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Givers and Takers
by Elwood McQuaid ........................................ 10
A Texas teacher was in for a shock recently when she discovered something better suited to Communist Russia than to the good old USA. What is happening to America?

The Greatest Sacrifice
by Thomas C. Simcox ...................................... 14
Old Testament sacrifices were neither easy nor inexpensive. And they had to be offered over and over again. But one was the costliest of all.

The Road to the Cross
by Mark Johnson ............................................. 16
Why would anyone endure what Christ endured? If you don’t think God loves you, take a moment to read this article. You may never think that way again.

Thank God for ‘Reveille’
by Peter Colón ................................................ 20
Death always produces sadness. But death is not the end for Bible-believing Christians. Praise God, He has a better plan!

The Resurrection: Dispelling the Myths
by Rick Lyon .................................................. 28
Did Christ really rise from the grave? Many people don’t think so. This outstanding article examines the theories and arrives at an inescapable conclusion.

Inside View ....................................................... 4
Eye on the Middle East ........................................ 5
Editorial ........................................................... 6
Remembering Latrun ........................................... 8
They Cry in Silence ............................................. 9
A More Perfect Union .......................................... 13
Dates to Remember ........................................... 19
Commemoration for the Honorable
Ariel Sharon ...................................................... 19
They Found Nothing! .......................................... 22
A Hill Called Calvary ........................................... 23
Beyond the Veil .................................................. 24
UN Criticizes Israel’s Policy
Toward Illegal Immigrants .................................. 27
U.S. Wants Israel to Give Up Jordan Valley ........ 31
A Memorial Day Unlike Any Other ....................... 32
Making Michael’s Dream a Reality ....................... 35
The First Epistle of John ..................................... 36
The Foundations of Faith ..................................... 38
Israel in the News ............................................. 40
New York Times Wins Top Dishonest Reporting
Award From HonestReporting.com ..................... 41
Apples of Gold (Zvi) ........................................... 42

Our Cover: Memorial Day at the Armored Corps
Memorial Site and Museum at Latrun, Israel (Hanan Isachar/www.isachar-photography.com).

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Communion at the Garden Tomb is always one of the highlights of our Up to Jerusalem tours to Israel. As I sat in the serene gardens on our tour last fall, preparing to celebrate communion with our group, I reflected on the first communion our Savior instituted, only a short distance away from where we were, and was reminded again how Replacement Theology has impacted the church.

Jesus initiated the first communion 2,000 years ago on Passover (Lk. 22:7–13). During the Passover meal that evening (vv. 19–20), He took bread, broke it, gave it to His disciples, and told them it was to remind them of His body, which was given for them. Likewise, He took the cup after the meal and gave it to them as a reminder that He was shedding His blood for them. Jesus called it the cup of the New Covenant.

The fact that His great suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection coincided with the Jewish holiday of Passover was not an accident. It was divine timing. Through Moses, God instituted Passover for the Jewish people enslaved in Egypt (Ex. 12:1–29). God prescribed the exact details for slaying unblemished yearling lambs and placing their blood on the doorposts and lintels of Jewish homes. He also commanded the Jewish people to remember the Passover each year as a holy day. Later, He codified it in the Law He gave to Moses.

Passover was God’s way of teaching about redemption and defining His requirements for an acceptable sacrifice that would deliver people from His judgment for sin. To this day, the Passover seder is celebrated in Jewish homes each year.

On the Hebrew calendar, Passover is observed on Nissan 15–22. Because the Hebrew calendar is lunar and based on 29-day and 30-day months, the corresponding dates on our Gregorian calendar vary from year to year. Some years, Passover is celebrated in March; other years, in April. This year it begins at sundown April 14 and ends at sundown April 22.

Jesus died on Passover. His last meal, which He celebrated with His disciples immediately before His arrest, was the Passover seder. It would seem reasonable that the church would always celebrate Easter on Passover. But in the first few centuries of the church, as Gentiles became the majority, church leaders began despising the Jewish people. Their dislike eventually turned to hatred.

Then hatred gave rise to Replacement Theology, or Supersessionism—the idea that the church has superseded or replaced Israel in God’s plan. This was a case of first developing a theology, then turning to Scripture to try to justify it. One of the outcomes of Replacement Theology was a decision to disassociate the Bible and the Christian faith from anything Jewish. Thus the Bible came to be seen as a thoroughly Christian Book.

At the Synod of Antioch in A.D. 341, the Roman church adopted Canon I, which forbade any Christian from observing Easter when the Jewish people observed Passover, under threat of excommunication. It adopted a method of setting the date for Easter on the first Sunday following the paschal full moon that follows the spring equinox. Thus the church severed Easter from Passover. Had it not been for Replacement Theology, we likely would celebrate Easter in conjunction with the Jewish holiday.

Although The Friends of Israel wholly rejects Replacement Theology, we still follow the traditional church calendar. Is this wrong? Well, Christ is honored whenever we celebrate His resurrection, regardless of the date. However, the date teaches us that Replacement Theology is far-reaching, even affecting churches that reject it.
not support the boycott of Israel,” he said, leading Bloomberg.com columnist Jeffrey Goldberg to note, “The ASA is more Palestinian . . . than the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.”

Freedomhouse.org lists the world’s most repressive societies. Israel is not on the list. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom cites 15 nations where abuse of religious liberty is “systemic, egregious, and ongoing.” Israel is not on that list either.

And it’s no wonder. Israel has led the way in showing compassion. Ask the Haitians about the Israel Defense Forces, which were the first to set up triage centers in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Ask the Japanese which nation helped them for more than a year after a 9.0 earthquake struck their eastern coast. Ask Gaza citizens who, in December, suffered through six-foot-plus floodwaters, prompting Hamas—which regards Israel as its sworn enemy—to ask for help. And Israel gave it.

Ask Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh about Israeli doctors who treated his one-year-old granddaughter for an intestinal infection. She was one of thousands of Palestinians who were treated in Israeli hospitals last year. Ask the Syrian mother who fled her own war-ravaged country to give birth in Israel. “I really don’t feel like I’m in an enemy country; everyone is helping me and caring for me,” she said.

Israel consistently models human compassion to friend and foe alike; and it appears the ASA vote created more supporters of Israel than it did enemies.

END NOTES
5 Ibid.
6 Goldberg.

by Steve Herzig, director of North American Ministries and Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Talk and turning up pressure on Israel have obviously replaced rational movement toward peace in the Middle East. The prevailing powers seem to prefer to reward Palestinian intransigence by imposing an agreement on Israel that is, in actuality, capitulation.

At the apparent insistence of the United States that Israel make yet another goodwill gesture preceding the secretary of state’s January visit, Israel released a group of Palestinian terrorists from Israeli prisons. Among them were two men convicted in 1992 of firebombing a bus and killing a woman who was nine months pregnant, along with her three preschool-aged children. An Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier died trying to save them. Palestinians gave the murderers a heroes’ welcome home. Enough said.

Meanwhile, Western advocates of Jewish concessions in exchange for Palestinian promises still refuse to address the Arabs’ rabidly anti-Israel diatribes and actions.

Palestinian leaders are reportedly counting on Israel being compelled to begin negotiations based on a return to the pre-1967 armistice lines, a plan Israelis view as a prescription for national suicide. And it is not reassuring to see Palestinian Authority (PA) maps bearing no trace of Israel: Everything is called Arab Palestine.

In fact, when PA President Mahmoud Abbas met with Egyptian leaders in Cairo last year, he declared, “In a final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli—civilian or soldier—on our lands.”

Apparently, Abbas and company do not share a neighborly attitude toward the Jewish state, which they refuse to recognize, despite the fact that more than 1 million (roughly 20 percent) of Israel’s citizens are Palestinian. Four Arab representatives hold seats in the Knesset.

In an October 15, 2013, op-ed piece in The New York Times, “How Palestinian Hate Prevents Peace,” Dr. Yuval Steinitz, Israel’s minister of strategic and intelligence affairs, summarized the PA’s actions:

The Palestinian Authority’s television and radio stations, public schools, summer camps, children’s magazines and Web sites are being used to drive home the message . . . that the existence of a Jewish state (regardless of its borders) is illegitimate because there is no Jewish people and no Jewish history in this piece of land . . . And until it ends, the current round of talks cannot hope to reach a successful outcome.

Although most Westerners know the PA systematically incites hatred against Israel, they still deny the real roadblocks to peace and stick to their mantra—peace at any price—with Israel picking up the tab by giving its enemies its property and then waiting for the ax to fall.

From the outset, the premise has been that peace can only be achieved when both parties demonstrate their desire to negotiate in good faith. Consider how that premise has worked out so far:

- 1948: Jewish Holocaust survivors accepted the UN Partition Plan that returned to them only a sliver of their ancient homeland. The Arabs responded with war.
- 1967: IDF troops liberated Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, then in good faith turned control of the Mount over to the Muslim Waqf. In return, Muslims barred Jews from worshiping on the Mount, even restricting lip movements.
- 1982: Israel gave Egypt back the Sinai it had captured in war, along with valuable oil fields, in exchange for a peace agreement that the Muslim Brotherhood recently threatened to rescind.
- 2005: Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip. Palestinians responded with a terrorist, Hamas government that fired thousands of missiles into Israel. Hamas leaders declared there would be no concessions or recognition of Israel, only resistance.

If Western negotiators, namely the United States, press for an imposed solution of paper promises with no real substance, the results will be catastrophic. There can be no politically motivated race for a partisan “breakthrough” here. Lives, Israeli and Palestinian, are at stake.

And should the Palestinian Authority continue to lionize murderers, deny Jewish rights, and be complicit in regularly allowing the PA media to call Jewish people “monkeys,” “rats,” and “pigs,” its sham agreement will prove a bloody farce.

All of which makes the biblical mandate to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6) a compelling imperative.
Remembering Latrun

Days after Israel was declared a state on May 14, 1948, ill-equipped and virtually untrained men and boys who would become the Israel Defense Forces stood in the line of battle, looking across a wheat field toward a place called Latrun.

The position was held by the expert troops of the Jordanian Arab Legion. They had been trained by the British and were well schooled in military tactics. To make matters worse, the approach to the Arab position was lined with machine-gun emplacements effectively protected by long lines of trenches. The lightly armed Jewish forces hardly stood a chance.

Among them were Holocaust survivors—emaciated, beaten-down human beings hoping for a chance at a new life and a way to forget the horror they had left behind. Some had entered the country only 72 hours earlier.

The reason for haste was that Latrun overlooked the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, the lifeline to the embattled city of Jerusalem where 95,000 Jewish people were in danger of being captured or starving to death. Resupplying Jerusalem was considered an absolute necessity. Jewish leaders believed that if Jerusalem fell, the reality of a new Israel might fall with it. Gone would be the dream of a national resurrection in the ancient homeland of world Jewry.

For the young immigrants, the setting was mesmerizing. They were in the Valley of Ayalon, where the famous Jewish soldier Joshua had commanded the sun to stand still as he vanquished the Amorites (Josh. 10:12–14). And after two millennia, their feet stood on the very soil where their forebears had longed to be. From the agonies of the Holocaust they had come home, with hope of building new lives in a haven free from persecution.

Then the command was given, and so began the treacherous march through fields that would be scorched by searing heat later in the day. It was like little David against Goliath, but with a different outcome. Goliath had the firepower. The Arabs had seen the Jews marching toward the wheat fields in the bright moonlight of the previous night. There would be no surprises.

Nor would there be a Jewish victory—only confusion, death, and retreat, marking a long and futile day. Ironically, many of the casualties had survived the bloody years of Hitler’s war against the Jews in Europe, only to die within hours of arriving in Israel at the hands of different enemies.

For Israelis, Masada and Latrun are symbolically related: Both defeats ultimately bore the seeds of triumph. Masada, where nearly 1,000 Jewish survivors resisted Roman legionnaires for three brutal years after Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70, bears the epitaph “Never Again.” At Latrun, the names of the thousands who fell are inscribed on a monument exuding the theme “Never Forget.”

Both places teach an important lesson: Sacrifices made for freedom must never be forgotten.

by Elwood McQuaid

A visitor to the Armored Corps Memorial Site and Museum at Latrun reads the engraved names of the soldiers who died there (Hanan Isachar/www.isachar-photography.com).

"Just because the plan of salvation was not worked out by a conference of scholars in a university doesn’t mean that there is nothing profound about it. ‘Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory’ (1 Tim. 3:16). Compared to that, nuclear physics is kindergarten stuff. We shall spend eternity marveling at the wonder of what God has done for us in Christ.”

—Vance Havner
A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

One of the worst Christian massacres—complete with mass graves, tortured-to-death women and children, and destroyed churches—took place in Syria in 2013 at the hands of the U.S.-supported jihadi “rebels”; and the U.S. government and its “mainstream media” mouthpiece are, as usual, silent (that is, when not actively trying to minimize matters).

The massacre took place in Sadad, an ancient Syriac Orthodox Christian habitation. Most of the region’s inhabitants are poor, as Sadad is situated in the remote desert between Homs and Damascus (desert regions and, until now, apparently the only places Syria’s Christians could feel secure; 600 Christian families had earlier fled there for sanctuary from the jihad, only to be followed by it).

In late October, the U.S-supported “opposition” invaded and occupied Sadad for over a week, until ousted by the nation’s military. Among other atrocities, 45 Christians—including women and children—were killed, several tortured to death; Sadad’s 14 churches, some ancient, were ransacked and destroyed; the bodies of six people from one family, ranging from ages 16 to 90, were found at the bottom of a well (an increasingly common fate for “subhuman” Christians).

The jihadis even made a graphic video (with English subtitles) of those whom they massacred, while shouting Islam’s victory-cry, “Allahu Akbar” (which U.S. Sen. John McCain [R-AZ] equates to a Christian saying “thank God”). Another video, made after Sadad was liberated, shows more graphic atrocities.

Here are the words of Archbishop Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh, Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Homs and Hama:

What happened in Sadad is the most serious and biggest massacre of Christians in Syria in the past two years and a half; . . . 45 innocent civilians were martyred for no reason, and among them several women and children, many thrown into mass graves. Other civilians were threatened and terrorized. 30 were wounded and 10 are still missing. For one week, 1,500 families were held as hostages and human shields. Among them children, the elderly, the young, men and women.

. . . What happened in Sadad is the largest massacre of Christians in Syria and the second in the Middle East.

It is but the tip of the iceberg of the persecution the nation’s Christian minority has suffered—including beheadings, church bombings, kidnappings, rapes, and dislocation of hundreds of thousands of Christians—since the war broke out.

A month before Sadad, another ancient Christian region, Ma’loula, one of the world’s very few regions that still spoke Aramaic, the language of Jesus, was besieged by the jihadis, its churches bombarded and plundered, its inhabitants forced to convert to Islam or die. The last words of one man who refused were: “I am a Christian, and if you want to kill me for this, I do not object to it.”

The archbishop is asking, “We have shouted aid to the world but no one has listened to us. Where is the Christian conscience? Where is human consciousness? Where are my brothers? I think of all those who are suffering today in mourning and discomfort: We ask everyone to pray for us.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: To read the complete story, go to RaymondIbrahim.com. There you also will find the following articles: “Christmas in Iraq: Slaughtered Christians?” “Syria: Terrorists Kill Four Children of Bishop for Preaching the Gospel?” “New Jersey: Muslim Brotherhood Attack on Coptic Bishop Denied.” “Three American Teachers Slaughtered for Christian Faith in Muslim World,” and many more.

by Raymond Ibrahim, author of Crucified Again: Exposing Islam’s New War on Christians. Mr. Ibrahim is a Middle East and Islam specialist, a Shillman Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and an Associate Fellow at the Middle East Forum.
In November 1980, Ronald Wilson Reagan became the oldest man ever elected to the office of president of the United States. He brought to the White House experience garnered in two successful terms as governor of California. Within minutes after Reagan took the oath of office in January 1981, all 52 Americans held hostage in Iran for 444 days by the tyrannical Islamic government were released.

During his eight years in office, President Reagan rebuilt the military, won the Cold War with the Soviet Union, resuscitated American patriotism, and certified recognition and respect for American exceptionalism before the world.
But the most significant aspect of Reagan’s tenure was his understanding that faith occupied an important place in the life of the nation. For years he advocated for the right to pray in our classrooms. Perhaps the following quotation best summarizes his view of the importance of God and the Bible in public life:

My experience in this office I hold has only deepened a belief I’ve held for many years: Within the covers of that single Book are all the answers to all the problems that face us today if we’d only read and believe.¹

Though some may question Reagan’s commitment to the Christian faith in which he was reared, his statements are a far cry from what American officials dispense today.

One of President Reagan’s most revealing comments was contained in his famous Evil Empire Speech, given at the National Association of Evangelicals convention on March 8, 1983:

A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very prominent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the cold war, and communism and our own way of life were very much on people’s minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly, though, I heard him saying, “I love my little girls more than anything . . . but I would rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God.”²

At issue was the Communist-Russian conspiracy to establish a completely godless, totalitarian world that would wipe out Christianity and all Judeo-Christian values. Beyond the conclaves, political clashes, theoretical debates, and international intrigues of the time, the inescapable bottom line was articulated by the young man who preferred to see his little girls die “still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God.”³

As a political system, Soviet Communism collapsed largely due to Ronald Reagan’s unbending opposition and American military capacity. Unfortunately, however, the campaign to purge God from the planet did not collapse. That campaign continues in another guise. The war (and that is the correct term) on Christianity in America is being waged from the courts to the kindergartens.

### The War on Christmas

Christmas 2013 was tagged as “the war on Christmas.” Advocates of atheism, in and out of government, evidently saw an opportunity to build on recent radical minority successes to rev up attacks on commemorations of the birth of Christ.

Among the hundreds of incidents that could be cited, perhaps the most egregious was the Veterans Administration’s (VA’s) decision on the distribution of Christmas cards to bedridden veterans at a hospital in Dallas, Texas.

Prosper, Texas, math teacher Susan Chapman, wife of a veteran and volunteer at various veterans’ organizations, thought it a good idea to encourage 52 students at the Grace Academy to make Christmas cards to hand deliver to the vets to cheer them up during the holidays. Myfoxfw.com reported that when Chapman contacted the VA to arrange delivery, this was the VA’s reply:

That’s great. We’re thrilled to have them, except the only thing is, we can’t accept anything that says “Merry Christmas” or “God bless you” or any scriptural references because of all the red tape.⁴

The incriminating words are although they knew God, they did not . . .

Two core deficiencies mark the failure of those who once “knew God”: (1) They refuse to “glorify Him.” That is, they refuse to give God His rightful place. (2) They refuse to be “thankful.”

Such people become a society of takers, never acknowledging the divine source of benevolence. They crave the best for themselves because, in their minds, they deserve it. And they credit themselves for their achievements, with no thanks to God. The consequences are inevitable: man-centered creature worship.

Unfortunately, the casualties extend to the next generation, which is not taught gospel truth or biblical norms. The result is the condition feared by the young man whom Reagan quoted: a society that lives without God. The consequences are inevitable: man-centered creature worship.

Societal endorsement of the death of Christianity and the Judeo-Christian ethic is suicidal. Rejecting what has brought this country up will assuredly bring it down.

### Spawning a Lost Generation

In the final analysis, at stake is the legacy of a generation confronting a huge challenge—one that has nothing to do with politics, complicit religious apostates, economics, or social revolution. It has to do with God Himself.

If the country continues down its current path, it will become the poster child for Romans 1 and will pay the price for failing to communicate God’s Word clearly to the rising generation:

Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Rom. 1:21–23).

The incriminating words are although they knew God, they did not . . .

Spawning a society of takers, never acknowledging the divine source of benevolence. They crave the best for themselves because, in their minds, they deserve it. And they credit themselves for their achievements, with no thanks to God. The consequences are inevitable: man-centered creature worship.

Unfortunately, the casualties extend to the next generation, which is not taught gospel truth or biblical norms. The result is the condition feared by the young man whom Reagan quoted: a society that lives without God or the Christ who came to save them.

Societal endorsement of the death of Christianity and the Judeo-Christian ethic is suicidal. Rejecting what has brought this country up will assuredly bring it down.

### The War That Was Never a Contest

During the Christmas season, a popular “prosperity gospel” preacher was asked to comment on whether there was actually a war on Christmas—meaning on Christ and Christianity.

He dodged the issue, saying it was not a concern for him and, therefore, not something to waste time discussing. That attitude is a problem plaguing many people both in and out of our pulpits. History
Why did Jesus tell His disciples in advance that one of them would betray Him?

Answer:

“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.”
— John 13:19

The war to banish God has already been won. In the end, we will see that all the enemies’ attempts were only small skirmishes destined to be forgotten when “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11).

E N D N O T E S


Elwood McQuaid is consulting editor for The Friends of Israel.

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Crime laws indicate that such laws inevitably morph into prosecution of “hate speech.”

Since the passage of America’s hate-crime law, we have seen an increasingly vicious intolerance of otherwise lawful and responsible ideas simply because they are denominated as “hate.” Facebook, Google, and Apple have all adopted prohibitions against hate speech and removed certain conservative and Christian comments from their sites.

The left-leaning Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has published its list of “hate groups” and cited legitimate Christian advocacy organizations like the Family Research Council and the American Family Association. Some government officials even rely on that list. The problem has become so widespread that I founded the John Milton Project for Free Speech, a venture of the National Religious Broadcasters.

In the waning weeks of 2013, the Duck Dynasty scandal broke, illustrating again the intolerance toward orthodox Christian ideas. Citing the Bible, Duck Dynasty patriarch Phil Robertson voiced his support for traditional marriage and his opposition to homosexuality.

His comments went viral, and gay-rights groups protested. So A&E, the channel that airs the family-friendly (and decidedly conservative) program, banned Robertson from the show. Because the backlash against A&E was fast and furious, the network relented and negotiated Robertson’s apparent return. Yet the incident proves the willfulness of powerful entertainment moguls to submit to dissenters whenever they cry “haters.”

Closer to home, instances in Canada of anti-Christian prosecutions based entirely on the expression of disfavored ideas have practically become legendary.

Although the U.S. government has stopped short of criminalizing “pure speech” simply because the ideas are unpopular, my review of nations that pass hate-crime laws indicates that such laws inevitably morph into prosecution of “hate speech.”

The hate-crimes approach, which targets disfavored ideas, is part of an increasing global trend. In Denmark a Danish-Iranian artist was recently convicted for criticizing Islam under the new law, and there are subtle signs that future prosecution of people of faith may be on the horizon.

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W

ith Passover beginning at sundown on April 14, grocery stores are stocking up on kosher items. Kosher literally means “fit and suitable,” and the laws of kashrut tell observant Jewish people what they can and cannot eat.

Not surprisingly, more is involved in making something kosher than most people realize. The animals must be slaughtered in a way that causes them no pain, and all their blood must be drained. To ensure no blood remains, the animal flesh is soaked in salt water. The reason for this procedure is found in Leviticus: “I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people” (17:10).

The Law made it clear that Jewish people were never to eat blood. So, in their desire to obey God, rabbis thoroughly inspect all meat before labeling it “kosher.” God declared, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement.

thoroughly inspect all meat before labeling it “kosher.” God declared, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement.
for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." Therefore I said to the children of Israel, “No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood” (vv. 11–12).

Why was God so unequivocal on this issue? Noted biblical scholar Dr. Charles Ryrie explained, “Two reasons are given for the command not to eat blood: the life of the body is derived from it, and it is the means by which atonement for sins is made.”

The blood was always the source of atonement.

Sacrifices in the Levitical system were costly because God demanded that people bring the best they had. The sacrifices presented to Him had to be perfect; spotless; without blemish, injury, or issue. The animal could not have a broken bone, for example, or a problem with its teeth or fur. It could not be blind or deaf. God demanded absolute perfection.

He instructed Moses and the Israelites regarding the first Passover: “Your lamb shall be without blemish” (Ex. 12:5). Years later He said, “Cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—for I am a great King” (Mal. 1:14).

Slaughtering the sacrifice before the Lord probably was not a pleasant process. The person bringing the sacrifice placed his hand on the animal, imputing his sin to the innocent beast. Then the priest killed the sacrifice. Blood flowed freely. It was collected and poured out before the brazen altar, on which much of the animal often was burned. The more sacrifices that were burned, the stronger the smell of burning flesh filled the air; and blood covered the priests. The area was virtually an outdoor slaughterhouse for the sole purpose of covering sin.

Under the Law, almost everything was cleansed by blood. Of the 301 references to blood in the Hebrew Scriptures, 68 of them (22.6 percent) appear in the book of Leviticus.

Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated over and over because, as the Bible states, “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). They were temporary coverings for sin until someone came who could deal with the problem once and for all.

The One whom God promised would deal with sin is the Jewish Messiah:

So shall He sprinkle many nations. 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 (Isa. 53:5; 53:4–6).

His sacrifice was the costliest of all: “If, I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.’ This He said, signifying by what death He would die” (Jn. 12:32–33).

The Bible contains many prophecies about the Messiah’s death for sinners, both Jewish and Gentile. Several passages in the Hebrew Scriptures picture His suffering. In fact, Jesus quoted one of them as He hung on the cross: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Ps. 22:1).

The prophet Zechariah taught that the Messiah’s execution would involve piercing and that, despite His death, He will someday return: And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day a fountain [of blood] shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

The New Testament confirms that God’s only provision for removing sin and obtaining His forgiveness is through blood sacrifice: “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

In God’s amazing love, He came to this planet to deal with sin, the biggest problem humanity faces: “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).

Jesus was the final and greatest sacrifice. He shed His blood so that individuals everywhere can receive forgiveness of sin if they place their faith in Him.

Corrie ten Boom was a Christian Holocaust survivor. She and her family were deported to the Nazi death camps for protecting Jewish people, and she endured the evils of the Ravensbruck concentration camp. She was the only member of her family who made it out of World War II alive. Years later, she declared,

“The blood of Jesus Christ has great power! There is perhaps not a phrase in the Bible that is so full of secret truth as is “The blood of Jesus.” It is the secret of His incarnation, when Jesus took on flesh and blood; the secret of His obedience unto death, when He gave His life at the Cross of Calvary; the secret of His love that went beyond all understanding when He bought us with His blood; the secret of the enemy and the secret of our eternal salvation.”

Robert Lowry said it well in his timeless hymn, “Nothing But the Blood,” written in 1876: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” His blood is the only source for cleansing and forgiveness for all mankind for all eternity.

END NOTES


2 Corrie ten Boom <dailychristianquote.com/dejesus2.html>.

Thomas C. Simcox is the Church Ministries training coordinator and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel.
Are you ever tempted to doubt God’s love for you? Perhaps you’ve lost a loved one, heard bad news from your doctor, or face some nagging temptation yet again. “God,” you agonize, “if You really love me, how can You allow this to come my way?”

At those moments, it is actually the facts about how much God does love us that can keep us from despair. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”
(Rom. 8:32). Meditating on Christ’s sufferings actually helps us “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” (Eph. 3:19) and is an eminently practical way to arm ourselves to trust Him, come what may.

Since the fourth century a.d., some Christians have found solace in walking the Via dolorosa, the “way of suffering” or “painful way,” to remember Jesus’ journey to the cross. This 2,000-foot-long route moves through Jerusalem’s Old City, from the a ntonia Fortress near the Temple Mount to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the oldest traditional site for the crucifixion and burial. The site of the burial deemed authentic and revered by the vast majority of contemporary, conservative Christians is the Garden Tomb, located near the Damascus Gate.

What really happened on the way to the cross? And how does meditating on Scripture’s truths fortify us with the assurance of God’s unconditional love for us?

The Scriptures about the Via dolorosa are clear, simple, and yet profound. On the road to the cross, God’s glory was on display; the plan of salvation was being worked out, and the love of Jesus for you and me was demonstrated: “Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus turned Himself over to His Father, trusting righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus turned to them to offer compassionate words of warning: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren! . . .’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” (Lk. 23:28–30).

This was the sixth warning to Jerusalem that Luke recorded from the lips of Israel’s Messiah. Barrenness was considered a curse; but Jesus knew that when the Romans would burn Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (and when it will be devastated again during the Tribulation), having no children to face such warfare would be a blessing. It would be better to be crushed to death under rocks than face such anguish.

Jesus’ closing question was a maxim to say that if He experienced such suffering undeservedly, more horrible judgment will face those who deserve it: “If they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?” (v. 31).1

The suffering Prophet, Priest, and King was moved with compassion to pause and issue a prophetic warning, even amid the stress of treading the path to the cross. Oh, how He loves you and me.

**Dependency**

Four soldiers formed the standard crucifixion squad. (“Then the soldiers . . . took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part,” Jn. 19:23.) The first stop on the way to Calvary was the courtyard of the Praetorium, or governor’s residence, where the soldiers “gathered the whole garrison around Him” (Mt. 27:27). This probably was the Fortress of a ntonia, adjoining the Temple. Even today carvings of ancient Roman games can be found on the courtyard’s pavement.

The 200 or so soldiers of the “whole garrison” decided to have some cruel fun before the serious work of crucifixion began. Notorious for their brutality, they vented their own depravity and hatred for Israel by mocking the “King of the Jews.” They stripped Him, clothed Him as faux royalty with a scarlet robe (likely the discarded cloak of an officer), twisted thorns into a crown (reminding us of the curse of sin on the earth), and gave Him a reed “scepter.”

Then they bowed in mockery with royal greetings; repeatedly spat on Him in contempt; struck His head again and again with the reed, driving the painfully sharp thorns of the crown deeper and deeper into His skull; and slapped Him with their calloused hands. How ironic that these mere creatures were allowed to torment their Creator, the true King of the universe.

Yet, “when He was reviled, [He] did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judgesrighteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus turned Himself over to His Father, trusting that the Judge of all the earth would make things right in the end. The loving Lord Jesus utterly depended on His Father so He could patiently bear the rejection of His own creatures.

**Humanity**

We do not know how long the mockery continued; but afterward, the march toward execution resumed. Despite His beatings, Jesus started out “bearing His cross” (Jn. 19:17), the 100-pound crossbeam that condemned men carried. However, Scripture says the soldiers conscripted Simon, a Cyrenian entering Jerusalem from the countryside, to finish the task. Clearly, the soldiers who had abused Jesus so cruelly never would have used Simon had there been any possibility that Jesus, staggering from exhaustion, torture, and loss of blood, could have dragged the weight Himself.

Jesus was not a superhuman sufferer. He was exhausted—a true member of humanity, coming in the likeness of men and being “obedient to . . . the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:7–8). The Man of Sorrows experienced the weakness of being human out of love for you and me.

**Sympathy**

Luke’s Gospel says a great multitude followed Jesus, including women whose hearts were breaking watching Him move toward crucifixion. Amazingly, He turned to them to offer compassionate words of warning:

Luke’s Gospel says a great multitude followed Jesus, including women whose hearts were breaking watching Him move toward crucifixion.

**Tenacity**

Six months earlier Jesus had told the apostles He would be killed. He also said, “No one takes [My life] from
Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn. 10:18). Everything about His final months, weeks, and hours showed His absolute commitment to fulfill His Father’s plan as the Lamb of God.

When Jesus finally reached Golgotha, where He would be crucified, He was offered a drink of wine mixed with myrrh or gall, used as a pain-killing sedative. The Jewish Talmud says noble women in Jerusalem used to donate it and bring it to crucifixions.2

“When He had tasted it, He would not drink” (Mt. 27:34). The Messiah was so determined to keep His senses sharp as He paid sin’s price for us that He refused anything that would dull His agony. His love for us was total and tenacious.

The way to the cross was complete. In horrible simplicity, Scripture says, “Then they crucified Him” (v. 35). All along the way, our Savior showed His dependency, humanity, sympathy, and tenacity. The Father was fully glorified by His Suffering Servant.

The next time circumstances tempt you to doubt God’s love for you, get out a Bible and walk beside your Lord on His way to the cross, as He suffered for you. The experience may change your life.

ENDNOTES

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Commemoration
The Honorable Ariel Sharon

On the passing of the late Prime Minister of Israel, The Honorable Ariel Sharon, we, the Board of Trustees of The Friends of Israel, Bellmawr, New Jersey, USA, extend to his family, friends, and the entire Nation of Israel our sincere sympathy and condolences.

His vision, wisdom, energy, courage, and steadfast faith in God’s immutable promises serve as the highest standard for HIS Chosen People who, by faith, await an assured, secure, peaceful, and glorious future in possession of the land which HE promised to them long ago.

“...And God said unto him: ‘I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land’” (Genesis 35:11–12, Masoretic Text).

Our prayers and unwavering support are with HIS People and their land.

James P. MacLean
Board Chair
January 30, 1965, was a cloudy day in London. Silent crowds lined the streets to watch the gun carriage leave Westminster Hall, bearing a coffin. Millions more viewed the funeral at home and abroad by television. The procession traveled slowly through central London to St. Paul’s Cathedral for the state funeral for the only commoner of the 20th century to be accorded such an honor.

The queen and other members of the royal family, the prime minister, and representatives of 112 countries packed the cathedral. They were there to pay their final respects to Britain’s greatest wartime leader, Sir Winston Churchill, who died at the age of 90.

Death always produces sadness. Everything a person has lived for, accomplished, or sought to achieve abruptly comes to a close (cf. Eccl. 2:1–11). Even pristinely manicured cemeteries and grand, marble mausoleums cannot erase the reality that they are filled with death and corruption.
The Proof

His resurrection is indisputable: He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:5–8).

Throughout history, many have alleged the resurrection never happened. Yet no one has been able to conclusively refute it. Henry Morris (1918–2006), founder of the Institute for Creation Research, said it best when he wrote, “It is profoundly significant that two thousand years of the worldwide spread of Christianity have been accompanied by two thousand years of strident unbelieﬁ. . . . and every conceivable form of anti-Christian thought. Even more deplorable has been the rationalism of so-called “Christian” modernists, liberals, and cultists of every variety of compromising pseudo-Christianity.

Yet with all this opposition, no scholar or anyone else has ever yet been satisfactorily able to explain away the empty tomb of Christ. The unbreakable historic record that Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried in a speciﬁc sepulchre, and was out of that tomb three days later, can be explained only by His Resurrection. Every other proffered theory has failed miserably.

His tomb is empty! The tombs of Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Karl Marx, and every other religious founder and philosophical genius still hold and will hold the remains of their occupants until they go back to the dust.1

Only through Jesus Christ is eternal life in heaven a sure thing. As Jesus Himself said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (Jn. 11:25–26).

The Power

Some years ago while visiting Israel, my wife and I attended a service at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. I found myself transfixed on the plaque attached to the door. It reads, “HE IS NOT HERE—FOR HE IS RISEN.” An angel spoke those words to the women who went to the tomb but could not ﬁnd Jesus’ body (Mt. 28:5–6; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:1–6).

The human body is said to have 50 trillion to 75 trillion cells. Some estimates go as high as 100 trillion. As I looked around the tomb, I tried to imagine what type of power it would take to blast that many cells back to life after being dead for three days. Jesus was not resuscitated but made alive to a glorified body by the incredible power of the triune God of Scripture (Jn. 2:19; Rom. 8:11; Gal. 1:1).

I realized that as a true, born-again believer in Christ, I can anticipate the same power when death overtakes me (1 Cor. 6:14). The promise of certain resurrection does wonders to minimize the fear of the grave: “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (15:55).

The Promise

Everything Jesus said and did hinged on the fact that He would rise from the dead. His resurrection guarantees all the promises associated with salvation. Perhaps that is why the apostles Paul and Peter stressed the fact of the resurrection. Paul wrote, “For I delivered to you ﬁrst of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3–4).

Peter wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet. 1:3–4).

Winston Churchill planned his funeral in great detail. Curiously, he arranged that a bugler be positioned high in the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral to sound “Taps” after the benediction. “Taps” is commonly known as the signal for “day is done.”

Then, as Churchill had instructed, as soon as “Taps” was ﬁnished, another bugler on the other side of the towering dome played “Reveille,” a signal for “Arise!” It seems Churchill testifyed that at the end of history, the last note will not be “Taps,” but “Reveille.”

I do despise death. But thank God, morning is coming. It is so because in Jerusalem today, there is an empty tomb that bears witness to that fact.

ENDNOTE

1 Dr. Henry M. Morris, “Impact of the Empty Tomb,” Institute for Creation Research <icr.org/ChristEmptyTomb>.

Peter Colon is the creative resource coordinator and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel.

Answers from God’s Word

Question: What are the consequences of being lazy?

Answer: “Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.” —Proverbs 19:15
They Found Nothing!

Twenty-five years ago, when my son was 8 and my daughter 10, I nearly traumatized them. We were relaxing at home, enjoying one another's company, when I looked at the children and said, “What would you guys think if I told you archaeologists think they found the bones of Jesus?”

Silence. It was a silence so profound it was almost eerie. My son stood up and, without a word, walked away. My daughter went on with what she was doing, but I could tell she was distracted.

All their lives they had been taught the truth: Jesus Christ arose from the dead. Both had asked the Lord into their lives when they were about 5 years old, and they were growing in the faith. How firmly did they believe in the resurrection? I was about to find out.

Sarah soon moved to sit next to me. “They didn’t really find Jesus’ bones, did they?” she asked.

“Does it really matter?” I replied. “We can all still be nice people. Even though Jesus promised to rise from the dead but didn’t, we can still follow some of His teachings.” I was giving her the same position many adults adhere to when they fail to grasp the significance of the resurrection and lack the faith to believe.

Sarah looked at me with a hard stare. Then she declared, “It would be the end of the world!”

Soon Daniel came by. I tried to engage him, but he kept walking as he exclaimed, “I don’t want to talk about it! They found nothing!”

For a little guy, he was quite adamant. I quickly brought the matter to an end and told them I was not serious. Then I initiated a discussion on the importance of the resurrection.

The apostle Paul told believers in Corinth, “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Cor. 15:14). How interesting that children often grasp such deep spiritual truth far easier than adults do. No wonder Jesus said, “Unless you . . . become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:3).

An 8-year-old’s simple proclamation, “They found nothing!” contained more life-changing truth than volumes written by scholars who have everything but the faith to believe.

by Peter Colón

The Colóns in 1989, when Daniel was 8.

The empty Garden Tomb (Thomas E. Williams/FOI Image Archive).
Was Jesus crucified at Calvary or Golgotha? Would it be shocking to hear it was at both? Both names point to the same location outside Jerusalem.

The word Calvary in Luke's Gospel is English for a Latin term translated from a Greek word meaning "cranium" or "skull" (Lk. 23:33). The other Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, and John—used the word Golgotha. It is a transliteration of an Aramaic term taken from a Hebrew word meaning "skull" or "a place of a skull" (Mt. 27:33; Mk.15:22; Jn. 19:17). So much for the charge that Scripture contradicts itself. Jesus was crucified at Calvary, which is also Golgotha.

It is not hard to visualize what happened at Calvary: Jesus was thrown backwards violently, His shoulders slamming against the heavy crossbeam He carried through the streets of Jerusalem. A soldier pounded a heavy iron nail through each of His wrists. The beam was lifted and attached to the standing stake. On top, an inscription read, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Jn. 19:19).

With His knees slightly flexed and one foot pressed on top of the other, a nail was hammered through the arch of each foot. Excruciating pain spread throughout His body. After six hours of brutal agony, Jesus said, "It is finished! And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit" and died (v. 30). A soldier pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water came out.

Why did all this happen on a hill called Calvary? Because "God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

It was at Calvary where three unseen, yet real, services were accomplished:

1. We were redeemed. Like God's Passover lamb, Jesus' shed blood bought our ransom and forgiveness of our sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

2. We were reconciled. Originally, we were God's enemies. Calvary changed that relationship. Now there is an unending peace between God and man (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20–21).

3. God's justice and holiness were satisfied. The Bible calls this doctrine propitiation, the turning away of wrath by an offering. God viewed Jesus' shed blood as an acceptable sacrifice for sin (Isa. 53:10; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). God received this sacrifice just like the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement. Jesus' blood, however, didn't merely cover sins; it brought us grace and redemption: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

All that remains is for individuals to believe that He died for them personally and to come to Him in repentance.

There is a grand sequel to the drama on Calvary's hill. Jesus was taken down from the cross. His body was prepared in the Jewish custom. A huge, heavy stone was rolled in front of the tomb's entrance. Then a special Roman unit was stationed in front of the tomb. All was set for an ancient prophecy to be fulfilled: "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16:10).

What came about three days later is probably best expressed by the refrain from a great classic hymn, "Christ Arose," written by Robert Lowry in the 19th century:

*Up from the grave He arose; with a mighty triumph o'er His foes; He arose a victor from the dark domain, and He lives forever, with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose! Because He lives, we, too, shall live. In His victory over the Devil and death rests the glorious promise of resurrection for all who truly have placed their faith in Him.*

by Peter Colón
For ages God has been inviting people to seek Him. Yet, at the same time, He made it clear that it was impossible to enter His presence. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, God replied, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Ex. 33:19). But He told Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (v. 20).

In fact, the Holy of Holies in both the Tabernacle in the wilderness and later in the Temple in Jerusalem was protected by a heavy veil. Behind the veil was the Ark of the Covenant, with its mercy seat. The space between the mercy seat (on top of the Ark) and the extended wings of the cherubim above it was God’s dwelling place among His people.

With the exception of Moses (25:22), only the high priest was allowed to approach the mercy seat. He could do so only once a year, on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement); and he had to bring the blood of an animal.

When Jesus died, something spectacular occurred that forever changed access to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Before Christ Died**

Under the Mosaic Law, access to God was segregated and limited. No mere Israelite could enter God’s presence. The Levitical priests had to offer specific sacrifices on the worshiper’s behalf. And though the priests tended to the daily offerings and routines of the Holy Place, not even they could approach the mercy seat where the presence of the glory of God resided.

Through the years, thousands of priests ministered in the Tabernacle and then the Temple without ever being permitted direct access to God.

By God’s instructions to Moses, a heavy veil was hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (40:21-22). God told Moses to be extremely careful to construct all the Tabernacle’s components exactly as God had shown him (25:9). The veil served as a barrier and constant reminder that sinful people could not simply walk into the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

In the days of the second Temple, which was enlarged by Herod, there were actually two veils. Not knowing if the veil in Solomon’s Temple hung closer to the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, the priests hung one in each place.¹ These veils were massive. Wrote Bible expositor David M. Levy, According to the Talmud, the veils were 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and about the thickness of a man’s palm (4 inches), and made of 72 squares that were sewn together. The veils were so heavy that it took 300 priests to hang them, according to Jewish tradition.²

Priests entered the Holy Place twice a day to burn incense on the altar. They did so with holy reverence and trembling to protect themselves from being consumed by the holiness of God.

One such priest was Zacharias, who was so ministering when the angel Gabriel met him to tell him he would have a son in his old age (Lk. 1:5-11). That son later would be called John the Baptist. However, these priests never entered with blood or approached the mercy seat. Only the high priest was permitted to do so on the Day of Atonement.

This elaborate design and procedure, originated by God at Mount Sinai, was to remind the Israelites that they could not enter God’s presence. It is hard to grasp how 14 centuries of this tradition affected the Jewish people. One wonders if they had any hope at all of entering the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

**Paving the Way**

But God had a plan. He prepared a body for His beloved Son, the eternal second Person of the triune God: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). Jesus was to become “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).

Jesus fulfilled King David’s prophecy that the Messiah, though from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, would be “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4):

> Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:7-10).

This Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood because it is based on the perpetuity of an indestructible life, Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice of superior blood, and the superior New Covenant:

> But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (9:11-14, emphasis added).

As both High Priest and sacrifice, Jesus entered a better sanctuary with better blood in order to obtain a better result:

> Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; . . . Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (vv. 23-24, 26).
Opening the Way

When Jesus died, something supernatural occurred: “Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit” (Mt. 27:50). Then the veil of the Temple—the symbol of 1,400 years of restricted access to God—“was torn in two from top to bottom” (v. 51). The fact that this massive veil was ripped in such a manner indicated God initiated the veil’s rending. He was telling people the way to the Holy Place was now open.

Jesus ripped the veil apart, passed through the earthly Holy of Holies, and moved into the Holy Place in heaven. He offered the better sacrifice: His own blood, the only blood in human history ever deemed sufficient to satisfy the wrath of God and redeem sinful man.

Today believers live under the Melchizedekian high priesthood of the New Covenant and have direct access to God through Jesus, who sits “at the right hand” of the Father in heaven (Heb. 10:12) and “always lives to make intercession for [us]” (7:25).

The Levitical system was made obsolete (8:13) in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy to the Jewish people that God would give them a New Covenant.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (4:16).

ENDNOTES

2. Ibid.

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UN Criticizes Israel’s Policy Toward Illegal Immigrants

The United Nations is criticizing Israel’s policy toward illegal immigrants, as thousands of them protested in Tel Aviv recently, demanding Israel recognize them as refugees and grant them asylum.

The UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released a statement in which it accused Israel of “sowing fear and chaos” among the illegal aliens who, it said, should be referred to as “asylum seekers” and not “infiltrators.”

“We demand that the government examine the asylum requests of the foreigners, and stop the large-scale arrests in south Tel Aviv,” said the UN agency, adding that while it supported the holding facility for infiltrators in southern Israel, it was not acceptable in its present form as the agency deemed it to be a long-term detention center.

Infiltration from Africa has been a major problem for Israel over the past several years, as tens of thousands have entered Israel trying to find work and have settled in working-class neighborhoods in southern Tel Aviv, Eilat, and many other cities.

Residents of these neighborhoods have been suffering from endless harassment, fear, and violence perpetrated by the many illegal infiltrators.

Most of the roughly 60,000 illegal immigrants from Africa living in Israel do not have refugee status. Nearly 500 of them have been ordered to spend nights in the special open facility in Holot in southern Israel for up to one year under a new law aimed at cracking down on illegal entry.

While Israel has succeeded in getting some of the illegal immigrants to return to their home countries and has prevented a new influx from entering by building a fence along the border with Egypt, the problem remains with the illegal infiltrators who are still in Israel.

Israel recently approved an amendment to the law to prevent infiltration of illegal immigrants, which allows police to jail illegal migrants for up to 12 months in special detention facilities.

In response, some 200 illegal entrants to Israel ran away from the Holot facility and protested in Jerusalem. Protesters said the open facility, which they must return to each night, is essentially a prison. Many accused the government of racism.

When this action did not help, the illegal aliens initiated a general strike. They assembled at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv and demanded that the government allow them to stay in Israel and work legally.

The illegal entrants argue that they should be given refugee status. Those illegal entrants whom Israeli authorities recognize as refugees are allowed to work in the country and are eligible for benefits, but authorities argue that the majority are simply economic migrants and not eligible for refugee status.

by Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

"David slackened his fellowship with God, and Satan vanquished him through Bathsheba; Peter followed afar off, and soon denied his Lord. Communion with God is the right arm of our strength; and if this be broken, we are weak as water. Without God, we can do nothing; and in proportion as we attempt to live without Him, we ruin ourselves."

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon
Around the time of Christ there were dozens of Messianic movements. Each ended the same way: The leader died, often by execution, and the movement died with him.

There was only one exception. When the leader died, the movement exploded throughout the Roman Empire and today reaches almost every corner of the world. That movement, of course, is Christianity; and what makes it unique is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote, “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Cor. 15:14). It is only because He arose that He broke the power of death, so those who trust in Him may have eternal life.

So certain were Christ’s followers of His resurrection that they willingly suffered torture and death, rather than renounce their faith.

Not everyone, however, believes in the resurrection. Therefore, during this Easter season, it might be good to examine the myths that have arisen and see why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is, in fact, impossible to refute.

Myth #1: Jesus Remained in the Tomb. Scripture says Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb “very early in the morning” and “saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large” (Mk. 16:2, 4).

The tomb was probably more like a cave. Its entrance was secured by a rock that conservative estimates say weighed between 3,000 and 4,000 pounds. It was wedged away from the door by a boulder. Because the rock was too big to push, it was set in place only when men knocked the wedge out of the way, causing the giant stone to roll into a channel carved in the earth in front of the door; and there it would remain forever.

When the women arrived, the stone had already been moved, revealing the inside of the tomb: “An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone” (Mt. 28:2).

The angel did not roll back the stone so Jesus could get out. He rolled it back so the women could get in and
“The empty tomb,” wrote J. N. D. Anderson, who was a lawyer and professor at the University of London, “stands... as an essential element in the evidence for the resurrection.” He continued, “To suggest that it was not in fact, empty at all, as some have done, seems to me ridiculous. It is a matter of history that the apostles from the very beginning made many converts in Jerusalem, hostile as it was, by proclaiming the glad news that Christ had risen from the grave—and they did it within a short walk from the sepulchre. Any one of their hearers could have visited the tomb... Is it conceivable, then, that the apostles would have had this success if the body of the one they proclaimed as risen Lord was all the time decomposing in Joseph’s tomb?”

Clearly, the tomb was empty. That fact over the centuries spawned other theories about what happened to Jesus’ body.

**Myth #2: The Women Went to the Wrong Tomb.** The Bible specifically says they “observed where He was laid” (Mk. 15:47). These women were so devoted to Christ that even after He died, they followed Him. They saw where Joseph of Arimathea placed His body. They knew they were at the right tomb. Roman soldiers guarded the tomb (Mt. 27:64–66). Were they guarding the wrong tomb? Did the angel go to the wrong tomb also and roll back the wrong stone? Of course, if he did, there would have been a body in the tomb. But there was not.

The tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Obviously, he knew where it was; and he placed Jesus in it. It is highly doubtful that everyone involved would have gone to the wrong tomb.

**Myth #3: Jesus Never Died.** This argument, sometimes called the Swoon Theory, posits that Jesus almost died but then came to and exited the tomb under His own power.


Here was Charles’s reply:

*Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross,*
Hang him in the sun for six hours, run a spear through his side, . . . put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours, and see what happens. Sincerely, Charles.2

Furthermore, if a Roman centurion had taken a living person off the cross, and that person survived, the soldier would have been executed. When the centurion told the Roman prefect,Pontius Pilate, that Jesus was dead, the soldier was certain He was dead. In fact, soldiers broke the legs of the men crucified with Jesus to ensure their death. When a crucified person’s legs were broken, he could no longer push himself up for air and suffocated. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw He was already dead; so they did not break His legs (Jn. 19:32–34).

Instead, a soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water, indicating He had already died. But if He had not been dead, the spear would have killed Him.

According to the Swoon Theory, Jesus survived the beatings and crucifixion, including being speared by the centurion. In a swooned, or “fainted,” state, He was removed from the cross; wrapped in linens; and placed in a tomb where He remained for some 36 hours without food, water, fresh air, or medical assistance. He then came to, removed the linens, and arranged them in the same manner as they were on His body, so it appeared He had drifted through them.

Then, after all He went through, He rolled away the two-ton stone, evaded the Roman army guarding the tomb, found His disciples, and lied to them about His resurrection.

How plausible is that scenario? Not plausible at all.

**Myth #4: Jesus’ Enemies Stole His Body.** The last thing Jesus’ enemies wanted was for His body to disappear. That is why they asked Pilate to guard the tomb: “Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead’” (Mt. 27:64). Had Jesus’ enemies stolen His body, they could have ended Christianity simply by producing it.

**Myth #5: Jesus’ Disciples Stole His Body.** How could they have done so? Roman soldiers were guarding it. The disciples were afraid of the soldiers and were in hiding until the resurrection and even afterward.

Here is a better question: Why would they steal the body and then insist Jesus rose from the dead, considering the consequences they would face? Scripture, in fact, teaches they did not believe the women who said Jesus was not in the tomb. They thought He was still dead:

> And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marceling to himself at what had happened (Lk. 24:11–12).

The greatest evidence of the resurrection, however, is not the empty tomb. The greatest evidence is that, for 40 days, person after person saw the resurrected Christ:

> Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9). After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country (v. 12). Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table (v. 14). Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead (Jn. 21:13–14).

The apostle Paul provided the following list:

> He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me (1 Cor. 15:4–8).

We serve a living Savior who died, rose from the dead, and one day will return.

Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

The most convincing proof today for those who do not believe is to see Jesus Christ living His life through people who belong to Him.

**ENDNOTES**


Rick Lyon is the senior pastor of Laurel Hill Bible Church in Clementon, New Jersey.

**Answers from God’s Word**

Question: What does God promise to do for the Jewish people in the last days?

Answer: “The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

—Joel 3:15–16
The United States is pressuring Israel to ignore its security concerns and persuade a skeptical Israeli public to accept U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s plans, which include Israeli withdrawal from the Jordan Valley in stages over the next 10 years, according to recent reports by Israel’s Channel 2 news.

U.S. head envoy over the peace talks, Martin Indyk, has met with senior Israel Defense Forces generals, urging them to accept the deal. Further, Indyk and his staff have reportedly told generals to “go to the media and be interviewed and respond, because they have the impression that the Israeli public has doubts about the subject.”

Analyst Mark Langfan, who has critically analyzed and dissected Kerry’s Jordan Valley plan, said, “Any Israeli general advocating the Jordan Valley plan is a military fraud, and I challenge them to a debate.”

Langfan added, “Martin Indyk has planned the annihilation of Israel for decades.” Indyk, who is Jewish, served as U.S. ambassador to Israel from 1995 to 1997 and from 2000 to 2001.

Video shows that prior to the 2005 “Disengagement,” when Jews were expelled from Gush Katif, Indyk was woefully mistaken in his predictions of the move’s results. Indyk claimed Israel’s unilateral withdrawal would produce “a new Palestinian leadership that is more responsible and capable and legitimate.” Instead, the terror organization Hamas took control of Gaza.

In 1967 the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that even more than the Jordan Valley, Judea and Samaria are strategic necessities for Israeli security. Kerry’s plan also includes mass withdrawals from Judea and Samaria.

by Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)
A Memorial Day Unlike Any Other

The entire nation of Israel comes to a standstill as people pause reverently to remember their country’s fallen soldiers on Israel’s Memorial Day (Hanan Isachar/www.isachar-photography.com). Inset: Michael Levin (Courtesy, Mark Levin).
I can’t move. My legs are beginning to cramp, and I can’t move. Harriet and I have been wedged in a corner standing beside Michael’s grave for more than three hours, surrounded by a sea of people. It’s Yom HaZikaron, Israel’s Memorial Day for its fallen soldiers, and we’re at Mount Herzl National Military Cemetery in Jerusalem.

So here we stand, along with hundreds of others who have come to this hallowed ground on this solemn day of remembrance to pay our respects. Even though the piercing siren which sounded promptly at 11 A.M. has long been silent, the crowd around Michael’s grave has not dispersed at all.

It’s hard to believe almost seven years have passed since our son, Michael, fell in combat. He was the first paratrooper and the only American out of 119 IDF casualties to fall in the 2006 Second Lebanon War. His final wish was to be buried in this cemetery.

The scene is unlike any you can imagine. There are thousands upon thousands of people standing shoulder to shoulder throughout most of the cemetery. The graves are covered with flowers and memorial candles, which are donated and given out upon entering Mount Herzl. Michael’s grave is unrecognizable, as the flowers brought by well-wishers lay in a heap waist high. They easily cover the hundreds of stones, personal items, and especially Philly [Philadelphia] memorabilia left by the hundreds of visitors who stop by his grave each week. What’s most astonishing is that the groundskeepers tell us that Michael’s grave is the most visited grave in the cemetery.

How can I possibly explain this to all of our friends and family back home? In America, unfortunately, Memorial Day does not carry the seriousness it does in Israel. For the most part, it is a day that marks the beginning of summer. A day for family picnics, barbecues, sales at the malls, or for opening your shore house, if you are fortunate enough to have one.

There is no national siren in America. No two minutes of silence, when all motor vehicles and pedestrians in the nation come to a complete standstill. The thousands of brave, patriotic American soldiers who gave their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan are not visited by the soldiers who served with them. In Israel, it is a time-honored duty and obligation to do so. Sometimes entire units will visit the bereaved.

The reason for all of this is apparent. Israel’s Jewish population has recently exceeded 6 million. It is estimated that one and a half million Israelis pay their respects at cemeteries throughout the country on this day. That is 25 percent of the population. This extraordinary turnout is due to the fact that many Israelis have either lost someone dear to them or know someone who has.
I've decided to make aliyah because of Michael.

Mr. Levin, my friends and I are 17-year-old Israelis who had ambivalent feelings about joining the IDF until we saw Michael's documentary in school. After a long class discussion, all of us are going to proudly serve. We are also encouraging our friends to do so, and it's all because of Michael.

I'm in the paratroopers because of Michael.

They also know full well that, for the most part, it is the Israeli armed forces that have kept them safe. If it weren't for the IDF, there would be no Israel. The massive turnout on this day is a fitting tribute to the more than 20,000 soldiers who have given their lives in defense of the nation in the past 65 years.

One after another, they push their way through the crowd to reach us. It's been going on for hours. By early afternoon Harriet is mentally and emotionally spent, but as long as there are people still here who want to speak to us, we feel obligated to stay. Some of them are barely able to get the words out; others break down and cry, unable to speak at all. We try our best to calm them. Their comments, both heartfelt and profound, often end with the same three words: because of Michael.

Mr. and Mrs. Levin, I want you to know that I am here in Israel because of Michael.

Mr. Levin, I came here to tell you that I'm a proud member of the IDF, and it's all because of Michael.

I'm in the paratroopers because of Michael.

Their story of a proud American Zionist who so willingly gave his life in defense of the nation that he loved so dearly continues to resonate throughout Jewish communities and has been passed down by word of mouth through the years. This, coupled with the extraordinary documentary, A Hero in Heaven, produced by Sally Milhas, continues to touch the hearts and minds of Jews all over the world.

To us he was a proud Jew who simply heard the call and heeded it, who honored his dream by following it, and who fulfilled his destiny by living it. As Michael always said, “You can't fulfill your dreams unless you dare to risk it all.”

We love him and miss him every day and hope to be proudly standing by his side next year on Yom HaZikaron.

Quoteworthy

“When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the Devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the Devil laughs. When he stops praying, the Devil shouts for joy.”

—Corrie ten Boom
When thousands of people arrived for my son’s funeral in Israel and a memorial service in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 2006, we knew Michael’s death had affected people in ways we were only beginning to understand.

My wife, Harriet, and I were left with a choice: Succumb to a crushing burden of grief or try to change the tragedy into something meaningful, something that would honor the sacrifice made by our 22-year-old son who was killed by Hezbollah in the Second Lebanon War.

Then we met Sally Mitlas, an incredibly dedicated, talented woman who understood Michael’s passion for Israel. She produced an award-winning documentary on Michael’s life called *A Hero in Heaven*. This film has served as the catalyst to raise the consciousness and appreciation of the sacrifice young men and women like Michael are making in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Fundraisers, speaking engagements, and the documentary all help us raise money for our son’s charity, the Michael Levin Memorial Fund for Israel.

This fund was established to help other “lone soldiers” like Michael, individuals who left their families, friends, and countries behind to live in Israel and help defend it. To date, more than 5,500 lone soldiers proudly serve in the IDF.

Over the years, we have helped these soldiers in a number of ways. We began by providing new ammunition vests for Michael’s entire unit. We refurbished several recreation rooms on *kibbutzim* (collective farms) that house lone soldiers and have helped to create four major events for hundreds of these soldiers. The events afford them the relaxation, food, entertainment, counseling, and educational and job opportunities they so rightly deserve.

The most rewarding part of this endeavor has been to help make Michael’s dream a reality. Early on, Michael quickly realized that lone soldiers have special needs and face problems and challenges other Israelis do not. He knew because he immigrated to Israel all alone at age 18 and immediately became a lone soldier.

His vision was to establish a lone soldier center to cater to these needs. I am proud to say that—with the help of a very dedicated, talented, and passionate staff—along with hundreds of volunteers, there are now four centers up and running in Israel. Our ultimate goal is to raise enough funds to purchase a larger facility in Jerusalem to serve as a permanent home for the center.

As Michael’s dad, I feel proud and gratified to be helping to carry out his vision, even though he is not here to see the results. May his sacrifice and memory continue to be a blessing to all of Israel.

by Mark Levin

To learn more about the Lone Soldier Centers in Israel in memory of Michael Levin, visit lonesoldiercenter.com. Also visit aheroinheaven.com to learn more of the Michael Levin story.
Warning Against Antichrists

At the inception of his epistle, the apostle John declared, “God is light” (1 Jn. 1:5). He said people who walk in God’s light abide in fellowship with Him. They continually confess and forsake personal sin (1:8–2:2), keep God’s New Testament commandments (2:3–11), and do not pattern their lives after the world’s ungodly system (vv. 12–17).

In the final verses of chapter 2 (vv. 18–29), John warned believers about the presence of deceptive men within the church. He called these false teachers “antichrists” because they denied that Jesus Christ is God. They had disrupted the church fellowship, twisted John’s teachings, and caused major discord and division within the body of Christ.

This epistle equips the faithful, instructing them on how to overcome such deceivers through Christ’s teachings and the power of God’s Spirit.

Deception of Antichrists

John wrote, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour” (v. 18).

The phrase little children includes all the believers John mentioned in verse 12. Some probably were young in the faith. Others probably were older believers who had not grown to maturity. Such Christians would be particularly susceptible to antichrists peddling false doctrine.

John reminded his readers it was the “last hour”—a new, critical time within the church (v. 18). The definite article (the) is not in the original Greek text. Thus the emphasis is not on a definite time but, rather, on the characteristics of the “last hour” leading up to the Great Tribulation, the seven years immediately preceding Christ’s return. Since John’s day, the church has been aware of the eschatological time that could soon envelop the earth.

A sign of the “last hour” is that the Antichrist is coming (v. 18). John’s readers had already heard that someone called the Antichrist will come. Scripture is replete with teaching about him by Jesus Christ (Mt. 24:5, 11, 23–24), the apostle Paul (2 Th. 2:3–4, 8–9), and John himself (Rev. 13:1–10; 19:19–20).

The word Antichrist is composed of two Greek words: anti, meaning “against” or “instead of,” and Christos, Greek for “anointed.” The English word for Christos is Christ. The Antichrist is identified in Scripture as the “prince who is to come” (Dan. 9:26); “a vile person” (11:21); and “man of sin,” “son of perdition,” and “lawless one” (2 Th. 2:3, 8), which all speak of his extreme wickedness. When the Antichrist appears, he will demand everyone to worship him as God.

John continued, “We know that it is the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18). How do we know? When John penned this epistle, many people had been labeled as antichrists because they denied Jesus’ deity. Today the spirit of antichrist that permeates the world emanates from those who deny Christ. What was true back then is still true today.

The apostle then said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (v. 19).

Because John’s readers knew the situation, he did not go into detail. It was a historical moment for the church when these heretics “went out,” indicating they openly rejected the church’s teaching concerning Christ’s deity. They were not asked to leave but did so on their own. These people should not be considered backsliders because they were never born again, and their departure gave conclusive evidence that they were not true believers.

Divine Anointing

John reminded his readers of the many resources available to them to counter the onslaught of antichrists: “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (vv. 20–21).

First, is the “anointing from the Holy One” (v. 20). This refers to the Holy Spirit of God given to each believer at the time of salvation (Jn. 14:26–27; 16:13; Rom. 8:9). Believers who are controlled by the Holy Spirit will receive the direction and discernment they need to avoid deceptions.

Second, they “know all things” (1 Jn. 2:20), better translated “you all know.” In other words, through the indwelling Spirit, believers receive the ability to know God’s truth through His Word and detect error.

Third, John reassured his readers of their actual knowledge of God’s “truth” (as it is embodied in Christ), which was taught to them (v. 21). He reinforced this statement by saying...
“and that no lie is of the truth” (v. 21). Truth and lies cannot coexist. Knowing God’s truth in its purity garrisons Christians against lies.

Fourth, John explained how Christians can identify someone who possesses a spirit of antichrist: “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” (v. 22). Such denial is a clear attack on Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God who is declared as the God-Man in Scripture (cf. Heb. 1:1–3). In John’s day, antichrists included Gnostics, Docetics, and Cerinthians. (See “The First Epistle of John: Introduction” in the March/April 2013 issue of Israel My Glory.) Scripture is clear: “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either” (1 Jn. 2:23).

**Direct Appeal**

John commanded his readers to abide in the truth that he imparted to them: “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (v. 24). The Holy Spirit’s abiding presence in the lives of believers assurers them they abide in both God the Father and Jesus, the Son of God.

Those who abide in Christ have received the promise and blessing of “eternal life” (v. 25) through Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 3:14–15, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 10:28; 17:2–3). Eternal life is a possession bestowed now that extends throughout eternity.

In the next verses, the apostle summarized what he taught: “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you” (1 Jn. 2:26). The phrase *these things* might well refer to John’s entire letter, but most likely it refers to the information about the antichrists (vv. 18–25).

He warned Christians to put up a defense against the craftiness and corruption of the antichrists’ heresies. Even today one must continually guard against cults, which twist the truth about Christ’s deity by weaving in their own heresy and denying that Christ is truly both God and man.

John reminded his readers, “The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you” (v. 27). The Holy Spirit who indwells true believers will endow and equip them to stand against the deception of antichrists. The apostle is not saying believers no longer need teachers of God’s Word. He, in fact, is a teacher throughout the epistle. Teachers are a gift to the church (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 1:11). John simply was emphasizing that the indwelling Holy Spirit enables believers to recognize deception.

The last section of 1 John 2:27 provides two reasons to trust the anointing of the Holy Spirit:

1. It teaches believers “all things” relating to the truth of God’s Word.
2. It is “true, and is not a lie.” In other words, the anointing is not false or counterfeit like the claims of heretics.

Therefore, since the truth of God’s Word has been “taught” to them through the personal anointing of the Holy Spirit, John is commanding his readers to “abide [remain] in Him [Jesus Christ]” (v. 27).

With the phrase *And now, little children, abide in Him* (v. 28), John again commanded believers to maintain a close, intimate, fellowship with Christ so they would not wander away from Him.

Another reason to abide in Christ is “that when [literally, “if” ] He [Christ] appears [is revealed], we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (v. 28). The word *if* does not express doubt concerning Christ’s return. Rather, it states that the time of His return is unknown.

The first-century church was well aware that Christ promised to return to rapture it away (Jn. 14:1–3). In fact, the any-moment return of the resurrected Christ has been the continual hope of all true believers (1 Th. 4:13–18) throughout church history.

Those who abide in Christ will have the “confidence” [assurance and boldness] (1 Jn. 2:28) to appear before Him when He is revealed because of their intimate relationship with Him. In that day they will “not be ashamed [literally, “put to shame”] before Him at His coming” (v. 28). They will not feel disgraced, ashamed, or fearful of divine judgment.

**Distinct Application**

John closed this section with a word on what sets Christians apart from antichrists: “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him” (v. 29). The conditional word *if* should be translated “since.” That is, “Since you know or have personal knowledge that God the Father is righteous, you also know that those who are ‘born of Him’ practice a life of habitual righteousness.”

The word *righteousness* declares God’s character and conduct. The word could refer to the nature of God the Father or Jesus Christ. Scholars differ, but most believe it refers to God the Father within this context.

In verse 29 John mentioned the new birth for the first time in this epistle (cf. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The visual sign of being born again is living a righteous life. “Everyone” (without exception) who is born again habitually practices righteousness.

However, living righteously does not bring about the new birth; genuine righteousness comes from being born again. Many people are morally upright and do benevolent works for humanity. But that does not mean they are righteous in God’s eyes; nor do their good deeds indicate they are born again or were motivated by a righteous life lived out in Christ.

The one mark that distinguishes antichrists from true believers is that they do not practice true righteousness that is energized by the Holy Spirit. Do not be deceived; by their fruits you shall know them.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel.
Our previous article showed that the apostle Paul was consumed by the transforming reality of God’s grace. Many times Paul used the word grace in his epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians.

Now we will examine Paul’s use of the word grace in the rest of his epistles, and then in the remaining New Testament (NT) books.

Paul’s Use of the Word ‘Grace’

- In His Epistle to the Ephesians:
  1:2—“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:5–6—“according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”
  1:7—“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”
  2:5—“Even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”
  2:7—“that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
  2:8–9—“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
  3:2—“if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you.”
  3:7—“I became a minister according to the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”
  3:8—“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
  4:7—“To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”
  4:29—“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”
  6:1—“Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

- In His Epistle to the Colossians:
  1:2—“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:5–6—“the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”
  3:16—“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
  4:6—“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”
  4:18—“This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.”

- In His First Epistle to the Thessalonians:
  1:1—“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:2—“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:12—“that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  2:16–17—“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
  3:18—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

- In His Second Epistle to the Thessalonians:
  1:2—“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:12—“that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  2:16–17—“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
  3:18—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

- In His First Epistle to Timothy:
  1:2—“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:12—“that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  1:17—“Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”
  4:23—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”
man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

6:21—“Grace be with you. Amen.”

■ In His Second Epistle to Timothy:
1:2—“To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1:8–9—“God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

2:1—“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

4:22—“The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.”

■ In His Epistle to Titus:
1:4—“To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”

2:11—“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”

3:4–7—“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

3:15—“All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.”

■ In His Epistle to Philemon:
1:3—“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1:25—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Use of the Word ‘Grace’ in Other NT Books

■ In the Book of Hebrews:
No one knows for certain who wrote this epistle. The author did not include his name in its text. Nor is there a historical record available that identifies the author. Some Bible scholars have suggested Paul wrote Hebrews; others offer significant reasons for believing otherwise.

2:9—“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

4:16—“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

10:29—“Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”

12:15—“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.”

12:28—“Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

13:9—“It is good that the heart be established by grace.”

13:25—“Grace be with you all. Amen.”

■ In James’s Epistle:
4:6—“But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

■ In Peter’s First Epistle:
1:2—“Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”

1:10—“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you.”

1:13—“Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

3:7—“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

4:10—“Minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

5:5—“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

5:10—“the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”

5:12—“This is the true grace of God in which you stand.”

■ In Peter’s Second Epistle:
1:2—“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

3:18—“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

■ In John’s Second Epistle:
v. 3—“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

■ In Jude’s Epistle:
v. 4—“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

■ In Revelation, by John:
1:4—“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

22:21—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Renald E. Showers is an author and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.

Quoteworthy

“It’s what you sow that multiplies, not what you keep in the barn.”

—Adrian Rogers
Tourism soaring

Israel hosted more than 3.54 million visitors from around the world in 2013, a new all-time high, according to the Israel Ministry of Tourism. Twenty percent came from North America, followed by Russia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Almost twice as many Christians as Jews visited Israel, and more tourists came from the United States than any other country.

Cruise travel to Israel also increased in 2013, with a record 257,000 cruise visitors.

The Ministry estimates that 53 percent of all tourists identify as “Christian” and 28 percent as “Jewish.” The most-visited sites seem to be Jerusalem’s Western Wall (68 percent), Jewish Quarter (64 percent), Church of the Holy Sepulchre (57 percent), Via Dolorosa (55 percent), and Mount of Olives (53 percent).

Hamas: Israel gone by 2022

Hamas Interior Minister Fathi Hamad recently told Palestinians they will fully liberate the entirety of “Palestine” within eight years. Hamad said Islamic prophecies foretell that Israel will be replaced with a Palestinian state.

Once the Muslims have their final victory, he said, the “Hittin” principle will prevail, referring to final victory, he said, the “Hittin” with a Palestinian state. Foretell that Israel will be replaced with a Palestinian state. Hamad recently told Palestinians that they will fully liberate the entirety of “Palestine” within eight years.

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The majority of infections are caused by organisms that normally reside on a person’s skin. Necrotizing fasciitis progresses quickly, particularly in people with compromised immune systems due to conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Hanski and his team discovered a novel mechanism that influences GAS virulence early in the infection. GAS senses the increased asparagine level in someone infected and alters its gene expression profile and its rate of proliferation, which can be deadly in the host.

The team also discovered that asparaginase, a protein that digests asparagine and is a widely used chemotherapeutic agent against leukemia, halts GAS growth. Asparaginase has never before been used to treat GAS infections.

Israel to supply PA with gas for next 20 years

A deal for the sale of natural gas from Israel to the Palestinian Authority (PA) was signed in January. Gas shipments will begin this year and continue for 20 years. The gas will be piped to a power station to be built in Jenin, which will be operated by the PA and produce electricity.

The consortium that licenses the Leviathan and Tamar gas fields—Noble Energy, Delek Drilling, and Avner—will earn NIS 1.2 billion ($627.5 million), and the PA will receive 4.75 billion cubic meters of gas over 20 years.

Yitzchak Shalita of Delek Drilling said he believes “economic cooperation, such as the agreement signed today, will help us bring the nations closer together and build a strong basis for peace.”

UN pulls exhibit

Bowing to Arab pressure, a UN agency at the last minute cancelled an exhibit due to open in Paris in January, “People, Book, Land: The 3,500-Year Relationship of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel.”

The U.S.-based Jewish newspaper The Algemeiner said Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center called the move an “absolute outrage.” He said, “The Arabs don’t want the world to know that the Jews have a 3,500-year relationship to the Land of Israel.”

UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Arabs claimed the exhibit may hamper peace negotiations.

Possible antidote to flesh-eating bacteria

Bacteria called group A streptococci (GAS) can live inside humans without causing symptoms or harm. But in some cases, it triggers fatal diseases, such as necrotizing fasciitis (also known as “flesh-eating disease”) and toxic-shock syndrome. Hebrew University researchers recently published research in the journal Cell that explains how this pathogen turns deadly, opening the door to possible future treatments. The research was conducted by Prof. Emanuel Hanski of the Institute of Medical Research Israel Canada at the Hebrew University’s Faculty of Medicine.

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The exhibit was jointly created by the Wiesenthal Center and the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.
If your will is up-to-date, you enjoy a certain peace of mind. The fact that a plan is in place to care for your loved ones and favorite charities is a reason to sleep well. It’s comforting to know you have thoughtfully arranged your affairs before you go home to be with the Lord.

Yet our world is changing rapidly. In these uncertain times, you may be wondering if your will can withstand the changes that lie around the corner. In light of today’s realities, it might be a good time to review your estate plan. Or perhaps you have yet to “get your house in order” and are looking to take that first step. Let us help. We can put you in touch with a capable professional to work around the uncertainties of the times.

To learn more about wills, request our free, no-obligation brochure, Making a Will That Works. Simply check the appropriate box on the envelope in this magazine, call Tom Geoghan at our office at 800-257-7843, or e-mail us at development_dept@foi.org.

The venerated New York Times, formerly considered a bastion of journalistic integrity, has won HonestReporting.com’s top award for biased reporting when it comes to Israel.

The “honor” was bestowed by HonestReporting’s readers. Writing for the media watchdog, Pesach Benson said, “The prevailing displeasure was best summed up in a one-line email: ‘The NY Times bludgeoned Israel all year.’”

Wrote Benson, “Much of the resentment focused on the paper’s op-ed section. A steady parade of commentaries disdainfully dismissing Israel’s Iranian anxieties certainly cemented the Gray Lady’s award in the latter part of 2013. This wasn’t surprising. HonestReporting’s long-term study of the Times’ opinion section found similar problems in 2012.

“But The NY Times built up a bona fide case to win this award even without the issue of op-eds. The paper added a known anti-Israel conspiracy theorist to its editorial board, glorified stone throwers, raised questions about the way it corrects the record, and finished the year with a flourishing photo failure. None of the 2013 runners up, such as the BBC, CNN, Haaretz, and others, came close to matching the tensions the Times stoked.”

Benson said the Times has even questioned Israel’s right to exist: “Nobody questions, say, Japan’s right to exist. Denying Russian people their self-determination is anti-Russian. . . . Yet The New York Times saw fit to publish a hefty 2,052-word commentary by Professor Joseph Levine in March [2013] arguing that it’s not anti-Semitic to question Israel’s right to exist. A Jewish state, asserts Levine, is ‘undemocratic,’ while the trappings of statehood aren’t a big deal anyway.”

Readers were the most upset by the Times’s treatment of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he addressed the UN in New York in September 2013. HonestReporting listed 13 specific, biased stories. One by Jodi Rudoren even prompted the newspaper to correct a description of Netanyahu’s wife, Sara, and issue her a personal apology.

To read Benson’s entire article, “A Year of Biased Reporting: Why The New York Times Won,” go to tinyurl.com/HonestReportingNYT.
uncomfortable, but the hope that we were homeward bound made me very happy. Some of the men, however, were deeply unhappy, tossed by the storm and the ruts in the desert. In addition, there was the constant fear that we might hit a mine and be blown sky high. There were many mines because the Six-Day War (June 1967) had just ended.

I tried to comfort my buddies in the Israel Defense Forces, but some cursed the day they were born. “Our cousins,” they said, “may give us a taste of their mines, and we will never get home.”

However, I assured them the Lord would see us safely home and no mine would touch us. They asked me how I could be so sure.

“Well,” I said, “I have the assurance in my heart that no harm will come to us. And what is more, I am sure about my heavenly home and that one day I shall be with my Lord, safe at home forever.”

I took out my Bible and read to them from the epistle to the Hebrews. One of them said, “Oh, all this was written by Christians.”

“No,” I said, “it was written by a man who used to be the greatest enemy of Christ but became a believer in Him, and he was a Jew.”

One of them said, “Is it not enough that we fast all day on the Day of Atonement? Now are you going to turn this truck into a synagogue? Surely, once a year is enough—I do not want to hear any more about this.”

But another said, “Leave him alone. I like what he says and would like to hear more.”

The first man replied, “You see, he has already poisoned your soul.” To which the other man replied, “I do not feel poisoned at all. I feel fine—a lot better than in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement.”

And so the conversation went on the way to Jerusalem.

Many weeks later, I received a pass for six hours after being engaged in difficult and dangerous work. It was a gift of God to spare my life. I prayed on my bed to the Lord, thanking Him for sparing me. Suddenly, my commanding officer came in. I was about to go home when he asked, “What were you doing when I came in?”

I said, “I was praying to God and thanking Him for sparing me.”

To which the other man replied, “I do not feel poisoned at all. I feel fine—a lot better than in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement.”

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The day I was scheduled to return home by plane after my military service in the Sinai desert, a terrible sandstorm broke loose. Our tents were blown away like so many balloons. Instead of traveling by plane and being home within an hour or so, we were loaded onto military trucks for the long trip through the desert to Jerusalem.

All through the night we travelled in cramped positions and were most uncomfortable, but the hope that we were homeward bound made me very happy. Some of the men, however, were deeply unhappy, tossed by the storm and the ruts in the desert. In addition, there was the constant fear that we might hit a mine and be blown sky high. There were many mines because the Six-Day War (June 1967) had just ended.

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I said, “I was praying to God and thanking Him that He spared my life.”

He was a new officer and did not know me, so he asked, “How could you pray without your phylacteries and without a minyan [a quorum of 10 men]?”

I told him King David prayed without those things, and so did Samuel the prophet.
The officer replied, “I see you have a special kind of faith. Could you tell me more about it?”

“Yes,” I said, “for you see, I believe in the living God and the Messiah, the son of David, who came to save all who put their trust in Him.”

He opened his eyes in amazement. “Now I can understand your peculiar behavior,” he said.

“I believe in the Old and the New Testaments and in the Lord Jesus,” I said.

“Why then do you stay in Israel?” he asked. “Why do you not go abroad?”

I told him, “This is my land for which I have fought and shed my blood in order to be able to believe in the Lord and to give my testimony if it is demanded here in Israel. I am a citizen of Israel, and out of this land came faith in our Messiah, which went forth into all the world.” I read him passages from the book of Acts and 2 Peter.

The officer said, “I am very much impressed with what you have to say, and if you keep on talking, you may even persuade me to become a Christian. I did not know there are Jewish Christians who love Israel.”

I showed him my military record and all the awards that were given to me since 1948 for the faithful performance of my duties.

“I apologize,” he said, “if I said anything against you. And I take back any unkind remarks I made.”

We shook hands, and he left.

by Zvi Kalisher in Jerusalem, from the Friends of Israel Archives, 1968

Please continue to pray for Zvi and Naomi Kalisher.

Zvi Kalisher has lived in Israel since 1946 and has been a columnist for Israel My Glory for 55 years.

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