In hope that this Hanukkah will be one of happiness, health, and prosperity for you and all of those you love.

Background Photograph by Walter Homan

Copyright ©The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.

Micah 7:8

Happy Hanukkah

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA) *Additional shipping charges apply. Canadian/Australian prices include hst/gst.

Now is the time to place your order for our unique and meaningful greeting cards. We have a limited supply this year. So order soon!

And remember, with each Christmas card, you can also give a free, one-year subscription to Israel My Glory! A card with a gift. What could be better?

Hanukkah Card (K14A)

$5 *(5 per pack)*

Yea, the word comes down to us,
To Bethlehem town He came.
Brought the hope this world cannot,
Our Saviour Christ His name.

Wishing you and yours a blessed Christmas.

Luke 2:11

Background Image ©Canstock

Poetry by Elwood McQuaid

Copyright ©The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Christmas Card (K14)

$11 *(20 per pack)*

Christmas and Hanukkah Will Be Here Before You Know It!

The Genuine Jesus:
Meet me at the manger—12
More than a prophet—20
The great admission—24

Plus:
Hanukkah in Israel—34
Christmas and Hanukkah Will Be Here Before You Know It!

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11

Yea, the word comes down to us, To Bethlehem town He came. Brought the hope this world cannot, Our Saviour Christ His name.

Wishing you and yours a blessed Christmas.

Happy Hanukkah

Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.

Micah 7:8

In hope that this Hanukkah will be one of happiness, health, and prosperity for you and all of those you love.

Now is the time to place your order for our unique and meaningful greeting cards. We have a limited supply this year. So order soon!

And remember, with each Christmas card, you can also give a free, one-year subscription to Israel My Glory! A card with a gift. What could be better?

Christmas Card (K14) $11* (20 per pack)

Hanukkah Card (K14A) $5* (5 per pack)

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA) *Additional shipping charges apply. Canadian/Australian prices include GST.
Meet Me at the Manger
by Elwood McQuaid
More than two millennia ago, an Infant was born in a backwater village in a remote corner of the Middle East. Do you know the message of the manger?

The True, Historical Jesus
by Patrick Neff
The world is full of doubters. Some even claim there’s hardly any evidence Jesus existed. But those people are wrong, as you’ll soon see.

More Than a Prophet
by Charles E. McCracken
Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the sea. What did He demonstrate by doing all these things? Read this excellent article to find out.

The Great Admission
by Steve Herzig
Many people say Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. Are they correct? You may be surprised!

A Heart for Our Needs
by Peter Colón
Ancient Judaism teaches that compassion is an attribute of God. Why did Jesus heal the sick? Here are the reasons.
After Joseph’s brothers were reunited with him in Egypt, they began worrying he might seek revenge because they had sold him into slavery many years earlier. But Joseph encouraged them not to fear, assuring them their evil actions had placed him where God intended him to be.

Joseph’s beautiful testimony to the greatness of God must have dumbfounded them: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

Evil cannot thwart God. He and He alone is able to work through it to accomplish His good.

The world witnessed this amazing aspect of God over the summer as a major conflict unfolded between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist group dedicated to annihilating the Jewish state.

As I left the United States for Israel in June, news came of the abduction of three Israeli teens in Hebron. Grave concern permeated Israel as it launched a massive manhunt to locate the boys. Finally, after almost three weeks of searching, their shallow graves were discovered. The nation mourned the senseless murders, and Israel immediately identified Hamas as the perpetrator.

Then a second tragedy befell Israel when an Arab teen was abducted and murdered by overzealous young Israelis seeking revenge. Israel quickly identified those responsible and rounded them up to face justice.

Hamas’s response was to fire rockets from Gaza into Israel. Though Israel implored Hamas to de-escalate the violence, Hamas stepped it up, increasing the number of rockets it fired.

On July 8, Israel had no choice but to begin Operation Protective Edge to secure the border between Gaza and Israel and end the continuous attacks.

Eventually, Israel sent ground troops into Gaza to destroy the underground tunnels Hamas had been building for four years. Israel located and destroyed 32 tunnels, 14 of which terminated in or near Israeli communities.

As Israel began interrogating captured Hamas terrorists, Hamas’s diabolical plan began unfolding: It was planning to send hundreds of heavily armed terrorists into Israel through the tunnels to kill thousands of unsuspecting Israeli men, women, and children on September 24 and 25, during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Hamas also planned to keep some alive and take them back through the tunnels into Gaza as hostages.

There is no way to justify the evil committed against the three Israeli boys or diminish the loss felt by their families. But what Hamas meant for evil, God used for good to save many Jewish lives. Hamas’s capture of the teens initiated the event that led to the conflict that allowed the tunnels to be discovered and destroyed, preventing thousands of Israeli deaths.

An Israeli woman in August surveys the damage from a Palestinian mortar salvo that narrowly missed a kindergarten (Baz Ratner/Reuters/Corbis).

Just as in Joseph’s day, our infinite and amazing God is above all; and no one can oppose or stand against Him.

As we enter the season of thanksgiving and celebrate the birth of our Savior, let us not forget that the greatest evil ever committed was the crucifixion of the unblemished Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Of all the people ever born throughout history, He was the only one who did not deserve to die. Yet God took that great act of evil against His only begotten Son—an evil of which we are all guilty—and used it for the greatest good: the atonement of sins for all who accept His marvelous gift of grace.

To God be the glory.
Do a computer search for “ISIS” and “Christians” and prepare to gasp in horror. ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or simply Islamic State) is slaughtering Christians in the Middle East in a war on Christianity that is more deadly than the one between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

While most of the Western world focused on Gaza last summer, ISIS was murdering people mercilessly. And as shouts of outrage concerning the war in Gaza proliferated, the virtual silence on the war against Christians was deafening.

During the civil rights movement in America, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. voiced concern that people refused to speak up when injustice reigned. “In the end,” he said, “we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Today in the war on Christians, the silence of friends speaks volumes.

“Is anybody listening?” asked Kirsten Powers in her July 29 USA Today article “Iraqi Christians’ nightmare.” “Thanks to ISIS persecution, Mosul is without Christians for the first time in 2,000 years,” she said.

ISIS had swarmed into Mosul demanding Christians convert, pay a tax, leave, or die. It robbed, pillaged, tortured, and expelled all the Christians there.

Speaking on Breitbart.com in July, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism expert Dr. Sebastian Gorka called the situation “a Christian version of the Holocaust and nothing less.” He also said, “The mainstream media are warped in terms of their world view. . . . So when it comes to the idea of religious persecution, they say, ‘Well who really cares because I don’t believe in God. If you are not sophisticated enough to be a post-modernist secularist . . . tough on you!’”

There are some voices trying to be heard. U.S. Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA), co-chairman of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, tried to get an official White House response to the war. In June 2013, he called the U.S. government’s response to persecuted Christians in the Mideast “anemic and at times outright baffling.”

Thirteen months later (in July) on the House floor, Wolf referred to Dr. King’s statement, saying, “The silence of the President and the silence of this administration is unbelievable.” Later, in an interview, Wolf added, “This place doesn’t want to do anything.”

U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) asked Congress to pass a bipartisan bill establishing a special envoy to the Middle East to promote religious freedom and protect minorities, condemning the deadly violence against Coptic Christians in Egypt.

The American Center for Law and Justice started a petition calling on U.S. President Barack Obama to demand that Christians be protected in Egypt in exchange for U.S. foreign aid. David Brog, executive director of Christians United For Israel, declared, “This is a modern pogrom. The silence must end. The United States must lead.”

Raymond Ibrahim, with the David Horowitz Freedom Center, said, “The overwhelming majority of Christian persecution around the world today is being committed at the hands of Muslims of all races, languages, cultures, and socio-political circumstances.”

According to Open Doors USA, which ministers to persecuted Christians worldwide, nine of the top 10 countries where Christians suffer the most are Islamic. The majority of anti-Christian persecution in the world in 2013 took place at the hands of Muslims.

In 2009 President Obama delivered a major speech in Cairo, Egypt, declaring, “I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition.”

The Palestinian Authority hailed it as “the beginning of a new American policy.” Maybe that is why the White House so far has said so little.

by Steve Herzig, director of North American Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Prelude to Apocalypse

Standing atop a mountain plateau in the stark Judean wilderness, one can look down at the remains of Roman siege camps that eventually trapped some 960 Jewish men, women, and children who had fled Jerusalem to Masada while the Romans slaughtered Jews by the thousands in the Holy City in A.D. 70.

Masada stands as a stark testimonial to a chapter in history most thought would never happen again. The scope of Roman savagery is a study in the fallen nature of godless, corrupt tyrants who have no regard for human life.

However, almost 2,000 years later, I am writing this editorial as Christians and an estimated 40,000 people of the Yazidi sect sit trapped on another mountain, awaiting death by starvation, exposure, or execution while praying for deliverance.

This horror involves the annihilation of Christians and others who refuse to submit to the demands of the jihadist ISIS hordes running rampant through Iraq and Syria.

ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), now calling itself IS (Islamic State), is a barbaric terrorist group bent on establishing an Islamic caliphate throughout the Middle East. Then it plans to move west to create a global Islamic empire. Christians and Jews are marked for annihilation unless they convert to Islam, as are dissenting Muslims and anyone else refusing to submit to ISIS’ outrageous demands.

ISIS’ stunning barbarism was displayed in the beheading of American journalist James Foley in August. Foley’s decapitation was similar to the slaying of Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl by Pakistani terrorists linked to al-Qaeda in 2002. Beyond this reprehensible savagery is an inflexible ideology. There is no appealing to these people. They will not cede to Western demands. Establishing a triumphant, global Islamist caliphate is their goal, and spreading fear among their enemies is their tactic to silence opposition, as is making their enemies believe concessions equivalent to surrender will bring peace.

ISIS’ satanically motivated mass murderers demand acceptance of their concept of Islam. Failing to comply brings death. Being killed for refusing to renounce one’s faith in Christ means decapitation, crucifixion, or an assortment of demonically concocted horrors designed to inflict the most appalling torture achievable.

In the pagan world of the ancients, watching ravenous beasts tear the innocent limb by limb was a blood sport that entertained the masses. People who delight in murdering, raping, and ravishing the helpless, as ISIS does, are driven by the same passion as their ancient counterparts: They love to kill. However, their lust for carnage is disguised as a commitment to religion. They do it in the name of their god.

Early Christians assembled in small groups on the floors of pagan theaters and arenas because they would not trade their faith for freedom; and they were murdered as a result. The same was true of believers who were bound to stakes, waiting for flames to consume them because they refused to forsake their Savior.

No one anticipated that the most egregious crimes against Christians would be perpetrated in our lifetime. The evil equals or exceeds that of previous eras.

Open Doors USA serves the worldwide persecuted church. Each year it compiles its World Watch List. In no fewer than 50 countries, Christians suffer extreme to moderate persecution. In Nigeria the Islamic Boko Haram terrorists’ brutal abductions and assaults on schools, churches, and entire Christian communities have forced even the silent mainstream liberal media to report on them.

If the secular media’s silence is due to its ideological prejudice or animosity toward Christianity, how does one explain the muteness of the majority of American Christians? Christians should be speaking out because the jihadists who now seem far away proclaim their intent daily for America.

There is no better statement on the perils of apathy than that of German Protestant Pastor Martin Niemöller, whose outspoken opposition to Adolf Hitler earned him seven years in a fetid Nazi concentration camp:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

by Elwood McQuaid
Dear Friends,

I don’t often read fiction (unless it masquerades as news about Israel). But when Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* came out in 2003, I decided to pick up a copy and see what all the commotion was about.

It didn’t take me long to figure out many people apparently love a fast-paced detective-mystery-thriller. The novel reportedly has sold more than 80 million copies worldwide.

That means more than 80 million people have read that Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene and fathered children with her. When I finished the book, I said to myself, *What rubbish.*

Then Christmas rolled around. In their usual attempts to rewrite history, the Arabs decided to stake their claim to Jesus: “We must not forget that Messiah [Jesus] is a Palestinian, the son of Mary the Palestinian,” reported *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority (PA), in November 2005. Also rubbish.

In May of this year, Pope Francis visited the Holy Land. He conducted a Roman Catholic Mass at Manger Square, outside the Church of the Nativity in PA-controlled Bethlehem. Covering the event was *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*.

In the newspaper’s op-ed on May 27, Alaa Abu Ammar wrote, “The image placed behind the Pope’s podium was beautiful indeed: it showed Jesus, peace be upon Him, as a baby wrapped in a Palestinian keffiyeh. . . . Although this image is a symbolic Palestinian national idiom, it is also truthful, since the son of Mary was a Palestinian, and this is the truth, not speculation.”

No, it is rubbish.

More lies and misinformation probably have been disseminated about Jesus Christ than about any other person who walked the earth.

So at this joyous time of year when we celebrate His incarnation, we devote this issue of *Israel My Glory* to the genuine Jesus. Here you’ll find the truth about the one and only Savior, who loves us.

The prophet Isaiah wrote of Him, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; . . . and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. . . . Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isa. 9:6–7).

To that we say, “Amen and Amen.” Merry Christmas to all of you from all of us at *The Friends of Israel*.

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox,
Editor-in-Chief
Open Doors USA serves the persecuted church around the world. Each year it ranks the 50 worst countries for Christian persecution. North Korea has headed the list for 12 years in a row. In the first 14 countries listed, believers suffer “extreme” persecution for their faith; in countries 15 through 27, “severe” persecution; and in 28 through 50, “moderate” persecution.

1. North Korea
2. Somalia
3. Syria
4. Iraq
5. Afghanistan
6. Saudi Arabia
7. Maldives
8. Pakistan
9. Iran
10. Yemen
11. Sudan
12. Eritrea
13. Libya
14. Nigeria
15. Uzbekistan
17. Ethiopia
18. Vietnam
19. Qatar
20. Turkmenistan
21. Laos
22. Egypt
23. Myanmar (Burma)
24. Brunei
25. Colombia
26. Jordan
27. Oman
28. India
29. Sri Lanka
30. Tunisia
31. Bhutan
32. Algeria
33. Mali
34. Palestinian Territories
35. United Arab Emirates
36. Mauritania
37. China
38. Kuwait
39. Kazakhstan
40. Malaysia
41. Bahrain
42. Comoros
43. Kenya
44. Morocco
45. Tajikistan
46. Djibouti
47. Indonesia
48. Bangladesh
49. Tanzania
50. Niger

The Open Doors 2014 World Watch List is used courtesy of Open Doors. For more information on Open Doors, go to www.opendoorsusa.org or www.worldwatchlist.us.
The nightmare continues for prominent Chinese human rights attorney Gao Zhisheng and his family. When Gao was released from prison in China on August 7, no one heard anything from him. His family had telephone conversations with him, but they didn’t hear much from him either.

Now it has become clear that isolation and torture have left Gao unable to speak coherently. China Aid reports, “Gao has been utterly destroyed. He can barely talk, and only in very short sentences. Most of the time he mutters and is unintelligible. It is believed he is suffering from a broad range of physical and mental health problems; he has not been allowed to see a doctor since his release.”

As his wife, Geng He, told the Los Angeles Times, if he cannot even obtain adequate dental care, what hope does he have for obtaining help to recover his mental health? While she and their two children escaped to the United States in 2009 and live in California, Gao is under virtual house arrest at his sister-in-law’s in China’s far west.

Dentists there do not have the means to repair the damage malnutrition did to his remaining teeth, and the government forbids him to travel to Beijing, much less to the United States to be reunited with his family.

Gao’s advocacy for religious minorities led to his conviction in 2006 for “inciting subversion,” and in 2007 he began serving a previously suspended three-year prison sentence. After he wrote an open letter to the U.S. Congress about human rights abuses in China, authorities abducted him and tortured him for more than 50 days. Gao later revealed his captors shocked his genitals with an electric baton and pierced them with toothpicks.

“As with the torture experienced during his pretrial detention, the purpose of this mistreatment was to extract a false confession,” noted Freedom Now, which works to free prisoners of conscience.

Thugs suspected of being state agents again abducted Gao on February 4, 2009. He reportedly reappeared from March 28 to April 20, 2010, during which he described how police beat him for two days and nights, according to Freedom Now.

China announced on December 16, 2011, that it would take him to prison to serve the three-year sentence imposed in 2006, thus withdrawing the five-year probation. In prison since December 2011, Gao remained in isolation in a small cell with little light 24 hours a day, according to China Aid.

“Guards were strictly instructed not to speak with him,” the advocacy group reported. “He was not allowed any reading materials, television, or access to anyone or anything. He was fed a single slice of bread and piece of cabbage, once a day; as a result, he has lost roughly 22.5 kilograms (50 pounds) and now weighs about 59 kilograms (130 pounds). He has lost many teeth from malnutrition. It is believed he was also repeatedly physically tortured.”

“The only thing I feared more than him being killed was his suffering relentless and horrific torture and being kept alive,” his wife told China Aid. “We desperately need help from our adopted country and from President Obama and Secretary Kerry personally to demand the Chinese government to allow my husband to come to the United States for medical treatment. If President Xi Jinping has any sense of decency or humanity, after crushing my husband both physically and psychologically, the least he could do is allow me as a devoted wife to care for him.”

Jared Genser, head of Freedom Now, told China Aid, “The situation is far worse than my limited imagination enabled me to contemplate. While China is a great power in the 21st century, the inhumanity and brutality that it has demonstrated by the torture of Gao Zhisheng shows its profound insecurity and fear of anyone in its population who stands up to its repression.”

by Morning Star News
(MorningStarNews.org)
Christians are often accused of worshiping three gods. Admittedly, the truth of a triune (three in one) God is a difficult, if not impossible, concept to grasp. God is not like humans. So every attempt to explain Him falls short.

Yet Christians worship only one God: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of Israel. The biblical reality is that He exists as three separate but equal Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some have tried to explain this concept using H2O, which can exist as a solid (ice), liquid (water), and gas (steam). Others use an egg, which is made up of three distinct parts yet is one, or a three-leaf clover. All these attempts seem good on the surface but break down when trying to explain the triune Godhead.

No one can truly explain the Trinity. We know Jesus is God, yet He is not the Father. Nor is He the Spirit. The Father is God, yet He is neither the Son nor the Spirit; and the Spirit is God, yet He is not the Son or the Father.

However, both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament support the triunity of God.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens" (Isa. 48:12–13). The One speaking identifies Himself as the eternal Creator of the world.

The speaker continues, "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me" (v. 16).

So the speaker clearly is God. Yet He says "the Lord God and His Spirit" sent Him. The three persons of the Godhead all appear in this verse: The One being sent is God, and the Ones doing the sending are God. Together, they constitute the true and living triune God of Israel: "And now the Lord God [the Father], and His Spirit [the Holy Spirit], have sent Me [the Son]."

Isaiah then identified the speaker: "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the Lord your God'" (v. 17). The speaker is the Redeemer, the Messiah.

More than 700 years later, the apostle John received specific revelation concerning the end-times. The risen Messiah declared to Him, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End; says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). The speaker here is Jesus, the Redeemer—the Messiah and second Person of the triune Godhead, the same One who spoke in Isaiah 48:16.

Scripture ascribes the act of creation to Him: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. . . . All things were created through Him and for Him. . . . who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:15–16, 18).

Also, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (Jn. 1:3).

Like Judaism, Christianity is monotheistic. The reality is that God is a plurality in His oneness.

The creedal statement of Judaism, the Shema, allows for this plurality: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (Dt. 6:4). The Hebrew word translated "one" is echad, which denotes a plurality within a unity.

It is used to refer to a single day that consists of evening and morning (Gen. 1:13). It is also used to describe the marriage union: "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one . . . echad flesh" (2:24).

When the Israelite spies returned from the Land of Promise to report to Moses, they brought from the "Valley of Eschol . . . one [echad] cluster of grapes" (Num. 13:23). It was a single cluster composed of many.

Because God is triune, He could come to Earth as a Baby in the Person of Jesus, yet still sit on His throne in heaven. Many find this truth difficult to grasp. But God is omnipotent and omnipresent; and with Him, nothing is impossible.
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP


2. Title of publication: ISRAEL MY GLORY.
3. Frequency of issue: Bimonthly.
4. Location of known office of publication: 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
5. Location of headquarters of general business and publishers: 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
6. Names and addresses of publishers, editor, and managing editor:
   Publisher: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
   Editor-in-Chief: Lorna Simcox, 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
   Managing Editor: Lorna Simcox, 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
9. N/A
10. Extent and nature of circulation:

   A. Total No. Copies Printed........ 192,217
   B. Paid and/or Requested Mail Circulation... 179,663
   C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation............ 179,663
   D. Free Distribution...................... 6,075
   E. Total Distribution .................. 185,738
   F. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing .................. 6,479
   G. Total.................................... 192,217

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. James A. Showers, President

**Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, price includes HST/GST**

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA)

*Buy Your Copy Today! (Jerusalem Assembly)* BY31 $9.95*

**Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures**

- This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.
- Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.
- We don't know anything else like it on the market.

Meno Kalisher is the pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly—House of Redemption in Jerusalem, Israel.

**Gain NEW insight into the Old Testament from a Hebrew-speaking native!**

**Meno Kalisher**

This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.

Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.

We don't know anything else like it on the market.

**Buy Your Copy Today! (Jerusalem Assembly)** BY31 $9.95*

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA)

*Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, price includes HST/GST

**Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures**

- This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.
- Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.
- We don't know anything else like it on the market.

Meno Kalisher is the pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly—House of Redemption in Jerusalem, Israel.

**Gain NEW insight into the Old Testament from a Hebrew-speaking native!**

**Meno Kalisher**

This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.

Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.

We don't know anything else like it on the market.

**Buy Your Copy Today! (Jerusalem Assembly)** BY31 $9.95*

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA)

*Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, price includes HST/GST

**Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures**

- This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.
- Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.
- We don't know anything else like it on the market.

Meno Kalisher is the pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly—House of Redemption in Jerusalem, Israel.

**Gain NEW insight into the Old Testament from a Hebrew-speaking native!**

**Meno Kalisher**

This outstanding work by Israeli Pastor Meno Kalisher is filled with information you won't find anywhere else.

Excellent for the seasoned scholar, yet easy to understand—even for someone who has never read a Bible.

We don't know anything else like it on the market.

**Buy Your Copy Today! (Jerusalem Assembly)** BY31 $9.95*
Meet Me at the Manger
Nestled in the terraced Shepherds’ Fields on the approach to Bethlehem is a cave. I expect it is merely one of many where shepherds and townsfolk of bygone days found shelter from the elements on disagreeable nights. The place was a delightful stop for tourists before the area came under the control of the Palestinian Authority in 1995.

Like so many traditional spots associated with the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago, the cave probably is not where the Son of God was cradled. That said, there is something compelling about the murky cavern where Christian believers file in to hear about Bethlehem and events there after Joseph and Mary arrived on that night of nights.

Something in the air insists on more than a brief talk about the site and its proximity to the little town the prophet Micah certified and God verified in prophetic fulfillment hundreds of years hence. When devoted believers enter the grotto, they bring something in their hearts. Spontaneously, someone begins to sing—no hymnals or cues needed.

Inspired by incomparable acoustics that resonate with cathedral-like sound, people join in with “Silent Night,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” and “Joy to the World.” The carols rise as a statement of faith deeply held and treasured as nothing else is in quite the same way.

In a sense, the presence of these Christians, along with countless others who have visited from all over the world, becomes an affirmation. More than two millennia ago, an Infant was born in a backwater village in a remote corner of the Middle East. The message of the manger was an irrevocable announcement: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Mt. 1:23).

A Reason to Give Thanks

The world we inhabit is immersed in strife, violence, and uncertainty. It’s enough to drive the most optimistic into depression and despair. A dismal state might be universal but for a single unshakable reality: The Babe in the manger arrived at the appointed time to bring to fruition God’s gift of peace, love, and life eternal promised to all who would, over the centuries, receive it.

Christians have something to sing about. There is a “Joy to the World” in living as a believer. And there is a peace that passes all understanding that transcends the hopeless lives all too many endure.

Soon after my wife, Maxine, and I became believers, we memorized a verse of Scripture that has become a sort of watchword for us through the good and not-so-good times of our lives: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Th. 5:18).

Inexorably linked to the relationship with Christ that gives us the abundant life is the quality of being genuinely and perpetually thankful. The joy the psalmists experienced has been transmitted to Messiah’s followers in an even more fulfilling way in the newer Testament. A typical expression is Psalm 136:1: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

Our time-honored, American Thanksgiving celebration frequently revolves around turkey, dressing, and other holiday goodies. Who doesn’t enjoy seeing depictions of our Pilgrim forefathers gathered around tables weighed down with harvest bounty? But food and spending time with family and friends are but pleasant fringe benefits. Our reason for celebrating is to remember that our thankfulness rises to Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

For a people blessed beyond measure, failing to be thankful is not an option. It is, instead, a manifestation of spiritual decline that will reap fatal consequences. The Epistle to the Romans describes the beginning of the end for great societies that have succumbed to ingratitude and turned from God to hedonism, which results in chaos and social disintegration:

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).

Unfortunately, creeping ingratitude has gripped much of Western society, including America. It has become a perilous part of modern life. The desire for more is rapidly displacing the attitude of thanksgiving for this generation. Forgotten is the fact that God exacts a heavy price from people who enshrine ingratitude and refuse to bend the knee to the One from whom all their blessings come.

The Greatest Generation

Journalist Tom Brokaw’s 1998 best-selling book, The Greatest Generation, was inspired by his visit to Normandy, France, to walk the beaches where thousands of young Americans fought and died in 1944. Reflecting on the generation that had endured so much yet gave back so much more, he concluded that generation was the greatest any society ever produced. It was a generation of men and women who fought not for fame or recognition but because it was “the right thing to do.” Brokaw wrote,

Millions of men and women were involved in this tumultuous journey through adversity and achievement, despair and triumph.
Certainly there were those who failed to measure up, but taken as a whole this generation did have a “rendezvous with destiny” that went well beyond the outsized expectations of President Roosevelt when he first issued that call to duty in 1936.¹

Our nation had not yet lost its focus on what constituted “the right thing to do.”

A proper understanding of right and wrong was brought fully to fruition when a Baby was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the land of Israel. Until then, the world was held in the grasp of a ruderless, pagan nihilism that oppressed the weak; worshiped power; and bowed before licentious, mythological gods and images of wood and stone.

When the apostle Paul, an itinerant emissary of Christ, formerly known as Saul of Tarsus, was carrying the Christian message to the East, he was told to take a left turn instead:

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:9–10).

In a very real way, all that is right, godly, good, and eternally edifying came to us when the infinite grace of a saving God invaded Western society. The Judeo-Christian ethic is the foundation upon which the greatest generation would eventually be raised.

Are we thankful? Is gratitude the flavor of the season?

Do Christians celebrate mere myth and fantasy with their manger scenes that dot the landscape? No, they do not. Christianity is personal. It involves a real relationship with the true and living God of the universe, and the Son of God offers it freely to everyone who comes to Him by faith.

With that in mind, I’d like to invite you to meet me at the manger and do the right thing in celebrating our adoration of Him.

ENDNOTE


Elwood McQuaid is consulting editor for The Friends of Israel.

Question: What will the Day of the Lord accomplish?

Answer: “For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up... The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.”

— Isaiah 2:12, 17

Rev up your devotional life with this fabulous book that will take you on an exciting trip to the Holy Land every day for 30 days!

Your guide will be renowned Israel expert and author Dr. Charles H. Dyer. Each chapter in Thirty Days in the Land with Jesus: A Holy Land Devotional also has vivid, full-color photography and thought-provoking questions.

And this great trip costs only $14.99!

Dr. Dyer served for 10 years as provost of Moody Bible Institute before becoming professor-at-large of Bible and host of “The Land and the Book” radio program. He is a prolific author whose writing is as enjoyable as it is informative.

Order your copy today!
(Moody Publishers)
BY35 $14.99*

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA)
*Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, price includes HST/GST.
Many people today are confused about the Rapture. Some don’t even believe there will be one.

Dr. Renald Showers, one of the most respected theologians of our time, spent more than three years meticulously researching the Rapture to produce *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* This definitive, thorough work will answer all your questions.

*Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* B55P $11.95*

*The Coming Apocalypse* B13 $8.95*

Also available as an e-book at foi.org/ebooks.

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.346.6461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA) *Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, prices include GST/HST.*
Bertrand Russell was a 20th-century British philosopher and logician who rejected the idea of absolute truth. In his famous 1927 essay "Why I Am Not a Christian," Russell wrote, "Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him." It seems incredible that anyone would make such a statement because we know much about Jesus.
Evidence for His existence is overwhelming; and it comes from a variety of sources, including Scripture, Christian and secular writings, and even some Jewish works.

One scriptural source is the Gospel of Luke. Not only was Luke a competent physician, but he was also a careful historian, as evidenced by the introduction to his treatise on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed (Lk. 1:1–4).

Luke’s sources were firsthand witnesses. He composed a well-researched, accurate, and inspired history. In fact, the entire New Testament has been shown to be historically reliable.

Furthermore, many Christian creeds and confessions that date back to the first century also provide evidence for Jesus’ existence. Apologist Gary Habermas explained these affirmations preserve some of the “earliest reports concerning Jesus from about 30–50 A.D. Therefore, in a real sense, the creeds preserve pre-New Testament material, and are our earliest sources for the life of Jesus.”

There is also secular evidence. The highly acclaimed Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (c. A.D. 55–120) alluded to Jesus’ death in his writings. In fact, Many ancient secular writers mention Jesus and the movement He birthed. The fact that they are usually antagonistic to Christianity makes them especially good witnesses, since they have nothing to gain by admitting the historicity of the events surrounding a religious leader and His following, which they disdain.

Even Jewish scholars attested to Jesus’ existence: “Similar to the secular references,” explained writer Josh McDowell, “the ones found in ancient Jewish sources are unfriendly toward Christianity’s founder, followers, and beliefs. For this reason their attestation to events surrounding Jesus’ life are valuable testimony to the historicity of these events.”

The Babylonian Talmud refers to Jesus’ crucifixion: “On the eve of Passover, Yeshu was hanged” (Tractate Sanhedrin).

And in the writings of ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. A.D. 37–100) is the following paragraph:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

The Historical Existence of Jesus Christ is completely verifiable. Also verifiable is His Jewish ancestry. Matthew’s Gospel stresses Jesus’ Jewish genealogy and His legal right to the Davidic throne:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ (Messiah).

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the [Jewish] people together, he inquired of them where the Christ [Messiah] was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judaea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel’” (Mt. 1:1, 16; 2:1–6; cf. Mic. 5:2).

Commentator Michael Vanlaningham said Matthew introduced his Gospel “by emphasizing the legal right of Jesus of Nazareth to be the king of the Jews and of the entire world. Matthew included Jesus’ genealogy to argue for the validity of His claim to David’s throne. . . . In Christ’s humanity, He was legally a son of David and was a rightful heir to the Davidic throne.”

Jesus was born of Jewish parentage, was circumcised, and grew up in a Jewish home in a Jewish village. He was raised in a Jewish community, experienced Jewish culture, and was brought up under Jewish law.

But There is a Final Piece of Evidence that has convinced multitudes throughout the centuries of the existence of Jesus Christ: a transformed life. Many early Christians experienced such deep changes of heart through faith in Him that they willingly died, rather than recant.

“These early Christians,” McDowell wrote, “had nothing to gain and everything to lose. . . . For this reason, their accounts are highly significant historical sources.”

The first-century writings of the apostolic fathers tell of the death of Polycarp of Smyrna. Polycarp had been in hiding but was betrayed and brought into the arena to face the authorities. The presiding proconsul told him all he had to do to save his life was renounce Christ:

“Swear by the genius of Caesar, repent, say: ‘Away with the Atheists’”; but Polycarp, with a stern countenance looked on all the crowd of lawless heathen in the arena, and waving his
hand at them, he groaned and looked up to heaven and said: “Away with the Atheists.” But when the Pro-Consul pressed him and said: “Take the oath and I let you go, revile Christ,” Polycarp said: “For eighty and six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong, and how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”

Before he was set on fire, Polycarp uttered a final prayer to God:

I also praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee through the everlasting and heavenly high Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Child, through whom be glory to Thee with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come, Amen.

Unlike Polycarp, Bertrand Russell died an atheist. Christian writer Dan Delzell said of him,

He was terrified to place absolute trust in something because in his mind, it might eventually be proven false. That fear kept him bound in chains to his skepticism . . . He was the poster child for fear-based living. It consumed him. It enslaved him. And it motivated him to reject Christ.

No one need be uncertain about Jesus. He most certainly lived, died, and rose again. And He most certainly will return.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., 120.
3 Ibid., 123.
4 Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 8.3.3
6 McDowell, 126.
8 Ibid.
9 Dan Delzell, “Bertrand Russell’s Greatest Paradox was His Faith,” christianpost.com, November 4, 2011 <tinyurl.com/BERT222>.
A recent deal between the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and an anti-faith activist group promises to threaten the religious free-speech rights of churches around the nation.

In July 2014, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) announced the IRS has settled a lawsuit the FFRF filed against it by agreeing to step up its investigation of churches and religious organizations suspected of crossing over the IRS line that separates permissible and impermissible activities.

It is permissible for religious organizations to take a public position on certain social and political issues, like abortion, traditional marriage, and religious freedom; but it is impermissible to endorse or oppose candidates for political office.

In reality, the line between these activities is extremely blurry and confusing due to how the IRS interprets its own rules.

The problem is compounded by the fact that it is sometimes difficult for a church or nonprofit faith group to advocate fully for a biblical position without explaining the issue’s background, which often involves mentioning political candidates. That is where the problem comes in.

Other religious-liberty attorneys and I have long proposed scrapping the IRS prohibitions altogether, allowing religious groups to speak freely about political candidates and the issues.

The IRS settlement with FFRF could portend a trouble: One of America’s most powerful governmental agencies is taking policy guidance from an organization known for its aggressive disdain of Christianity.

I have occasionally heard some Christians say churches and faith groups should stop complaining about such developments and either let the IRS have its way or refrain from claiming tax-exempt status. That, however, is a false choice for two reasons: One is constitutional; the other, biblical.

● Constitutionally, the First Amendment religion clauses were designed to protect people and organizations of faith from the overreaching power of the federal government. In one tax case, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the idea of tax-exempt status for religious groups, stating the purpose was not to grant them special favor but to safeguard their free exercise of religious rights to protect them from the potentially abusive power of the IRS.

Such protection is clearly needed. The news has been full of accounts of the IRS harassing conservatives and Christians simply because of their beliefs.

● Biblically, we find direction from the Gospel of Luke, which records how the agents of the scribes and chief priests questioned Jesus about taxes, hoping to put Him on the horns of a dilemma. The men who confronted Christ were actually “spies who pretended to be righteous” (Lk. 20:20). They were trying to “seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor” (v. 20).

“Is it lawful,” they asked, “for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (v. 22). The tax was the Roman poll tax, a census tax of one denarius per person. Because it symbolized Rome’s iron grip over the Jewish citizenry, the Jewish people hated it in particular.

If Jesus supported the tax, His enemies could have used His position to stir up the masses against Him. If He opposed it, the pro-Roman Herodians could have reported His stance to the Roman governor as a form of insurrection.

After pointing out that the denarius coin bore Caesar’s image, Jesus gave His well-known response: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (v. 25).

Though the question was based on evil motives, Jesus’ answer was based on truth. Our Savior teaches us to know the difference between the obedience we owe to the state and the ultimate obedience we owe to the Lord.

Taxes should be paid when they are owed. But there is nothing wrong with a church or Christian organization using the benefits of the tax-exemption rules that the Supreme Court has reminded us are designed to help insulate religious ministries from improper governmental interference.

Tax issues can sometimes be a subterfuge for a mean-spirited attack on people of faith.

We must watch carefully what the IRS will do in the wake of the dangerous agreement it has struck with the Freedom From Religion Foundation.
Many people believe Jesus was a good man and a prophet. Some will even admit He was the Son of God who came to Earth. But tell them Jesus was God Himself who appeared in human flesh, and that is where you may part company.

Yet the Bible teaches Jesus Christ was unequivocally God incarnate. One of the ways He demonstrated His deity was by asserting authority that belongs to God alone.

The prophet Isaiah foretold the Messiah’s unique nature: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). This particular baby Boy would be conceived without a human father but would be human in every sense, while fully God. His name, Immanuel (Hebrew for “El [God] with us”), revealed His true identity.

Some 700 years later, angels announced the Child’s birth to Temple shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. The shepherds found the Child lying in a manger, exactly as the angels had proclaimed.
The Baby’s humble surroundings did little to reveal the authority that would be vested in Him. Approximately 30 years later, He manifested that authority in every facet of His ministry: He healed the sick, controlled nature, expelled demons, forgave sins, and raised the dead. In other words, He did what God alone can do.

He also astounded multitudes, “for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mt. 7:29). Unlike the Jewish leaders of His day, Jesus did not quote scholars or refer to commentaries; His authority resided in Himself.

**Authority to Heal**

The Gospel of Matthew records how a distraught Roman centurion begged Jesus to heal his servant. As Jesus and the thronging crowds entered Capernaum in Galilee, the city Jesus used as His headquarters, the centurion met them and pleaded, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented” (8:6). Not only was the centurion a Gentile, but he was also a Roman soldier—a despised reminder of Israel’s subjugation to Rome.

Without hesitation, Jesus responded, “I will come and heal him” (v. 7).

The centurion confessed, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed” (v. 8).

As a soldier in a position of power, the centurion understood everything boiled down to authority. Just as he could issue a command and it would be obeyed, he knew Jesus could merely say the word, without even entering the centurion’s home, and the servant would be healed. Jesus gave the command, and the servant was healed immediately.

**Authority to Expel Demons**

After they arrived safely at the other side of the lake, they encountered two demon-possessed men described as “exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way” (v. 28). When these violent men saw Jesus, they shrieked, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (v. 29).

Convinced they would be confined in judgment, the demons begged Him, “Permit us to go away into the herd of swine” that was feeding on the mountain (v. 31; cf. Lk. 8:32).

Jesus commanded them, “Go” (Mt. 8:32); and the demons left the men and entered the swine. The herd immediately went berserk, charged down the slope, and drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Though this was probably not the outcome the demons intended, they were nonetheless obligated to submit to Jesus’ authority. When He spoke, they obeyed.

**Authority to Forgive Sin**

Then Jesus returned to Capernaum. He was teaching in a house in the city, and Jewish leaders from every town in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem showed up to hear Him (Lk. 5:17). Suddenly, bits of the ceiling began to fall on the guests. Four men were on the roof, dismantling it so they could lower their paralyzed friend into Jesus’ presence. The large crowd outside the door impeded them from getting their friend to Jesus any other way.

Jesus told the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Mt. 9:2).

Knowing only God can forgive sins, the Jewish leaders and teachers immediately thought, “This Man blasphemes!” (v. 3).

Had Jesus not been God, they would have been correct. But to demonstrate His authority to forgive sin, Jesus provided tangible evidence by healing the paralyzed man, telling him, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house” (v. 6). The young man immediately rose to his feet and walked out the door, in plain sight of the religious leaders and astounded crowd (v. 7).

**Authority to Raise the Dead**

Perhaps Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue at Capernaum, had seen Jesus heal the paralyzed man. It appears that, later the same day, Jairus came to Jesus because his 12-year-old daughter was dying. Before Jesus could make His way to the man’s home, word came the girl had died (Lk. 8:49).

Jesus comforted Jairus: “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well” (v. 50). At Jairus’s house, Jesus issued a simple command: “Little girl, arise” (v. 54). The girl’s “spirit returned, and she arose immediately” (v. 55). Only God could recall the child’s departed spirit and bring her back to life.

The Babe in Bethlehem’s manger was truly “God with us,” as His ministry powerfully demonstrated. His unprecedented teaching and His ability to heal the sick, control nature, expel demons, forgive sins, and even raise the dead signified His authority as God.

Prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18).

Jesus was indeed a teacher and a prophet, as many claim. But He was more. He was God who came to Earth. He demonstrated His deity time and again by exercising authority that belongs to God alone. And though it may be difficult for some to believe God became a man, it is no more difficult than believing an omnipotent God can do as He pleases.

Perhaps people should ask themselves what God asked Abraham when He promised Abraham’s 89-year-old wife, Sarah, would give birth to a son the following year: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14).
“Now the Angel of the Lord found [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness. Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees” (Gen.16:7, 13).

“Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens” (Gen. 19:24).

“But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham! ... Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me’” (Gen. 22:11–12).

“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Ex. 3:2, 6).

“Joshua ... lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood ... with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua ... said to Him, ‘Are you for us or for our adversaries?’” So He said, ‘No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped” (Josh. 5:13–14).

“So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. ... The Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. ... When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. ... Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, because we have seen God!’” (Jud. 13:19–20, 22).

“Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM’” (Jn. 8:58).

Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus did not have His “beginning” when He was born in the manger of Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. Jesus is the second Person of the triune Godhead. As God, He was alive and active “from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2), including in the creation of the world.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, He can be seen interacting with Abraham, Hagar, Moses, and Joshua in His capacity as the Angel of the Lord. Prophecies concerning His First Advent appear clearly in the Jewish Bible, and their fulfillment can be seen in the New Testament.
or you a Prophet like me [Moses] from whom you shall hear. 'I [the Lord] . . . will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Isa. 7:14).

And now the Lord will raise up for you a Prophet like me [Moses] from among you, whom you shall hear. And what he speaks to you, you will do. You shall hear what the Lord says. (Deut. 18:15, 18).

As for the sign the Lord will give you, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

The prophets of old spoke of Him, and the apostle John pulled back the curtain on the Messiah's future return in the book of Revelation. God's Word is filled with references to Jesus' physical return to Earth to rescue the Jewish people, whom He loves, and to establish His literal, 1,000-year reign over all the earth on David's earthly throne from Jerusalem—the city of the great King.
Messianic fervor hit a high throughout the Orthodox Jewish world in the early 1990s. Banners trumpeted messages like “Messiah Is Coming,” “We Want Messiah Now,” and “Prepare for Messiah” throughout Jerusalem; and billboards did the same in large cities in the United States and Canada. The Jewish community was abuzz.

Even secular newspapers, magazines, and syndicated columns were asking, “Who is behind these posters, and who is the Messiah?”

Producing the banners and billboards was the Chabad Lubavitch, a Hasidic (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish sect headquartered in Crown Heights, New York. Originating in a small Russian shtetl (community) in 1775, the Lubavitch managed to survive horrendous persecutions in Europe, including the Holocaust; and by the early 1990s under the leadership of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, it had become the fastest-growing sect within Judaism.

Rabbi Schneerson’s picture appeared in store windows, on buildings and buses, and in newspapers throughout Jerusalem. The Rebbe, as he was called, is said to have performed hundreds of miracles and possessed Solomon-like wisdom and compassion for the oppressed.

He held audiences with presidents and prime ministers, governors and congressmen; and though he was not born in Israel and never even visited there, most of his followers hailed him as the Messiah. He neither acknowledged nor denied the claim.

Schneerson died in 1994. However, many of his followers expected him to
rise from the dead; and to this day, many Lubavitch believe he is coming back.

**MOST JEWISH PEOPLE** do not believe Schneerson was the Messiah. Nor do they believe Jesus was. In fact, many will tell you that, like Rabbi Schneerson, Jesus neither affirmed nor denied His Messiahship. But the Bible teaches otherwise.

No banners proclaimed Jesus’ coming 2,000 years ago. Yet Messianic fervor was rampant. Throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, news spread of a great rabbi named **Yeshua** (Jesus). He performed great miracles (Acts 2:22), possessed greater wisdom than Solomon (Mt. 12:42; Lk. 11:31), and demonstrated profound kindness and compassion.

But unlike Rabbi Schneerson, Jesus met all the specific Messianic criteria established in God’s Word: He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea, a direct descendant of King David from the tribe of Judah (Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2). And, contrary to what some say, He acknowledged He was the promised Messiah.

The Gospel of John records that Jesus made Himself clear to a Samaritan woman as He traveled through Samaria from Judea to Galilee. No Jewish man in those days, especially a rabbi, intentionally walked through Samaria or talked to Samaritan women (Jn. 4:9). But Jesus was different. He did not follow social etiquette or miss divine appointments.

He asked the woman for a drink and spoke of “water springing up into everlasting life” (v.14). After gaining her attention by accurately describing her life (vv. 15–18), Jesus shared with her how “salvation is of the Jews” (v. 22).

She understood the Jewish concept of Messiah: “I know that Messiah is coming. . . . When He comes, He will tell us all things” (v. 25).

To which Jesus replied, “I who speak to you, I Am.” They were reminiscent of the words God spoke to Moses at the burning bush when He said, “I AM WHO I AM. . . . Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14).

This was not the only time Jesus used the words I Am to declare His deity. In speaking to the Pharisees, He declared, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (Jn. 8:58).

Jesus also acknowledged His Messiahship to His disciples in Caesarea Philippi. He asked, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Mt. 16:13). The disciples responded that some said He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. “But who do you say that I am?” He asked (v. 15).

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God” (v. 16).

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (v. 17). Jesus acknowledged that Peter was correct in calling Him the Messiah and told Peter his knowledge came directly from God the Father.

Though Peter receives most of the theological press for recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, Martha’s response was equally dramatic. When Lazarus died, his sister Martha came to Jesus, saddened that the Lord had not been there to heal him. Jesus told her Lazarus would rise again. Martha agreed he would indeed rise in the resurrection.

Jesus declared, “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). Jesus thus admitted His identity as both Messiah and God.

Martha’s response was thrilling: “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world” (v. 27). She called Him Lord, Christ (Messiah), and Son of God, revealing her deep faith.

On the day Jesus would be crucified, He was brought before Caiaphas the high priest, who declared, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” (Mt. 26:63).

Jesus replied, “It is as you said,” admitting His Messiahship. He then added, “Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (v. 64).

That encounter was the defining moment for the rejection of Jesus as Messiah. The high priest tore his clothes (in violation of Jewish law) and declared no further need for witnesses (v. 65). The Jewish leadership clearly understood Jesus’ claim to be both Messiah and God and declared Him guilty of blasphemy, which was punishable by death.

Today there are Lubavitcher Jews who check Rabbi Schneerson’s grave daily, hoping for his resurrection, even though he failed to meet the biblical standards for the office of Messiah.

In contrast, Jesus stood before the Jewish leaders of His day, having met all of the criteria; and they refused to recognize Him. Instead, He was shamed, beaten, and sentenced to death.

Though Schneerson’s body still lies in the ground, Jesus rose from the grave and sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father until His enemies become His footstool (Ps. 110:1).

The Hebrew Scriptures declare, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way. . . . Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (2:12).

It is not that Jesus failed to acknowledge who He was; it is that people then, as today, refuse to believe.
When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He entered a world that was bursting with anticipation. Some of the Jewish people were longing for God’s divine manifestation, as in the days of Moses and Solomon (Ex. 40:34–38; 1 Ki. 8:10–11). But they believed that before God’s presence would be evident, Israel’s Redeemer-Messiah must come, as the prophets promised.

The Gospel of John brings this belief to life by accentuating Jesus’ eternality and divinity as the promised Immanuel (“God with us”): “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’ presence in the world was God’s presence on Earth.

In fact, the apostle John used a Greek word for “dwelt” in John 1:14 that is identical in meaning to a Hebrew word used in Exodus 40:35 to indicate the residing of God’s physical presence: “And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested [dwelt] above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
When Jesus ministered to the Jewish people, He obeyed the Law perfectly and revealed the true nature of God’s holiness and character in His words and actions. People were able to experience genuine grace and truth when Jesus resided with them.

Sadly, through the ages the church has neglected to show the Jewish people the same grace and truth Jesus displayed toward them. Its long history of persecution, oppression, and anti-Semitism has blighted the heart of Jesus’ message to the nation of Israel and, consequently, to many others.

As a result, Jesus is frequently judged by the flawed actions of people and not by His own words and deeds. Yet He devoted every area of His life to the Jewish people. In grace He cared for them, and in truth He spoke to them.

A POPULAR AMERICAN AUTHOR AND LEADERSHIP EXPERT once said, “True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not the enrichment of the leaders.” Unfortunately, ancient Israel experienced exactly the opposite. Many of Israel’s leaders grew rich at the expense of ordinary citizens. Ezekiel 34 portrays these rulers as shepherds whom God promises to judge.

God had intended for them to lead His people by the standards of the Law, which He designed to benefit everyone: young and old, rich and poor, men and women.

However, many of Israel’s “shepherds” looked out for themselves and took advantage of the most vulnerable. So God indicted them: “The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them” (v. 4).

In Jesus’ day, the judgment of Ezekiel 34 was read aloud in synagogues during the Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication) season as a reminder of the wicked Israelite leaders who permitted false gods, idols, and foreign kings to lead God’s people away from trusting in Him.

Jesus probably heard Ezekiel 34 read during Hanukkah. It was during the Feast of Dedication when He announced, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:11). He was the ruler they had been waiting for. He was the promised One who would live by the true nature of God’s Law, embodying true justice and righteousness, as promised by the prophets (Isa. 9:6–7).

Unlike a number of Israel’s past shepherds, Jesus was selfless and uninterested in personal gain. Rather, He came to be the sacrificial Shepherd who would give His life for His people.

THE HUNGRY, THIRSTY, SICK, AND POOR all flocked to the One who sincerely cared for their physical welfare. Jesus’ response toward those who were suffering reflected the pure compassion of the Father that poured out on His people.

Even in His own grief over the beheading of His cousin, John the Baptist, Jesus selflessly ministered to His people, providing for their needs.

When word came of John’s death, Jesus retreated to an isolated place, probably to pray, considering His own death was imminent. Yet He turned His attention toward a large crowd full of the sick and needy, healing them of their illnesses.

His disciples urged Him to send the crowds into town to buy something to eat for themselves. Instead, moved by compassion, Jesus performed a miracle and fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish (Mt. 14:14–21; Mk. 6:34–44).

THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES were the guardians and interpreters of the Law in Jesus’ day. In their zeal to keep people from breaking the Law, they manufactured extra laws that became a heavy burden for anyone desiring to worship God, doing more to push people away from the Lord, rather than drawing them near.

They heaped manmade law after manmade law on the Jewish people, reveling in the accolades and praise of men. They displayed their righteousness like fine clothing, praying and tithing publicly so that all could see their devotion to God. They demanded more of the people than the Law required, often for their own personal benefit, and neglected the true responsibility of “justice and mercy and faith” (Mt. 23:23).

Seeing these unnecessary demands burdening His people, Jesus declared, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (11:29–30). His desire was to reconnect His people to the true character of the Father through justice, mercy, and faith.

Through His sacrifice and resurrection, Jesus Himself became our High Priest, reconciling to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob those who trust in Him.

Jesus truly loved the Jewish people. Although He was frustrated with Israel’s failed leaders, He healed His people, taught them, and wept over them. He was the true Shepherd who cared for His flock and loved it to the end.

Someday He will return and rule over Israel and the world with perfect justice as the eternal King of glory.

The next time you’re tempted to judge Jesus by the blunders of the church, examine His life from the Scriptures and see the genuine Jesus. When you do, perhaps you’ll begin to see that He is the true, divine Shepherd who loves you.
It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose, and therefore they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion; a striving of the bowels—a yearning of the innermost nature with pity.¹

In other words, no one was as compassionate as He.

Ancient Judaism fervently believed compassion to be one of God’s paramount virtues. Judaism teaches it is among the first of God’s 13 attributes of mercy mentioned in Exodus 34:6–7. These 13 attributes are so reassuring to Jewish people that they recite them in unison three times during the Jewish Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a 19th-century, British Baptist preacher, opened his great Christmas Eve sermon in 1914 with these words: “He was moved with compassion” (Mt. 9:36). Spurgeon continued:

This is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek.
For the Sorrowful

It is never easy to see a loved one die. The New Testament records three occasions when Jesus raised people from the dead: He raised Lazarus (Jn. 11), a widow’s son (Lk. 7:13–14), and Jairus’s daughter (8:49–55). Each time, He was moved by compassion.

The widow’s son was raised in the village of Nain (Hebrew for “pleasantness”). As Jesus approached the village gate, the pleasantness was overshadowed by the gloom of death. A young boy had died, and his body was being taken to the cemetery.

When the Lord saw the widow, He literally felt her pain and despair. Showing no dread of the greatest of all defilements under Jewish law—that of contact with the dead—Jesus walked to the bier, touched it, and said, “Young man, I say to you, arise” (7:14). The boy immediately sat up and began to speak. Jesus then gave him back to his mother.

Nain witnessed the fulfillment of an ancient set of prayers called the “Eighteen Benedictions.” The second benediction, recited daily, praises God because He alone revives the dead. It is no wonder the miracle at Nain stirred great fear as the crowds praised God. They recognized a mighty prophet had come; and they declared, “God has visited His people” (v. 16).

For the Sick

“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick” (Mt. 14:14). Healing was essential to Jesus’ ministry. It authenticated His Messiahship. The Gospel of Matthew is usually viewed as being written to Jewish people. So it is no wonder Jesus’ compassion is mentioned more times in Matthew than in any other Gospel.

Matthew emphasized Jesus’ kingship and authority. During an illness, the Jewish tradition is to read from the Psalms. Why? Because the great God of David, who is all-compassionate and who alone is the ultimate, authoritative King, can bring healing, according to His purposes.

In accordance with Jewish expectations, Jesus healed the sick for two main reasons:

1. To prove He was God in the flesh. Early in Israel’s history, the Lord made a covenant of healing with His people. He established the fact that only God, the great Physician, can heal: “for I am the LORD who heals you” (Ex. 15:26).

2. Jesus’ healing ministry sent a strong message that the same God who made the covenant of healing with the Jewish people now walked among them.

For Souls

In the ancient world, sheep were a major industry. Sheep and lambs are mentioned more times in the Bible than any other animal and sometimes symbolize God’s people.
The current situation in Nigeria is one of ongoing terrorist acts against Christians. . . . We cannot guarantee anyone’s personal safety. The risks are real and serious. Please print your name and sign below that you have read and understood this warning and are coming to Nigeria fully informed . . . of the risks to your personal safety.

I’m sorry, Mr. Johnson, but your life insurance application was rejected.”

When I asked why, the agent explained: “On the questionnaire, your answer about travel said you are going to Nigeria. That’s not considered a safe place right now. If you want to reapply after your trip, you can call me back then.”

As I hung up the phone, I remembered the waiver the mission organization had asked me to sign. It read, in part,

I wondered about the wisdom of the trip I was planning. What would my wife and my church think? We had heard that more than 1,000 Nigerians had died for Christ in 2012 and early 2013. Almost immediately, it was as if the Lord said, “Your missionary friends serve in Nigeria full time. Your Nigerian brothers and sisters live with such threats constantly. Surely, you can face some risk for 17 days.” I knew I could not let fear overtake me.

Today, remembering that July 2013 visit, I am so glad I made the trip. I went to encourage suffering Christians there. But God used them to encourage me.
The flight was tiring but good. The provost of the seminary where I would teach met a colleague and me at the airport in Abuja, the capital. The drive north to the school was three hours. Due to the dangers of traveling after dark, the driver hurried to arrive before sundown.

The next day was Sunday, and I attended the service at the Chapel Church on campus. The guest speaker was a Hausa pastor from farther north, where terrorist activity was strong. His message on the church at Ephesus from Revelation 2 explained that first-century Christians who refused to acknowledge Caesar as Lord were martyred.

“A true Christian is willing to die for Christ,” he declared.

If I had preached that message back home, people may have nodded—or yawned. Here, the mood was blood earnest since everyone knew that this pastor or members of his church could be the next to be killed for our Lord.

On Monday I was excited to finally meet my morning class: 31 eager students in Homiletics Practicum, the art of expository preaching. Most were already pastoring, and some traveled great distances for this summer module.

After three hours of teaching, it was time for chapel. It was prayer chapel, and one of the prayer requests was for the families of 26 students at another school who had just been killed.

Boko Haram terrorists had set fire to a dormitory and shot the Christian students as they evacuated. The prayers were heartfelt, recognized Jesus as Lord of the universe, and included requests for the salvation of the perpetrators.

I knew my wife probably heard about the murders, and it was important to email home that we were safe. I found Internet access and did so as soon as my afternoon Bible Study Methods class ended. My wife was grateful because she had heard on the radio about the killings at a Nigerian Christian school.

Another day in chapel, the assistant provost made a special announcement about parking for the few students who drove. “Yesterday, someone parked by the gate. You must park only in designated places because of terrorism,” he stated. Car bombings are frequent in Nigeria.

In so many ways, I was impressed by the dedication to Christ that living under persecution brings. The most frequent topic selected for practice sermons in homiletics workshops was how to face suffering and be true to Christ in the face of hardship.

I was also struck by the seriousness of the prayer requests. One student shared that he pastored farther north, where the local government was Muslim. He and the other Christian pastors in the area were told to pay a fine amounting to tens of thousands of dollars or their churches would be demolished. He asked prayer for wisdom about whether to borrow the money.

A young man in Bible Study Methods class was a public school teacher. He so longed to learn the Bible that he decided to attend summer school even though authorities warned him that if he went to the seminary, he would have no job when he returned. I felt unworthy to be teaching such dedicated students.

Despite persecution, the students and faculty displayed the joy and love of the Lord. They seemed genuinely encouraged by my coming. Each class gave me a full set of Nigerian clothes. Someone commented, “If I go to your country, I am called an African American. But if you come..."
here and wear our clothes, you are an American African.”

Biblical Christianity

On the second Sunday, a Nigerian faculty member took me to a church half an hour from campus. The church met at the Widow’s School. I learned that widows in Nigeria often find themselves without resources or livelihood, as the husband’s family frequently confiscates their belongings.

So the churches started a boarding school where widows and their children can live and be lovingly trained in marketable skills while getting back on their feet.

On the way to church, the young Ph.D. Old Testament professor asked me if I knew why Islam is so angry in Nigeria. “I would like to know,” I replied.

He explained that Christianity there is mostly biblically conservative and extremely evangelistic. “One hundred years ago,” he said, “there were almost no Christians in Nigeria. Today, the Christians outnumber the Muslims, with more Muslims turning to Christ all the time. They have no answer but terrorism, yet Christianity keeps on growing.”

I was also impressed with the thoughtful and sacrificial response of many Christians to the violence around them. It was a privilege to meet seminary Provost Dr. Sunday Agang, who has written extensively about living with violent persecution. He explained that some Christians see no recourse than to turn the other cheek, while others have begun to strike back.

Dr. Agang has lost loved ones to the violence; but he has also started a peacemaking relief organization that helps both Christian and Muslim widows and truly models overcoming evil with good (cf. Rom. 12:21).

Unforgettable

Due to my teaching schedule, I did not have much time for travel. However, I did get to visit Jos, a city where hundreds of Christians have been martyred in recent years. I also traveled through another village and saw burned-out houses. A few months before, Muslims were displeased by the outcome of a local election. So they went to a nearby mosque, armed themselves with weapons stored there, threw fire bombs at Christian homes, and began shooting everyone who tried to flee.

If we in the United States say we are not suffering, we speak as those who have forgotten our oneness with the body of Christ worldwide: “The members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:25–26).

Boko Haram killed 1,783 of our brethren in Nigeria in 2013 and another 1,631 in the first six months of 2014, according to International Christian Concern.

The visit to Nigeria took me out of my comfort zone, but I am forever grateful for the privilege of meeting precious members of Christ’s body there. I was humbled and inspired by their joyful commitment and how they live out biblical Christianity in the midst of deep affliction.

We need to learn from them. And we need to pray more earnestly for them.
A Reason for Living

Christmas is the season of love, friends, and family. A time to host large gatherings and hope your favorite gravy boat doesn’t end up a casualty. Or a time to go to the store and stock up on attractive paper plates in an effort to preserve your fine china.

However, if you brought home paper cups and found one had a hole in it, chances are you would judge it unworthy for use and condemn it to the trash. And no one would blame you.

In life we judge things constantly. Should an item we purchase be defective, we usually return it, exchange it, or get rid of it. And why not? After all, it did not do what it was created to do. But then, neither do we.

The Bible says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Dt. 6:5). But most people do not. We were created to love, honor, glorify, and enjoy God forever—to serve and worship the God of Israel.

Yet we wander around this world looking for meaning in life because we have lost ours. We do not do what we were created to do, so we find ourselves feeling empty and hollow—like cups with enormous holes.

Ironically, though we are defective, we still think it unfair of God to judge us. Yet we are His creation. He made us in His image to do His work and His will. However, mankind has failed to function as God intended: “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Eccl. 7:20). God has every right to judge us.

We would judge a defective cup, pronounce it a failure, and trash it. The cup gets the garbage; we get separation from God: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). We are headed for punishment we have rightly earned by our sinful actions.

God is not wrong to judge. He is righteous and just. Yet, praise Him, He does not look at us the way we look at the cup. He is merciful: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8).

Heaven requires perfection. Sin cannot be allowed in. However, rather than discard us, God sent us His Son, Jesus Christ. He loved us so much that, rather than give us what we deserve, He did for us what we could not do for ourselves: take the punishment for our failures and provide us with righteousness, “even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe” (3:22).

The paper cup has no intrinsic value, so it would be odd if someone said, “Little cup, I love you so much I don’t care that you don’t work. I am going to keep you and just use my hand to try to get little bits of water at a time.” But we have value to God. He made us in His image. He loves us and will always love us because His faithfulness endures forever. He refused to let us perish but told us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and we could be saved from our sins and our rightful punishment.

Now this is the grace of God: He goes above and beyond for us. Rather than let us remain broken, He made a way to fix us! “But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23, emphasis added).

If we take the defective paper cup and place it in a good cup, both work together to hold water. The broken cup then can function as intended, with help.

We need a lot of help. That is why God gave us Jesus. When we place our faith in Him alone, God no longer sees us as “broken.” He looks at us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He sees us “in Christ.” And once we are in Christ, we can do what He created us to do.

John 3:17 says, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” God has the right to judge us. However, it is His joy to forgive us.

It’s easy at Christmas to see the world as a better place: People are nicer. Stores are prettier. Families get together. Yet the sad truth is we are all broken. We are all sinners who need a Savior.

Jesus was not born as a Baby in Bethlehem so we could have figgy pudding and parties with friends and family, but that through Him and in Him we might have meaning and purpose. In Jesus we not only have a reason for the season but a reason for living and a peace in dying.

For unto us was born that day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (cf. Lk. 2:11). He lived the sinless life we could not live, so we could have a perfect sacrifice for sin. He paid the price we could not pay, so we could have forgiveness. He arose glorified, so we might obtain victory in Jesus and life everlasting.

Now, knowing what we know, how can we not love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, body, and strength?

by Andrea Anderson, a Christian writer who lives in New Jersey
On December 16, Jewish people around the world will light the first candle in the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah. This joyous holiday commemorates the cleansing of the second Temple in Jerusalem after Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV sacrificed a female pig to Zeus on the altar around 167 B.C. Antiochus, a type of the Antichrist, persecuted the Jewish people fiercely.

Hanukkah is referred to in Scripture as the Feast of Dedication (Jn. 10:22). Hanukkah gelt (money), dreidels (spinning tops), potato latkes (pancakes), and sufganiyot (jelly doughnuts), are all part of the modern celebration.
Latkes and sufganiyot are fried in oil because the story goes that when the Maccabees liberated the Temple, they found only a small cruse of consecrated oil that miraculously burned for eight days, giving them time to consecrate more.

Here are some wonderful photographs, taken by Israeli photographer Hanan Isachar, of Hanukkah in Israel. We wish all our Jewish friends a happy Hanukkah.
Spiritual Discernment

First-century believers were often inundated with heretical doctrine from people whom the Bible identifies as false teachers and false prophets.

At that time, there was no completed New Testament or a systematic theology to guide Christians away from error. Biblical doctrine was generally communicated orally by the apostles, elders, or other spokesmen within the church; and it was easy for unscrupulous false teachers to enter the fellowships, capture people’s hearts, and mislead believers. Therefore, it was necessary for Christians to acquire spiritual discernment to know whether they were hearing truth or error.

In 1 John 4:1–6, the apostle John gave believers guidelines so they could determine if a teacher was providing truth from God or lies from Satan.

Command to Test Spirits

John commanded Christians to test the spirits to see if they were from God: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test [examine] the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (v. 1).

Again, John expressed affection by calling his readers “Beloved” before issuing a strong warning against false teachers. The word spirit refers to the demonic spirit behind the lies of these false prophets. Believers should rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit in discerning whether someone is a false teacher.

They must “test the spirits” to determine if a teacher’s message is truly a revelation from God. The word test connotes a metallurgist who carefully examines a metal or coin to determine its authenticity, full weight, purity, and worth. The word is in the present tense, indicating a Christian should continually be evaluating every speaker’s words before embracing the message.

Jesus and the apostles Peter and Paul constantly warned the church to guard against false prophets (Mt. 7:15; 24:11; Acts 20:28–30; 2 Pet. 2:1).

The words false prophets could refer to men who falsely claim to be prophets, but most likely they mean individuals who speak falsely concerning Christ: They tell lies inspired by demonic spirits and claim their message is from God.

These anti-Christian teachers were mentioned in 1 John 2:18–19. Today they primarily would be teachers from cultic and occult groups propagating nonscriptural views of Jesus Christ.

Often Christians believe a speaker because of his or her position, credentials, authoritative tone, or acceptability in Christian circles. Yet it is mandatory that believers evaluate a speaker’s theology and teaching in light of God’s Word to discern whether he is from God.

Criterion for Testing Spirits

John provided the criteria every Christian should use to test the spirits:

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world (4:2–3).

In other words, where a teacher stands on Jesus’ divinity as the eternal Son of God who became a man is the conclusive test for whether he or she is a false teacher.

Belief in Christ’s incarnation is indispensable for true teachers. In fact, it is the doctrine by which all else within Christianity stands or falls (cf. 1:1–3). All teachers who are from God must believe and proclaim that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh.

All who refuse to “confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” possess “the spirit of the Antichrist” (4:3). There is no in-between. One who does not believe in or tries to diminish Christ’s deity or humanity is condemned as heretical and denounced as anti-Christian. John boldly declared that anyone who deviates from what he has taught is considered to possess the spirit of “Antichrist, which you [Christians in John’s day] have heard was coming, and is now already in the world” (v. 3).

If the apostle were here today, he would denounce heresies like the following:

- Gnosticism, which taught Jesus did not have a human form.
- Marcionism, which taught Christ did not come in a physical body.
- Cerinthianism, which denied Jesus’ divinity.
- Docetism, which taught Jesus only seemed to be human.
- Ebionitism, which taught Jesus was the Messiah but not divine.
- Monarchianism, which claimed Jesus was among the greatest of all men but was not divine.
• Arianism, which taught Christ did not always exist but was created and was therefore subordinate to God the Father.
• Apollinarianism, which said Christ was divine but not human.
• Nestorianism, which claimed there is no union between the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ.
• Eutychianism, which taught Christ had only one nature that was neither undeniably human nor undeniably divine.

Throughout the centuries, myriads of heresies would develop that deny either the humanity or deity of Jesus Christ.

Christianity's True Spirits

John reassured his readers and praised them for not yielding to the spirits speaking through pseudo prophets: “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (v. 4).

Again, the apostle spoke tenderly, addressing his readers as “little children” in the family of God and acknowledging their faith. John praised them for not succumbing to false teachers and expressing confidence that they would not be fooled. He also reminded them of the divine power they possessed through Jesus Christ—power administered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who strengthened them to overcome satanic lies and be victorious over false teachers.

The phrase have overcome is in the perfect tense, meaning that at a particular point, John’s readers recognized certain teachers were satanically motivated; and they continued to reject them as false teachers, remaining victorious over them.

These Christians overcame false teachers “because He who [was] in [them] is greater than he who is in the world.” John did not reveal to whom this phrase refers. Four interpretations are possible:

(1) God the Father (3:2).
(2) God the Father working through Christ (2:14; 3:1).
(3) God the Father and Son working through the Holy Spirit.
(4) The indwelling Holy Spirit alone.

All these teachings are true in countering the Devil and his evil world system.

Through His death on the cross, Christ disarmed, defeated, dethroned, destroyed, and doomed the Devil (cf. Heb. 2:14). However, God uses the indwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of believers to endow, equip, strengthen, teach, and lead them to victory over the Devil’s power and false teachers (cf. Jn. 14:16–17; 1 Jn. 2:27; 3:24; 4:2).

The word world refers to the invisible, evil, spiritual world system the Devil governs. He corrupts humanity’s values, attitudes, thoughts, and practices, leading people to rebel against the true and living God of Scripture; thus they oppose His plans.

John said false teachers, false prophets, and all their followers “are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them” (1 Jn. 4:5).

There is a marked distinction between false teachers and teachers from God. False teachers derive their beliefs and messages from the philosophy of this godless, Christ-rejecting world. Often they twist Scripture to make it say what it does not mean. Yet their teachings, viewpoints, and persuasive arguments seem logical to unbelievers, who “hear” and accept their message because it stimulates them to listen. Cults attract followers because their messages, no matter how far from the truth, appeal to the world’s ungodly desires and ambitions.

In contrast, God’s teachers draw their messages from the truth of Scripture. To the ungodly of this world, what they say often makes no sense. To them, preaching Christ as the God-Man who was crucified for the sins of humankind seems ridiculous. The message of faith in Christ as the only way to heaven is considered crude, offensive, a stumbling block, and foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18–31). Satan, the god of this age, has blinded the minds of those who do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4).

Today many cults rip Scripture from its context, twist it into saying what they want, and use it to justify their ungodly, detestable, unscriptural teaching.
The Wisdom of God (Part 4)

Daniel and the Handwriting on the Wall

The previous article focused on God’s distribution of wisdom to Daniel after he was taken captive to Babylon. God gave Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar a dream that disturbed him so much he could not sleep. Then God revealed to Daniel the dream’s content and meaning.

This article explains two more tests of the wisdom God gave Daniel. After Daniel described the king’s dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed he “fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel” and said, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret” (Dan. 2:46–47). Then he made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the kingdom’s wise men (vv. 48–49).

Daniel’s Second Test of Wisdom

Later King Nebuchadnezzar had another dream that frightened him (4:4–5). Because his pagan wise men could not interpret it, he asked Daniel to tell him the dream’s meaning. He told Daniel, “The Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you” (v. 9).

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was about a huge, strong tree that grew to the heavens and provided food for all living things. A holy being from heaven commanded the tree be chopped down and its branches cut off, but its stump and roots be left in the ground and bound with a band of iron and bronze. The voice from heaven then declared, “Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him” (vv. 10–16).

The purpose of the dream was “that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men” (v. 17).

Nebuchadnezzar restated his earlier directive to Daniel: “Declare its interpretation,” for “you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you” (v. 18).

Daniel explained that the huge, strong tree represented the king in his impressive greatness and ruling authority over extensive areas of the earth (vv. 20–22). The cutting down of the tree indicated Nebuchadnezzar would be cut off from ruling. The binding of the stump with bands of iron and bronze meant he would be bound with mental illness that would change his heart to that of a beast. He would be driven from his throne to graze in the open field with the animals, eat grass, and be wet with dew.

The condition would last for a period of “seven times” until Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (vv. 23–25).

The command to leave the tree’s stump and roots in the ground meant that, after Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged “that Heaven rules,” his kingdom would be restored to him (v. 26).

The Dream’s Fulfillment. The dream was fulfilled 12 months after Daniel interpreted it. Nebuchadnezzar was walking about the royal palace of Babylon, boasting, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (vv. 28–30).

While he was speaking, a voice from heaven declared,

King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses (vv. 31–32).

Immediately, “he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws” (v. 33).

Nebuchadnezzar’s Restoration. At the end of the appointed time, Nebuchadnezzar looked to heaven. His understanding returned to him; and he blessed, praised, and honored the Most High, everlasting God who is sovereign over the angels of heaven and all the inhabitants on Earth and who answers to no one (vv. 34–35).

The king was restored to his kingdom (v. 36) and pronounced the following benediction to God, whom Daniel introduced to him: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (v. 37).

Daniel’s Third Test of Wisdom

Nebuchadnezzar died on October 7, 562 B.C. After three other men ruled, Nabonidus became king of Babylon in 556 B.C. In 555 B.C. he marched an army westward to conquer rebels who had revolted against Babylonian rule since Nebuchadnezzar’s death. Before leaving Babylon, Nabonidus entrusted “kingship” to his eldest son, Belshazzar.

Eventually, Nabonidus built a royal palace in a distant town of the Arabian peninsula and settled there. As a result, Belshazzar became the
real authority in Babylon, the capital city of the Babylonian kingdom.5

Belshazzar's Feast. Belshazzar hosted a huge feast for 1,000 of his officials (5:1). He sat on an elevated platform where everyone could see him.6

After he got drunk, he demanded the vessels captured from Jehovah's Temple be brought to him from the Temple of Marduk, Babylon's chief pagan god. Belshazzar intended to use Jehovah's sacred vessels to praise the Babylonian gods while getting even drunker with his nobles, wives, and concubines.

Since the Temple of Marduk also held the sacred vessels of other conquered peoples, it appears Belshazzar chose to desecrate the vessels of Israel's God for three specific reasons:

1. Belshazzar would have known it was Israel's God who gave King Nebuchadnezzar the dream that foretold the Babylonian kingdom's downfall (Daniel 2).

2. Ancient sources reveal that Medo-Persian troops conquered the city of Babylon's environs four months before Belshazzar's feast.7 Babylonian officials at the feast had fled to the fortress city of Babylon as the Medo-Persian army advanced. Thus, when Belshazzar defiled Jehovah's vessels, the people whom God had foretold would capture Babylon were already encamped outside the capital city was cut off from help.

3. Nebuchadnezzar had made his capital "the world's mightiest fortress."8 The outer wall was so thick that no weapons could penetrate it. A second inner wall with fortress towers and ramparts made scaling it suicidal.9 Because the walls straddled the Euphrates River, the city had a constant supply of water.10 In addition, it was stocked with enough food to feed its population for more than 20 years.11 Ancient historians claimed these impressive preparations prompted the Babylonians to laugh at the Medo-Persian siege of their city.12

Consequently, it appears Belshazzar purposely chose to mock the God of Israel by showing his contempt for Him, His sacred vessels, and the dream He gave Nebuchadnezzar.

The Handwriting on the Wall. Suddenly the detached fingers of a man's hand appeared. They wrote three words near the top of a wall easily visible to Belshazzar and his guests.

The king became so frightened his face grew pale, his hip joints went slack, and his knees began to knock. He screamed for his wise men, but they could neither read nor interpret the writing, creating mass confusion for Belshazzar and his officials (vv. 5–9).

The Queen Mother's Suggestion. Hearing of the confusion in the banquet hall, the queen mother arrived and urged Belshazzar to summon Daniel to read and interpret the writing (vv. 10–12).

Daniel's Appearance. So the king called for Daniel. Before Daniel interpreted the writing, he told Belshazzar that, by desecrating Israel's sacred vessels, he had exalted himself against the very God who had humbled Nebuchadnezzar. Because of Belshazzar's arrogant contempt, God sent the mysterious fingers to write the ominous message (vv. 13–24).

Daniel's Interpretation. The mysterious words were MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. His interpretation was as follows: MENE meant "numbered" or "reckoned."13 It indicated God had numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and had reckoned that those days had come to their end.14 This word was written twice for emphasis.15 TEKEL meant "weighed."16 God had weighed Belshazzar in His balances and found him deficient in moral worth.17 PERES meant "broken" or "divided."18 It implied God would shatter Belshazzar's kingdom and give it to Medo-Persia (vv. 25–28).

The End of Belshazzar and Babylon. King Cyrus of Medo-Persia knew Babylon's defenses would prevent his troops from entering the city. He would need a unique strategy. So on October 13, 539 B.C.,19 the night of Belshazzar’s feast, the Medo-Persians diverted the Euphrates River from its normal channel under the city's walls. When the water was shallow enough to ford, they entered the river channel and walked underneath the walls into the city. They went directly to Belshazzar's banquet hall and killed him and many of his officials.20

The Babylonians were caught by surprise. Before they knew what was happening, the great city of Babylon had fallen to Medo-Persia without a major battle or destruction.21

ENDNOTES
3 Olmstead, 37.
4 Ibid., 38.
5 Ibid.
Intel to invest $6 billion in Israel

Intel will spend $6 billion to upgrade its Kiryat Gat chip manufacturing plant in one of the biggest single investments ever by a foreign company in Israel. The deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs.

Under the deal, Intel will get a grant of $300 million over five years and be eligible for a tax reduction over 10 years. Intel will guarantee to hire at least 1,000 workers and spend hundreds of millions of shekels on products and services in Israel.

Intel is by far the largest international firm operating in Israel. Over the past 40 years, the company has invested over $10 billion in Israel and employs some 10,000 people. According to a company official, about 30,000 Israelis are employed in companies that do business with Intel.

U.S. reportedly helped Hezbollah

Mohammed Afif, the new head of public relations for the Lebanese-based, Iranian-backed terror organization Hezbollah, gave a rare New York Times interview as Lebanese experts reveal his group is indirectly receiving American intelligence aid in its fight against Islamic State (ISIS).

The United States sent new weapons to the Lebanese army, which coordinates with Hezbollah. Likewise, U.S. intelligence has found its way to Hezbollah, according to Lebanese experts.

In contrast to the blase, indirect provision of intelligence and weapons to a terror group in Lebanon, U.S. President Barack Obama blocked a routine Hellfire missile shipment to Israel during Operation Protective Edge and ordered strict supervision on future transfers.

Hezbollah remains antagonistic to America over Syria, where it has joined Iran in supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad against the very rebels the U.S. is arming. However, the ISIS threat has indeed raised talk that the U.S. may even join forces with Hezbollah’s sponsor, Iran.

Afif blamed Americans for causing ISIS by supporting Syrian rebels, saying, “This beast which you raised up, as in past cases, you find it’s dangerous for you.”

Mossad seeks new recruits

The Mossad, Israel’s secret intelligence agency, has launched a new website in six languages to recruit men and women interested in covertly defending the Jewish state. The new site can be viewed in English, Hebrew, French, Russian, Arabic, and Farsi.

A statement announced, “The goal of the upgraded site is to make the organization more accessible to potential recruits who may not be exposed to the variety of positions—in operations, intelligence, technology and cyber, and administration—available.”

“The State of Israel has been—and remains—under daily, tangible threats,” said Mossad Director Tamir Pardo. “We must continue to recruit the best people into our ranks so that the Mossad might continue to lead, defend and allow for the continued existence of the State of Israel.”

WCC demands Israel release terrorists

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has called on Israel to release jailed terrorists, despite the severity of their crimes and the abundance of terrorists immediately returning to terror.

NGO Monitor notes that WCC is a collective of “347 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories” and wants to end Israel’s “illegal occupation.”

An event called World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, organized by the WCC’s Palestine Ecumenical Forum (PIEF), equates “Palestinian political prisoners”—including jailed terrorists—with the Jewish people leaving Egyptian oppression in biblical times.

The WCC calls for the release of all jailed terrorists, whitewashing their crimes. One such terrorist is listed by name in the PIEF dossier: Ayman Sharawna.

As a “political prisoner” being jailed by “the occupation,” Sharawna was arrested in 2002 for his role in multiple terrorist attacks, including a bombing in Be’er Sheva that wounded 18 people. He was released in the 2011 Gilad Shalit deal.

Sharawna was rearrested in 2012 after returning to terrorism with Hamas in Gaza but was released again in 2013. After his second release, he publicly announced his return to terror.

Yet the WCC lists Sharawna as the type of “political prisoner” whose release was an “achievement.”

Anti-missionaries lose lawsuit

The Eshel Hashomron Hotel in the Jewish town of Ariel in Samaria recently cancelled an “anti-missionary” conference and was sued for doing so.

The conference was organized by leading rabbis who have expressed concern over growing Christian and Messianic Jewish activity in the area. The rabbis characterize all such activity as “missionary” in nature. The case was dismissed by the Petah Tikvah district court.

In fact, what they label as “missionary activity” is not illegal in Israel. What is illegal is offering monetary reward as an incentive for conversion and attempting to convert minors. All other forms of sharing one’s faith are protected under Israel’s laws regarding freedom of religion.

Five-year high

Some 24,800 new immigrants arrived in Israel in the Jewish year 5774—a 28 percent increase over the year 5773 and the highest number of the past five years.

Immigration from France has more than doubled, from 2,650 in 5773 to approximately 6,000 in 5774, marking the first time in history more immigrants arrived from France than any other country.
Seven years of harassment and attacks by hard-line Muslims have finally forced a Palestinian church in East Jerusalem out of its building. Calvary Baptist Church moved out after Islamists threatened the landlord.

The persecution started immediately after the congregation moved there in 2007. First a Muslim attacked a member with a knife. Then someone tried to set the building on fire, said Pastor Steven Khoury. Next came vandalism and then physical attacks on children coming to church.

Twice before Muslims have forced the Jerusalem congregation to leave a building it was using for ministry.

Hard-line Muslims tend to be more tolerant of the ancient churches than evangelical ones that actively spread the message of Christ.

Khoury is no stranger to persecution. His father, a pastor, ministered in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. During that time, Khoury’s uncle, George Khoury, attended a three-day prayer conference and accepted Christ as his personal Savior. He became a changed man and the inspiration for the church established by the elder Khoury. George’s favorite verse was Matthew 16:25: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

The verse became prophetic when a neighbor began frantically knocking on George Khoury’s door one night. Muslims were trying to take an elderly man’s house from him by force. George took the man into his house to protect him and then walked outside to face the Muslims. They beat him to death with a metal rod.

“When they were beating him, they were saying, ‘It’s okay, he’s a Christian,’” Pastor Khoury said.

“If you’re a Christian living in an apartment or you’re a Muslim who has received Christ, it’s going to be very dangerous for you to do worship, music and Bible teachings in your apartment . . . because of threats and danger issues,” Steven Khoury said.

Yet Khoury said his congregation is determined to stay in Jerusalem and do what he feels God has called them to do.

_by Morning Star News_  
(morningstarnews.org)
A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Prov. 25:11).

Now that the Six-Day War [June 1968] is over, I was thinking the Arabs may leave us alone. But it is not so. They are preparing much trouble. I was away for three days with my military unit but was not given the joy of home or family for I am again called up to patrol in Jerusalem to look for mines in the city.

The Arabs try to sneak mines in all the time. Trying to locate them is a dangerous job. The Arabs plant grenades, mines, and time bombs. When we discover one, we must dismantle it right away; and that can mean the last moment of your life.

I am tired of war. For 10 years I have been under arms all the time. So far the Lord has spared me. But how soon will my time come?

I went on patrol along the dark streets of Jerusalem with a partner, and we went to Mea Shearim, the quarter where the ultra-Orthodox live. It was 3 A.M. I was exhausted from a night of patrolling.

Suddenly, I heard the cry, “Steht auf zu Sliches!” meaning “Get up to say the prayers of repentance,” the customary prayers before the Day of Atonement.

As the men shouted, they knocked on every door and called people to go to the synagogue. When they noticed us, they invited us for a cup of tea. We gladly went inside to warm our chilled bones.

After I had my tea and listened for a while, one of the ultra-Orthodox men asked whether we were also going to the synagogue for the prayers of repentance. “No, I do not say the prayers of repentance because I don’t need to,” I told them. “I have asked the Lord to forgive me, and He died once for all.”

The man said to me, “You talk like a goy [Gentile].”

I said to him, “All night I have been patrolling the streets and guarding you so that you could sleep without fear and be able to go to the Wailing Wall or the synagogue to pray when you want.”

His wife asked me, “Are you without faith?”

“No,” I replied. “I have faith, and I believe in the living God as revealed by the prophets.”

The man then said, “There is something about you I don’t like. I can smell a rat.”

“Well,” I said, “Just to relieve your mind, I will tell you straight out I am a Messianic Jew. I believe in the Messiah.”

As soon as he heard that, he screamed, “Gevallt! [horrors]. Whom did I invite into my house?”

I replied, “Maybe it was the Lord’s guidance so that you might hear the truth.”

“What have you done?” he said. “It is not too late. You can still repent.”
He asked me how it happened that I came to believe like a goy. I told him my whole story and how I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and in what darkness I lived before I found Him. He took out a big red handkerchief, about a square yard in size, and started wiping away his sweat. As long as I spoke, there was perfect silence. When I finished, I asked his wife, “Would you please give me another cup of tea?”

As I drank the second cup of tea, I continued my testimony. “Now that you have heard me, are you still going to the synagogue to repeat your customary prayers and offer a rooster for a sacrifice?”

The Orthodox have a ceremony called kapparot, or kappores, where a chicken or rooster is swung over their heads while they pray, “This is my exchange. This is my substitute. This is my atonement. This chicken will die, but I will have a long life and peace.” Then the chicken is slaughtered.

The man said to his wife, “What do you say to this?”

She answered, “I am asking you that question. You were the one who invited him. Why don’t you answer him?”

He said, “I will give my answer to the newspapers, and you are going to read about it.” I told him I would be honored if he told all of Israel about me.

Then I said goodbye and continued patrolling the streets so that they could continue going to the synagogue and offer prayers of repentance.

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

Please continue to pray for Zvi and Naomi Kalisher in Jerusalem. Also, please pray for their grandchildren in the Israel Defense Forces.

Zvi Kalisher has lived in Israel since 1946 and has been a columnist for Israel My Glory since 1959.

VISIT OUR WEB STORE!

There’s Never Been A Better Time To Visit Us. Stop By Today!

WWW.FOI.ORG

A Remarkable, soul-searching commentary on the important book of Romans.

To find out more

by Dr. Alva J. McClain, founding president of Grace Theological Seminary

This outstanding, doctrinally sound work divides Romans into four sections: condemnation, salvation, vindication, exhortation.

Each section deals with a specific subject, answers a great question, and presents a clear revelation of God.

Sign up for the Up Close With FOI e-newsletter to receive occasional e-mails regarding the latest on upcoming conferences, special events, new product announcements, and opportunities to show your solidarity with the Jewish community.
Our new 2015 children’s calendars, *Journey Through the Bible*, are one of a kind! They’ve been completely redesigned to do what no other calendars do . . . teach Genesis 1–11 in a colorful, fun format. They’re great for youngsters learning to read a calendar. And they’ll help them grow in God’s Word.

Our *Israel in Focus* calendars are as beautiful as ever, with breathtaking pictures of the Holy Land.

**MIX AND MATCH AND STOCK UP TODAY!**

**JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE: Y15 | ISRAEL IN FOCUS: Y15B**

$7* each; 3 for $19*; 10 or more, $6* each.

Order online at foi.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us at 1.800.345.8461 (USA) | 1.888.664.2584 (CANADA) *Additional shipping charges apply. In Canada/Australia, prices include hst/gst.

© 2014 The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099