resurface if believers sincerely examine the texts for themselves.

There are plenty of valid biblical arguments to persuade any Bible-believing Christian that the pretribulational Rapture is the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ and the resurrection of His church.

**ENDNOTES**

2 Christopher Goffard, “Harold Camping is at the heart of a mediapocalypse,” Los Angeles Times, May 21, 2011 <goo.gl/9075Dw>.
4 Ibid.

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Every person born since the creation of man will receive a resurrected body. Some will enjoy eternal life with God, while others will suffer eternal damnation and judgment in the Lake of Fire. This chart explains the various resurrections.

Scripture says, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). The human body must be transformed to live and function in the eternal environment that will exist after the Millennial Kingdom. Millennial Kingdom saints no doubt will receive resurrected bodies at some point. However, the Bible does not specify when that event will occur. Unregenerate people will possess an eternal body before standing at the Great White Throne Judgment prior to being cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer forever.

**WHEN DO PEOPLE RECEIVE THEIR RESURRECTED BODIES?**

**Church Saints**
Meaning everyone since the Day of Pentecost who has trusted in Christ alone for salvation.

**WHEN**
At the Rapture, when the Lord returns for His church and resurrects all believers, both dead and alive.

**SCRIPTURE**
Jn. 14:2–3
1 Th. 4:13–18

**Old Testament Saints**
Meaning the patriarchs, Moses, David, the prophets, and everyone who trusted in the God of Israel by faith.

**WHEN**
At Christ’s Second Coming, when He returns to Earth with power and great glory; and every eye sees Him.

**SCRIPTURE**
Dan. 12:2
Rev. 20:4

**Tribulation Saints**
Meaning everyone who died trusting in Christ during the future seven-year Tribulation.

**WHEN**
At Christ’s Second Coming, when He returns to Earth with power and great glory; and every eye sees Him.

**SCRIPTURE**
Dan. 12:2
Rev. 20:4

**The Unregenerate**
Meaning everyone who failed to trust in God alone for forgiveness of sin from creation through the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

**WHEN**
At the Great White Throne judgment at the end of Christ’s 1,000-year reign.

**SCRIPTURE**
Rev. 20:5, 11–15
WHEN IS IT?

A LOOK AT WHY EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS DON’T ALL AGREE ON THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

BY MIKE STALLARD
Christ’s premillennial Second Coming to Earth is evident even from a casual reading of the Scriptures. The Bible, taken at face value, clearly states the Messiah will return to establish His worldwide, earthly Kingdom, headquartered in Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 2; 7; Isa. 11; Zech. 14; Rev. 19—20).

To come to a different conclusion, we must purposely adopt a nonliteral understanding of God’s promises.

The timing of the Rapture of the church, however, is more complicated to determine. Genuine believers in Christ who take the Bible at face value still disagree on when it will occur. Therefore, it is imperative to study the Word carefully to see what the Lord has told us.

Premillennialists—those who believe Christ will return to Earth to reign for 1,000 literal years from David’s throne in Jerusalem—hold several views concerning the Rapture’s timing.

1. Pretribulation (Pretrib) Rapture. Pretribulationists believe the Rapture will occur before the seven-year Tribulation.
2. Posttribulation (Posttrib) Rapture. Posttribulationists believe Christ will rapture the church after the seven-year Tribulation.
3. Midtribulation (Midtrib) Rapture. Midtribulationists teach the Rapture will take place halfway through the seven years of Tribulation.

4. Prewrath Rapture. Proponents of this position, a modified midtribulational view, believe the Rapture will occur sometime during the last half of the Tribulation.

5. Partial Rapture. Adherents of this view teach Christ will rapture so-called spiritual Christians before the Tribulation, but all others will go through it. This view focuses more on the qualifications of individual Christians to be raptured, rather than on the timing of the Rapture.

The pretrib and posttrib views are the most prominent among premillennialists. But if we carefully compare Scripture with Scripture, we see the church will be raptured before the Tribulation.

DEFINING THE DAY OF THE LORD

Perhaps the most crucial Bible passage on the Rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:9. The text flows chronologically, following the outline of the entire book (cf. 1:9–10). Church Age believers will be “caught up” (raptured) in the air to meet Jesus (4:13–18). Chapter 5 presents the key for the event’s timing: Following the Rapture, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (v. 2).

The Day of the Lord will bring sudden, unexpected destruction and trouble on those who were not raptured: “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman” (v. 3). The words as labor pains upon a pregnant woman strongly illustrate the trouble people on Earth will face, and the words peace and safety reveal it will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Their hope and expectation of peace will be dashed to the ground.

The question then emerges, “To what does the ‘Day of the Lord’ refer?” Verse 9 reveals the significance of this query: “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation [deliverance] through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This verse contains an exemption from wrath. The context indicates the apostle Paul was not talking about hell (eternal wrath) but, rather, the particular wrath called the “day of the Lord” (v. 2). And since it says God did not “appoint us” to wrath, the passage implies the church will be removed before the Day of the Lord wrath arrives.

If we study the phrase Day of the Lord throughout the Bible, we quickly realize it doesn’t mean the same thing everywhere. Generally, it refers to God’s judgment. It refers to historical events and future end-times events, and its context determines the correct time frame. So we must ask what it means in the particular context of 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and not in some other part of the Bible.

Each Rapture view defines the Day of the Lord differently. Sometimes adherents of the same view even differ among one another.

The posttrib view often defines the Day of the Lord as the brief period of God’s judgment associated with Christ’s Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. The prewrath view says the Day of the Lord begins with the seventh seal sometime during the last half of the Tribulation (Rev. 8:1). The midtrib view usually delineates it as the last half of the seven years. Many proponents of the pretrib view define the Day of the Lord as the full seven years.

“PEACE AND SAFETY”

Which view has the best definition? The answer is found in the phrase peace and safety (1 Th. 5:3). If we assume the posttrib position, the Battle of Armageddon would precede the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation. That is not a time of “peace and safety.”

If we assume the prewrath position, the seal judgments would precede the Day of the Lord. These judgments include war (second seal; Rev. 6:4) and seriously unsafe conditions. So this view also fails to handle the “peace and safety” statement.

The midtrib view leads to a similar conclusion. Battles between the king of the north and king of the south occur immediately before the midpoint of the
seventh-year Tribulation (Dan. 11:40—12:1), making it difficult to harmonize these wars with people on Earth declaring “peace and safety.”

Only the pretrib view adequately accounts for the “peace and safety” reference. At the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation, the Antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel (9:27). We can easily see why people would announce “peace and safety” and then receive the opposite of what they had expected—seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.

The pretrib view best handles the “peace and safety” statement of 1 Thessalonians 5:3 by referring to all seven years as the Day of the Lord. This fact leads to the inevitable conclusion that the church is exempt from all seven years of the Tribulation. Hence, the Rapture described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 is pretribational.

A more thorough study of the Rapture’s timing includes fleshing out other passages, such as John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52; and Revelation 3:10. Debate will continue, no doubt, among “premillennial cousins.” But a serious study of God’s Word on the issue will leave no one in darkness.  

**ENDNOTES**


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**THE BEREAAN BOX**

**Q** What does the phrase *Israel of God* mean?

*Israel of God* refers to Jewish people who received Christ as their Savior and consequently belong to the church. It does not refer to the entire church.

The phrase appears in Galatians 6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and [Greek, *kai*] upon the Israel of God” (vv. 15–16).

The term *Israel of God* is often misinterpreted to mean the entire church. People with this view believe the church constitutes the true and only Israel today and that, hereafter, Christians become “spiritual Israel” or “spiritual” Jews, and all New Testament promises concerning Israel will be fulfilled in the church and do not apply to ethnic Jewish people or the literal nation of Israel.

However, the church cannot be the “Israel of God”:

1) The context of Galatians 6 makes it clear that two groups compose the church: redeemed, ethnic Jewish people—referred to as the “circumcision”—and redeemed Gentiles, called the “uncircumcision” (v. 15).

2) Throughout the New Testament, the word *Israel* (used 75 times) always refers to ethnic Jews, not Gentiles in the church. The remnant of believing Israel, “according to the election of grace” within the nation of Israel (Rom. 9:6; 11:5), is recognized as the true “spiritual Israel” (Rom. 9–11; 1 Cor. 10:32). Jews remain Jews after receiving Christ, and Gentiles remain Gentiles; Gentiles do not become spiritual Jews or spiritual Israel.

3) People who see the church as the “Israel of God” use an uncommon translation of the Greek word *kai* in Galatians 6:16. They translate it as “even” (cf. NIV translation), which implies both redeemed Jews and Gentiles constitute the “Israel of God.” However, it is better and more natural to translate it as “and” (cf. KJV, NKJV, NASB), which implies only Jewish believers are the “Israel of God.”

4) It would have been strange for the apostle Paul, the Jewish believer who wrote Galatians, to refer to Gentile Christians as Israel.

Dr. Ronald E. Diprose summarized the issue well: “Thus we conclude that Galatians 6:16 is insufficient grounds on which to base an innovative theological concept such as understanding the Church to be the new and/or true Israel.”

*BY DAVID M. LEVY*

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**ENDNOTE**

What We’re Spared
Think of the worst disasters in history. They’re nothing compared to what lies ahead—but not for the bride of Christ.

by Bruce Scott
Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the church, will never abuse His bride. One of the greatest proofs of His faithfulness to her is the Rapture of the church, the future event when Jesus returns for His bride so that she can always be with Him (Jn. 14:3; 1 Th. 4:17).

In the Rapture, all believers will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air, not only to receive new, immortal, and resurrected bodies—but also to escape the “hour of trial” that will afflict the entire earth (1 Th. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:50–54; Rev. 3:10).

**UNPARALLELED HORROR**

The “hour of trial,” or Tribulation, will span seven years and be characterized by worldwide disaster, horror, doom, and God’s righteous wrath. The words *wrath* and *indignation* appear 14 times in Revelation 6—19, the chapters covering the Tribulation narrative. Eleven of those times specify the wrath comes from God; and of those 11, two come from the Lamb, Jesus Christ (6:16–17).

God will pour out His righteous anger during the Tribulation through three sets of seven judgments in the form of seals (as in a seal on a document), trumpets, and bowls.

When Jesus Christ opens the first seal, the Antichrist will emerge, conquering with power, signs, lying wonders, and deception (vv. 1–2; 2 Th. 2:9). The following seals will yield wars and rumors of wars, famine, a great earthquake, cosmic disturbances, and the death of one-fourth of Earth’s population (Rev. 6:3–17; cf. Mt. 24:6–7). Using today’s world population figure of approximately 7.5 billion people, 1.88 billion people will die in the early stages alone of the Tribulation.

The great earthquake and cosmic disturbances will cause people to recognize that God’s wrath has come upon them:

> [They] hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15–17).

After the seals, seven angels will sound seven trumpet judgments, which will affect one-third of whatever they encounter. The first four trumpets will impact one-third of the earth’s environment (8:7–12). The fifth trumpet will release demon-like locusts to sting and torment unbelievers for five months (9:1–12).

The sixth trumpet judgment will release four angels to kill a third...
of what’s left of the earth’s population through an army of 200 million horsemen. Fire, smoke, and burning sulfur will spew from the mouths of the troops’ horses; and the horses’ tails will be like snakes, possessing power to wound people (vv. 13–19). Using today’s population figures, the sixth trumpet judgment will kill another 1.85 billion people, bringing the Tribulation death toll to 3.7 billion—half of the entire world’s population.

The seventh trumpet will cause an earthquake and hailstorm, preparing the way for the terrible bowl judgments (11:15–19).

The seven bowl judgments will unleash loathsome sores on the Antichrist’s worshipers; turn fresh water and the sea into blood, killing all sea creatures; cause unbearable, scorching heat from the sun; cover the Antichrist’s kingdom in painful darkness; dry up the Euphrates River, allowing kings from the east to come; produce an unprecedented earthquake, causing entire cities to collapse; and cause 75-pound hailstones to fall on people (16:2–21).

Where will the bride of Christ be during all of this divine retribution? Forever safe with her Lord in heaven. Prior to the Tribulation, an archangel will shout, announcing the coming of the Bridegroom. The church will be “caught up together” to meet Him in the air. “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16–17; cf. Mt. 25:6).

WHY WE’RE SPARED
Why won’t the church be on Earth during the Tribulation? Because throughout Scripture, God reveals the principle of separating His people from impending divine judgment. Although He sometimes allows us to suffer persecution and martyrdom, such suffering comes from the hands of evil men, not from God.

Abraham’s question to the Lord before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates this principle: “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:23, 25).

God spared Lot and his family from Sodom’s obliteration (19:16). Other examples include God separating Noah and his family from the worldwide flood (7:7), Israel from the Egyptian plagues (Ex. 8:22–23; 9:4–7, 26; 10:23; 11:7); and the Israelites from Korah and the other rebels whom God was about to destroy (Num. 16:23–26). God also offered to save the Israelites in Jerusalem from the Babylonian siege (Jer. 21:8–10).

This principle is also implied in Revelation 3:10, where Jesus promised the church at Philadelphia to “keep [them] from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” The church is never mentioned in the Tribulation chapters of Revelation, strongly implying the church’s absence.

It is true that during the Tribulation, people will come to know the Lord, even multitudes (7:9–17). They will suffer persecution and martyr’s deaths (Mt. 24:9; Rev. 6:11; 11:7; 20:4). These believers will become Tribulation saints—people who did not believe the gospel before the Rapture but became believers during the Tribulation.

In contrast, the church is a unique entity, a spiritual union of Jews and Gentiles who trust Christ during the present age and are baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). To the bride of Christ the Lord promises protection. She will not be the object of her Bridegroom’s wrath. “Jesus . . . delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Th. 1:10). “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9).

Although Christians throughout history have always suffered tribulation and persecution, they will not suffer the Tribulation. Christ will spare His bride because “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (Eph. 5:29).
COMING FOR HIS BRIDE

BY PETER COLÓN
While on a class trip in Israel many years ago, I stumbled on a Jewish wedding taking place in Cana of Galilee. It reminded me of the future Rapture of the church and of Christ’s words in John 14:1–3:

> 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.

Scripture clearly teaches the church is Christ’s bride, which He lovingly and sacrificially purchased with His blood.

Townspeople lined the street as the handsome young bridegroom rode slowly by on a donkey. He looked like a king—dressed all in white, with a gold cloth wrapped around his waist. A white, Bedouin-style cloth covered his head; and he wore sandals (more like slippers) decorated in splendid, ornamental lace.

The donkey also was adorned royally, with a sequined, carpet-like saddle. Around its neck hung large, gold-twisted chains with small bells; and an ornate wreath of flowers sat on its head.

Flanking the bridegroom were men of all ages. They kept a steady pace, moving slowly down the road with him as they sang a repetitious, simple tune.

An elderly man, probably the town patriarch, led the procession. He wore a long, scarlet robe that opened as he twirled in dance. If I recall correctly, he swung a stick over his head as he chanted.

The sound of ululation filled the air. Ululation is a high-pitched trill commonly made by Mizrahi Jewish women on happy occasions. Mizrahi in Hebrew means “Eastern” or “Oriental,” and it refers to the descendants of Middle Eastern Jewish people from biblical times.

A local onlooker told us both families had arranged the marriage and that the couple had an unnecessarily long, drawn-out betrothal. According to ancient Jewish marriage custom, the man uses the betrothal period to prepare a home for his bride and himself in his father’s house. The bystander told us the lazy bridegroom had needlessly delayed the marriage by procrastinating his building of an extension to his parents’ house.

It was amazing to witness some semblance of the ancient Jewish marriage custom. It reminded me of a sermon Dr. Renald Showers—retired author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry—once preached regarding the remarkable parallel between ancient Jewish marriage customs and Christ’s Rapture of His church.

Just as the Jewish bridegroom returned for his betrothed, Jesus will return for us. Jesus promises to prepare a place for us and bring us home with Him. Scripture clearly teaches the church is Christ’s bride, which He lovingly and sacrificially purchased with His blood. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit secures our position.

The present Church Age is our betrothal period. But unlike the lazy bridegroom I saw in Cana, Jesus is busy preparing a place for us and will return for us at the appointed time.

What a cause to rejoice! Like the Jewish women in Cana ululating for joy, we should “[speak] to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [our hearts] to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

As Christ’s bride, we eagerly await His return. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16–17).

Our Bridegroom is coming soon.

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GOD’S PROPHETIC CALENDAR

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THE IDENTITY OF NIMROD

Archaeological excavations in ancient Mesopotamia reveal striking parallels between the Bible’s King Nimrod and the ancient Semitic ruler Sargon the Great, thus confirming the biblical king’s historicity.

The Old Testament mentions Nimrod four times, calling him “a mighty one on the earth” (Gen. 10:8; 1 Chr. 1:10); “a mighty hunter before the Lord” (Gen. 10:9); and the founder of the Assyrian Empire (Mic. 5:6). But who was he?

The ancient Jewish writers Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus suggested Nimrod was a giant who opposed God1 and the tyrant behind the construction of the Tower of Babel (respectively).2 Genesis 10:10–12 includes within Nimrod’s kingdom the Sumerian cities of Babel and Uruk (Erech); the city of Akkad (Accad) in “the land of Shinar” (southern Mesopotamia/Babylonia); and the Assyrian cities of Nineveh, Resen, and Calah. Archaeologists have uncovered the remains of some of these cities, which have helped them identify Nimrod.

Nimrod built his extensive empire from south to north, indicating a third-millennium BC setting (3000–2000 BC). Therefore, he must have ruled in this region during this period. Egyptologist Douglas Petrovich argues that Sargon the Great, who built the first cities of Sumer and Akkad, best fits the historical data for five reasons:

First, both Nimrod and Sargon came from the same region. Nimrod’s origin in Cush matches Sargon’s origin in Sumerian Kish. Both peoples and territories were named after Cush (Kish), Noah’s grandson. The Sumerian King List names Kish as the first city on which “kingship was [again] lowered from heaven” after the flood and says it became the leading city of Sumer, facts later confirmed by archaeological excavations.

Second, both Nimrod and Sargon made Akkad a prominent city. Although scholars don’t know the exact location of Akkad, ancient texts place it in Babylonia and Kish and suggest it became prominent once Sargon made it his capital and restored Kish. From Akkad, Sargon conquered Mari, Ebla, and Assyria.

The archaeological record fits with the biblical record of Nimrod’s location in Sumer and his conquests of Uruk—the center of power in Mesopotamia—and Akkad, from which he extended his rule north (Gen. 10:10–11).

Third, both Nimrod and Sargon initiated building projects in Assyria. The Bible reveals Nimrod built the principal cities of Assyria (vv. 11–12). Archaeological discoveries in Nippur (an ancient city in Mesopotamia) credit the same feat to Sargon.

Archaeologists have discovered inscriptions of Sargon’s rule on monuments of native governors in the Assyrian cities of Ashur and Nineveh. They also found the remains of a statue dating to the reign of Manishtushu, Sargon’s second son and successor. Since history records Manishtushu as a less powerful figure, his attaining such stature strongly implies his father had seized power in Ashur. Additional excavations also support the fact of Sargon’s mastery in Assyria.

Fourth, both Nimrod and Sargon created a lasting influence on Assyria. The Bible indicates Nimrod’s exploits indelibly impacted the Israelites, since the prophet Micah equated the “land of Assyria” with “the land of Nimrod” (Mic. 5:6). In like manner, Sargon left an abiding influence on Assyrian culture by introducing the Eponym dating system, used throughout the history of Assyria.

Fifth, both Nimrod and Sargon were legendary for their military exploits. Genesis 10:9 calls Nimrod a “mighty hunter before the Lord,” indicating God observed—not approved of—his military exploits. “Therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord.’” His reputation may have extended to successive generations (v. 9). Palace reliefs discovered in ancient Nineveh display the hunting exploits and military conquests of Assyrian kings.

Ancient steles reveal Sargon also was renowned for his military conquests, such as those recorded in his Stele of Ishtar, his Victory Stele, and the Manishtushu Obelisk. These steles, which embody only a small part of the mass of archaeological evidence concerning Akkadian military brutality, sufficiently show Sargon’s reputation in this regard.

Overall, archaeological excavations in ancient Mesopotamia provide historical evidence for Nimrod’s identity as Sargon, once again confirming the Bible rests on a solid, historical foundation.

ENDNOTES

1 Philo of Alexandria Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim (QG) 2.82.
2 Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 1.113–114.

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PHOTO: NEWSCOM

THE IDENTITY OF NIMROD

UNEARTHING TRUTH WITH RANDALL PRICE

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2018
How to live a life that pleases God is the overriding theme of the first 12 verses of 1 Thessalonians 4. Verses 1–8 speak about sexual purity, and verses 9–12 provide practical instruction on how to maintain right relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as with unbelievers.

Christians should strive to maintain moral purity, love the brethren, and live godly lives. Verses 9–10 emphasize the centrality of loving other Christians, and verses 11–12 remind us how vitally important it is to maintain a good testimony in our walk, work, and witness.

**LOVE’S CHARACTER**

The apostle Paul wrote, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (v. 9).

The word but abruptly changes the subject from sanctification to brotherly love. Although it can be interpreted “and,” “now,” “but,” or “on the other hand,” it is best to interpret the word as “now.” The text should read, “Now concerning brotherly love.”

The phrase brotherly love does not refer to love within one’s family but, rather, sincere affection for one’s brothers and sisters within the church. We see an example of such love in the first church in Jerusalem: “All who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44–45; cf. 4:32).

Paul knew from his coworker Timothy’s report that the Thessalonians were sincerely loving one another because he wrote, “You have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Th. 4:9). Notice, no one had taught them about love; they were “taught by God” through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This is how all believers in every age should be taught. The major teaching was for all these believers “to love one another” (v. 9; cf. Rom. 5:5). The apostles continually reminded believers throughout the New Testament to practice “love.”

**LOVE’S CULTIVATION**

Paul confirmed the Thessalonians’ loving attitude when he wrote, “And indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia” (1 Th. 4:10). He did not have to urge the Thessalonians to love believers in the Macedonian churches because they already were doing so. They had many opportunities to show their love to their Macedonian brethren because Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province and attracted many visitors.

It is Christ, living and working in believers through the Holy Spirit, who produces love. It is Christ who causes us to excel, overflow, or possess a superabundance of God’s love for others. Only through the enablement of the Holy Spirit can we love someone who persecutes us. The Thessalonians had Paul and Silvanus as examples, even though their stay in Thessalonica was brief. In Paul’s absence, new believers imitated the model of love he originally communicated to them.

Years after Paul wrote this epistle, the apostle John elaborated on our responsibility to love our Christian brethren: “For this is the message that you [Christians] heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 Jn. 3:11). The word beginning refers to when Jesus told His disciples to love one another.

John wrote often about God’s nature and His attribute of love (cf. Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7–8). This is one of the first messages they received from Christ and one of the last messages Jesus taught them before His departure (Jn. 13:34–35; 15:12, 17). The word love appears in the present tense, meaning love should be manifested continually throughout our lives.

Love for other believers is one indication we possess eternal life: “We know that we have passed from [the] death to [the] life, because we love the brethren” (1 Jn. 3:14). The words have passed are in the perfect tense, meaning we possess eternal life the moment we receive Christ. Our love for other born-again believers provides evidence (not the means) of our salvation.

Notice, the verse does not say we are to love some of the brethren. We are to love all the brethren. Believers who are
truly in fellowship with God will love all Christians.

Of course, the supreme example of real love is Jesus Christ, who voluntarily gave His life for us: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1 Jn. 3:16). Believers in John’s day, as well as today, already knew of Christ’s self-sacrifice and supernatural love for mankind (cf. Jn. 10:15–18). His action was the greatest expression of true love the world has ever seen, and love binds all believers together as an ongoing witness to the world. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (13:35).

**LOVE’S CONDUCT**

Paul then exhorted the Thessalonian believers to show love toward nonbelievers in the work-a-day world: “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing” (1 Th. 4:11–12).

Some believe these verses connect to verses 9–10. Others believe they raise an entirely new thought on one’s relationship to coworkers. It would seem that verses 11–12 connect to brotherly love no matter what the context.

First, Paul said, “Aspire to lead a quiet life” (v. 11). There seemed to be a restlessness among the Thessalonians because of a misunderstanding concerning Christ’s soon return. (The next section of chapter 4 deals with that subject.) We must not allow the expectation and excitement of Christ’s return to keep us from carrying out our daily obligations.

We must strive to live peacefully with saved and unsaved alike. We must rest in the spirit every day as we anticipate Christ’s return. It is our continual obligation to do so.

Second, Paul said, “Mind your own business” (v. 11). This is an exhortation not to pry into other people’s business. Meddling is totally out of the will of God and can disrupt, divide, and sow discontentment within the body of Christ, as well as blemish our Christian testimonies.

Third, Paul said, “Work with your own hands” (v. 11). This is an exhortation against idleness. It also means not to be so heavenly minded at work that we neglect to do the jobs we are being paid to perform. Poor job performance leaves a poor testimony among believers and nonbelievers alike and can tarnish the entire work of a local church.

Honest work habits come instinctively with habitual holy living on the job. For example, Paul worked long hours making tents, a trade he learned as a young boy. (Jewish fathers in the first century always taught their sons a trade.) Paul maintained a good testimony on the job and used his trade to support himself while spreading the gospel during his missionary travels (cf. Acts 18:2–3).

Paul added, “As we commanded you” (1 Th. 4:11). Paul and Silvanus personally had taught the Thessalonians this principle when they established the church. Thus, these Christians had no excuse for being restless or idle at work or for meddling in others’ business.

Paul provided two purposes for his exhortations:

1. “That you may walk properly toward those who are outside” (v. 12). The word *walk* refers to how we behave each day before nonbelievers. We need to win their respect by living blamelessly before the unsaved world.

   In most cases, unbelievers will not understand our lifestyle and will ridicule us. But over time they usually come to respect the strong moral stance for what is right. Without a good testimony before the unbelieving world, we become a reproach to the cause of Christ and can be snared by the Devil (1 Tim. 3:7).

2. “That you may lack nothing” (1 Th. 4:12). The implication is that we should pay for whatever we need in life. It also speaks of believers being self-sufficient, rather than depending on others for support or care. God does not want us to be like parasites or freeloaders who sponge off others rather than working to support ourselves. Christians who depend on others for their daily needs when they are physically and mentally able to work broadcast a bad testimony to the unsaved world.

   We all need to take inventory of our Christian walks and ask ourselves, “Am I showing love to believers and unbelievers alike? Am I living a life that is pleasing to God?”

**NOTICE, NO ONE HAD TAught THEM ABOUT LOVE; THEY WERE “TAught BY GOD” THROUGH THE INDWELLING POWER OF THE HOLy SPIRIT.**

by David M. Levy, director of Education and Ministry Relations and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry
A new year has begun, and new prospects are on the horizon. The Bible challenges us to spend our time wisely and avoid wasting opportunities: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15–16).

Many of us are overwhelmed and distracted. Countless things cloud our minds and demand our immediate attention. But distractions can have consequences. For example, approximately 3,500 people died and 400,000 were injured in 2015 alone due to distracted-driving accidents.¹

But there is an even greater danger. How many lives are ruined, families wounded, and opportunities lost due to the complacency of distracted living? Scripture abounds with tragic examples of people who lost their focus and lived distracted lives.

So how do we keep focused when distractions abound? The following seven biblical texts focus on the “one thing” we ought to do that, by God’s grace, will help us redeem our time in the days ahead and keep us on the path of life.

ONE DESIRE
In Psalm 27:4, David proclaimed he desired and sought after one thing: daily, unbroken fellowship with the Lord: “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”

The psalm’s intensity reveals David’s passionate thirst for God. He longed to dwell in the Tabernacle, or “the house of the Lord,” the one place that radiated God’s glory and the beauty of His grace and mercy. God personally met His people there, where His presence and the Ark of the Covenant dwelt. David sang, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells” (26:8).

Of course, God’s glory no longer dwells in man-made structures (Acts 17:24–25). No Tabernacle or Temple has stood in Jerusalem for almost 1,950 years, and God’s glory departed from the Temple more than 2,500 years ago. Yet Jewish people come to the Western Wall of the ancient Temple Mount in an attempt to be close to where the Lord’s glory last resided. Some even enter an excavated tunnel that leads to an underground area believed to be exactly in line with the ancient Holy of Holies.

Yet David found God’s beauty in a tent. Today the Lord dwells within the hearts of believers who “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:21–24).

How passionate are we about our relationship with the Lord?

ONE NEED
Luke chapter 10 records the account of two sisters, Martha and Mary, who hosted a dinner for Jesus. Mary sat and listened to Jesus while Martha, distracted and overwhelmed with serving, asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her.

Jesus replied, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part” (vv. 41–42). Martha allowed many things to distract and fluster her, but Mary stopped everything to sit at Jesus’ feet. Each woman made a choice: Martha chose tasks. Mary chose listening to Jesus—the “one thing . . . needed” and “that good part.”

Like weeds and thorns in a garden, the cares and distractions of this world can choke out the impact of God’s Word in our lives. If we’re not careful, we can become like barren trees, bearing no fruit.

How eager have we been to focus on the Word of God lately?

ONE WORD
As Christians, we struggle to be free from the shackles of outward religious rules and practices. The apostle Paul encouraged the fledgling believers in Galatia to live freely in the liberty of grace, but he reminded them they still needed to obey the moral law.

The moral law, Paul said, is summed up in one word: love. “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14). Grace should free our hearts to truly love others. While the pressure of external religious standards creates discord and a spirit of comparison, grace frees us to serve and love because we are loved and no longer need to prove ourselves.
How have we gone out of our way to demonstrate sacrificial love for others lately?

ONE LACK

One day, an influential, wealthy young man stopped Jesus to ask Him what he must do to inherit eternal life (Lk. 18:18). Jesus replied, “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother’” (v. 20).

In what appears to be a quick but sincere answer, the young man’s self-evaluation found no flaws. “All these things I have kept from my youth,” he told Jesus (v. 21).

Jesus responded, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (v. 22).

Jesus often used questions to challenge the religious presuppositions of people and to reveal their sinful hearts. Jesus challenged the young man to sell everything, give the profits to the poor, and follow Him. Sadly, the man chose his riches over Jesus: “But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich” (v. 23).

Jesus exposed the man’s heart, and the man left devastated. He was sorrowful not because he saw the truth about himself, but because he did not want to give up his riches. The one thing he lacked was an honest evaluation of his spiritual condition.

When was the last time we thoroughly and honestly evaluated our spiritual lives?

ONE TRUTH

One day Jesus passed a blind man sitting by the road. The man had seen only darkness his entire life. The miraculous touch of the Light of the World gave sight to his eyes and light to his darkness (Jn. 9:1–11).

When questioned by the religious leaders, the healed man proclaimed, “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (v. 25). The leaders became angry and excommunicated him from the synagogue.

Later Jesus found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” (v. 35). The man then openly declared his faith in Jesus—the Messiah and Son of God—and worshiped Him. Snatched from darkness into light, he didn’t know all the answers. He couldn’t even adequately describe Jesus when the religious leaders questioned him. But he knew one thing vividly: He had moved from darkness to light, both physically and spiritually.

How often are we overcome with a vivid awareness of our salvation?

ONE OBJECTIVE

We live in a busy world. Days and weeks fly by, and it seems we never have enough time to get everything done. Each day we have tasks to complete, people to meet, and obligations to fulfill. Some people schedule everything, prioritizing who and what need their attention. But sometimes we fail to prioritize time for God.

The apostle Paul faced many challenging and busy days; and he didn’t have an iPhone, day planner, or pocket organizer. But one thing he did have: the proper priority. He concentrated on his relationship with God above all else: “One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13–14).

Paul strove to become more like Christ every day. He enthusiastically looked forward to the adventure of walking with Jesus, longing to know “the power of His resurrection” and “the fellowship of His sufferings” (v. 10). God had top priority in Paul’s daily schedule, even in prison.

How does our pursuit of spiritual growth impact our daily schedules?

ONE REMEMBRANCE

Years ago, the Messiah’s imminent return for His church, the future judgment, the Millennial Kingdom, and the eternal state filled pastors’ sermons. Christians talked about them and used to live as if any day could be their last on Earth. Somehow the church has forgotten these truths, carelessly living as if tomorrow will always come.

Hope in Christ’s return motivated the early church to stand firm, share the Good News, and live godly lives in a fallen and perverse world. Peter charged the Christians of his day to remember that God’s timetable was not theirs: “Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8).

The Day of the Lord is on the horizon, and His promises are irrevocable: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13).

How sure is your hope of Jesus’ promised return at any moment?

It’s easy to become distracted and lose focus on what counts. This year, let’s evaluate and reorder our lives so we live wisely and purposefully—impacting others for eternity.

ENDNOTE


by Clarence Johnson, a Bible teacher and director of The Friends of Israel Institute of Jewish Studies
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said recently Israel will not accept the new, unified Hamas-Fatah government unless Hamas renounces terrorism and acknowledges Israel’s right to exist.

“Israel opposes any reconciliation in which the terrorist organization Hamas does not disarm and end its war to destroy Israel. There is nothing Israel wants more than peace with all our neighbors. Reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas makes peace much harder to achieve. . . . Reconciling with mass-murderers is part of the problem, not part of the solution,” Netanyahu posted on Facebook.

The Fatah-Hamas agreement, brokered by the Egyptian government in October, ended the decade-long schism between the two factions. Fatah agreed to lift punitive sanctions on Hamas in exchange for control of the Gaza Strip and the formation of a unity government, JNS.org reported.

The Israeli government also called on Hamas to release two Israeli hostages—Avra Mengistu and Hisham a-Said—and return the remains of fallen Israel Defense Forces soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, JNS.org reported.

From news reports

**IDF SPEAKERS COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM ON U.S. CAMPUSES**

As virulent anti-Semitism increases on U.S. college campuses, the pro-Israel organization Reservists on Duty (RoD) has stepped up its efforts to counter false claims against the Jewish state.

It recently organized a speaking tour called Arabs Breaking the Silence, featuring Christian, Muslim, Druze, Bedouin, and Arab-Palestinian former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers who shared their experiences of living in Israel and serving in the IDF. The former soldiers spoke on university campuses in California, Arizona, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and New York.

The tour countered the claims of the anti-Israel organization Breaking the Silence. According to data collected by the AMCHA Initiative, a nonprofit that documents and combats anti-Semitism, the beginning of the 2017–2018 school year has seen a marked increase in anti-Israel activity, including Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) posters and swastika incidents. In the fall, AMCHA had reported 457 anti-Semitic incidents on U.S. college campuses in 2017.

Pro-Palestinian students from the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) have been promoting a book called the Disorientation Guide on such campuses as Tufts University, Columbia University, and New York University (NYU) to convince incoming freshmen that Israel is a white supremacist, apartheid state. SJP is connected with the terrorist organization Hamas. SJP activists at NYU accused the university of “racist” and “Zionist” policies and called for it to end its study-abroad program to Tel Aviv University, falsely claiming “students of Palestinian descent, or Arab descent more broadly, are distinctly prohibited from studying at the Tel Aviv site.”

The SJP chapter at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst sponsored a speaker who accused Israel of pursuing “ethnic cleansing” and “ethnic purity,” JNS.org reported. Such accusations of Israel as a white supremacist nation are baseless, said Ron Krudo, director of Campus Affairs for StandWithUs. About 70 percent of Israelis were born in African or Middle Eastern countries and thus “would be considered ‘people of color’ in America,” Krudo told JNS.org.

In October NYU also hosted a 10-day run of “The Siege,” an anti-Israel play performed by Palestinian actors who portrayed as heroes the Arab terrorists who seized Bethlehem’s Church of the Nativity in 2002, JNS.org said.

From news reports
U.S. ISLAMIC CHARITY PROMOTES ANTI-SEMITISM

Senior officials from the U.S.-funded Muslim charity Islamic Relief have promoted anti-Semitism and praised Arab terrorists on social media, according to the Middle East Forum’s recent Islamist Watch report.

In numerous social media posts, Chairman of Islamic Relief’s U.S. branch, Khaled Lamada, expressed support for the Muslim Brotherhood; admired violence against Israel; and praised Egyptian guerilla fighters for “causing the Jews many defeats.” Another U.S. Islamic Relief official, Yousef Abdallah, posted content glorifying Arab terrorists as “martyrs” who provided weapons to “kill more than 20 Jews” and “fire rockets at Tel Aviv.”

The United States gave $370,000 in aid to Islamic Relief in 2016, and Islamist Watch research has revealed Islamic Relief sends much of its funding to Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

UNESCO APPOINTS FIRST-EVER JEWISH DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently voted to appoint its first-ever Jewish director-general a day after the United States and Israel announced they would withdraw from UNESCO due to its anti-Israel bias.

Former French Minister of Culture Audrey Azoulay won the narrow vote—30 to 28—against Qatari Hamad Bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari. “In a time of crisis, we need more than ever to get involved [and] work to strengthen the organization,” said Azoulay.

JNS.org

U.S. OPENS FIRST PERMANENT MILITARY BASE IN ISRAEL

The United States has opened its first-ever permanent military base in Israel, continuing the long trend of U.S.-Israeli military cooperation. The base, located in southern Israel, will house dozens of U.S. military personnel who will assist Israel’s air defense missions. “[The American military] will assist and improve the ability of the state of Israel and IDF’s air defenses,” Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus told JNS.org.

The U.S. task force will help Israel “improve detection, interception and deployment in aerial defense while strengthening cooperation,” IDF Brig. Gen. Tzvika Haimovich said.

JNS.org

HAMAS KEEPS BUILDING TUNNELS INTO ISRAEL

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has discovered a Hamas terror tunnel underneath a United Nations’ school in the Gaza Strip, placing the school’s children in grave danger. “Yet another terror tunnel under an UNRWA schoolyard. This is what Hamas rule looks like, and this is more proof of the double war crime committed as terror tunnels are built to attack Israelis, while using the children of Gaza as human shields,” Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said.

Days later, the Israel Defense Forces demolished a Hamas terror tunnel being built inside Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip, The Times of Israel reported.

JNS.org

IDF SOLDIERS HELP SUDANESE REFUGEES

Israeli NGO iAid recently sent two former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers to Uganda’s border to help South Sudan’s refugees who have fled due to national unrest, famine, and economic crisis. “In an effort to support the conflict’s most vulnerable displaced communities, the two former combat soldiers were there to utilize their elite training to assess the situation and provide much-needed support for sustainability,” The Jerusalem Post reported.

Israeli NGOs such as iAid and IsraAID are continuing to send workers to aid the more than 11 million Sudanese men, women, and children facing displacement, hunger, and a lack of medical necessities, the Post reported.

From news reports

UAE DISCRIMINATES AGAINST ISRAELI JUDO PLAYERS

When Israeli Judo champion Tal Flicker won the gold medal recently at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam judo tournament in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), he quietly sang Israel’s national anthem, “Hatikvah,” to himself because the tournament’s organizers refused to play it. They also refused to let the Israeli players compete under the Israeli flag or wear their nation’s flag on their uniforms, as the other players were allowed to do.

Israeli bronze medal winner Tohar Bubul was shunned by his opponent, who refused to shake his hand. The president of the UAE Judo Federation and the general secretary of Abu Dhabi Sports Council later apologized.

From news reports

Israel is one of only 11 nations possessing the ability to independently launch unmanned missions into space. “Israel is one of the few countries that has the entire chain of satellite capabilities, which means launch, design, construction, and operation,” Director General of the Israel Space Agency Avi Blasberger told JNS.org.
O
ne day as I left home, I ran into a few Orthodox men who were trying to sell commentaries. “Do you want to know the true faith?” one asked me.

“I know the true faith,” I answered. “It is you who are far away from the truth.”

One replied, “You are lucky our holy rabbi did not hear you say that.”

I told him, “Only God is holy, and I know where to find the full truth.”

“Have you read these books?” one asked me.

“If you gave me those books for free, I would throw them away,” I replied.

They were not happy with me and looked as if they wanted to fight. “How do you know the books written by our rabbis are not good?” one demanded.

“It is clearly written in Deuteronomy 6:13–14, ‘You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him . . . You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people, who are all around you.’ Of course, you have not read this. But this is a very important chapter. So I want to ask you, Where is the truth? In the Bible, or in the many stories of rabbinical tradition?”

A passerby who was listening to our conversation chimed in with the answer. “Of course, the Bible!” he declared.

“How do you know all of this?” one of the Orthodox men asked me. “Are you one of those who believe in This Man?” (The Orthodox always refer to Jesus as “This Man.”)

I replied, “I believe in the living God. I believe what is written in the Holy Bible.”

“Where is it written in the Bible about Yeshua? Can you show us?” one asked. Now we had arrived! I had been waiting patiently for this moment. I quickly opened my Bible and read to them the “forbidden chapter,” Isaiah 53:

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But 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. 4–6).

“About whom is this written?” I asked.

“This is written about our Messiah, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson from New York,” one replied. Then they showed me brochures that claimed Schneerson, the ultra-Orthodox rabbi who lived in Brooklyn, New York, and died in 1994, was the Jewish Messiah.

“You are blind to follow such a false belief,” I replied. “I can go to the cemetery in New York and find his body in his grave. So how could he be the Messiah?”

“You and many others who believe in This Man refuse to serve in the army!” one yelled.

I was happy he had brought up this subject. I showed pictures of when I served in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973.

“I fought in all of these wars,” I said. “Now one of my sons serves as a high officer in the navy. The other serves in the air force as a paratrooper, and my daughter serves in communications.”

Then I asked the men, “Have any of you served in the army?”

I knew none of them had.

Some knew some verses from the New Testament, so one of them asked, “You believe in Yeshua, and He said, ‘You shall not kill.’ And what have you done in the war but kill others?”

I told him, “You have not read what Jesus said in Matthew 22:21: ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ I am an Israeli citizen, and it is my duty to serve in the army.”

“This is not the end of our conversation,” one replied. “You will have to speak with our rabbis. They will show you how you are wrong.”

“Speaking with them would bring me great joy,” I told them. Isaiah 9:2 says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” I am ready and waiting to bring them the light.

—The Friends of Israel Archives, September 2004

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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