Israel My Glory

IN THIS ISSUE

Then They Came for Me
by Elwood McQuaid ........................................ 8
When an American public school feels comfortable staging a hostage drill that makes Christians the terrorists, can something more sinister be far behind?

The Lie
by Herb Hirt ................................................ 12
Did you ever become angry with God because you asked for something He did not give you? Then perhaps you’ve bought into the biggest fairy tale of all.

Facing the ‘Lion’
by Peter Colón ............................................ 16
The lions of Tsavo devoured men. Fierce and stealthy, they showed complete contempt for people, except as food. We, too, face a vicious adversary. And here are our keys to victory.

The Coming Counterfeit
by James A. Showers ...................................... 18
He will rule the world. He will deceive billions. He will demand to be worshiped. He will try to annihilate Israel. And he may be coming soon.

Prince of Heresy: The Mystery of Simon of Samaria
by Craig L. Parshall ...................................... 24
A false spirituality has grabbed hold of modern culture. Liberal theology accepts almost anything these days, including some surprising heresies.

ABOUT THE ISSUE

It wasn’t many years ago when talk of the Devil, evil, and the concept of a satanically imbued, future Antichrist was regarded as outside the material, scientifically verifiable sphere and, therefore, was nonsense. But times have changed. And one does not have to journey to a Third World, voodooistic culture to explore spiritism, Devil worship, and extrasensory perceptions. Mediums, seers, channelers, spiritualists, and folks who “chat” with the dearly departed now swim in the mainstream of modern Western life. In this issue, our authors take us on a journey into biblical truth about the reality of sin, Satan, and the coming one whom the Bible calls the Antichrist. It is vital to know the facts—and they’re all in the Bible.

(Cover: digital composition, Thomas E. Williams)

ALSO FEATURING

From Bill Sutter’s Desk .................................. 4
Eye on the Middle East .................................. 5
Editorial ................................................... 6
They Cry in Silence ..................................... 11
Beware the Lies of the Devil ......................... 22
Dealing With the Devil ................................. 27
The Master Deceiver’s Handiwork .................. 28
What’s in a Name? Everything! ..................... 30
Welcome to Vermont .................................... 31
David and the Adversary ............................... 31
The Book of Jonah ....................................... 32
The Foundations of Faith ............................... 34
A Madrassa Grows in Brooklyn ..................... 36
One God, Three Entities (Part 3) ................... 38
Israel in the News ....................................... 40
Look Who’s Talking ..................................... 41
Zvi .......................................................... 42

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Zionism is belief in and support of Israel as the God-given homeland of the Jewish people. As Christians, we understand that our Zionist beliefs are firmly rooted in the Bible as God’s sure revelation. Specifically, the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12 presents God’s promise to raise up a special people—the Jewish people—and give them a particular land, the land of Israel. The boundaries of this Land of Promise are recorded in Genesis 15. Confirmations of God’s promise were given to Isaac in Genesis 17 and to Jacob in Genesis 28.

Christians who are compelled by their faith to speak up on Israel’s behalf are increasingly being sought by Jewish groups that provide opportunities to work for the State of Israel and serve with the Jewish people. Following are several Jewish organizations that welcome the help of Christians.

CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, is a media-monitoring organization that responds to inaccurate and distorted news coverage of Israel and the Middle East. Misinformation about the Jewish state has also surfaced in professional journals, encyclopedias, travel guides, and even dictionaries.

CAMERA is recruiting Christians to join it in monitoring the media and helping to set the record straight on distortions or inaccuracies and blatant anti-Israel and anti-Jewish prejudice. Two New Jersey residents, Sharon Stone and Gladys Carden, said recently they joined a CAMERA media watch team in southern New Jersey because of their “genuine love for the Jewish people” and their concern for accurate news coverage “about the people we love.”

Volunteers are encouraged to write letters for publication in newspapers and magazines (including online) and to communicate with responsible parties in the broadcast industry, particularly radio and television. A variety of CAMERA publications, action alerts, and e-mail informational releases also support these activities.

To contact CAMERA and learn how you can participate, log on to www.camera.org, or call CAMERA at 617-789-3672.

AIPAC, the America Israel Public Affairs Committee, the largest and most influential Jewish, pro-Israel organization in America, is encouraging Christians to participate in its activities. Friends of Israel worker Jonathan Craft serves as an AIPAC delegate from his state of Nevada. According to Jonathan, “AIPAC is a tangible way for us as Christians to put feet to our support for Israel.”

With the support of its members nationwide, AIPAC works on a bipartisan basis with members of Congress and representatives of the administration on numerous important initiatives related to the Jewish state.

These include aid to Israel, prohibitions in aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, condemnations of Iran for its declared nuclear intentions and threats to Israel, and passing congressional resolutions supporting Israel’s right to self-defense. AIPAC is relentless in its work to ensure that the U.S.-Israel relationship remains strong and vital.

You can obtain information about becoming active with AIPAC in your state or nationally by accessing the Web site www.AIPAC.org or by phoning 202-639-5200.

Sar-El, the Volunteers for Israel program in the United States and 30 countries worldwide, brings volunteers to Israel for two and three weeks of service. Work projects are typically with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and may include assignments in food service, warehouses, and hospitals.

Many of the volunteers are Bible-believing Christians for whom volunteer service in Israel is a fitting expression of their Christian Zionism. One of these is Dr. Wesley Walker from California who has participated in 13 stints of volunteer service since 2000. Dr. Walker shares, “I support God’s plan for Israel . . . and have a deeper love for the country and the people.”

Detailed information on the Sar-El Volunteers for Israel program, including a program application, may be found at www.vfi-usa.org or by calling Jeanne S. Schachter at 888-473-6527.

William E. Sutter is executive director of The Friends of Israel.
Speaking at a National Jewish Democratic Council conference, the candidate had the following to say:

The United States “cannot ask Israel to take risks with respect to its security. But it can ask Israel to say that it is still possible for us to allow more than just this status quo of fear, terror, division,” the onus to make these all stop is on Israel’s back. It is interesting that the Palestinians did not get the nod to meet Israel and most of the civilized world half way. Also noteworthy is the assumption that two states living side by side in peace is what “everybody wants.”

And although the speaker received a round of applause from his audience, there was not a flicker of a hint as to how he proposes to offer a solution that would lend credibility to what he said.

We can presume that, in “asking” Israel “to say it’s still possible for us to allow more than just this status quo of fear, terror, division,” the onus to make these all stop is on Israel’s back. It is interesting that the Palestinians did not get the nod to meet Israel and most of the civilized world half way. Also noteworthy is the assumption that two states living side by side in peace is what “everybody wants.”

The truth is that everybody does not want two states living side by side in peace. Intractable Islamists, as represented in the Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA), have no intention of living side by side with Israel in peace. Virtually every day they say that they live to see Israel destroyed and a Muslim state established on its grave. It is somewhat embarrassing to realize that some of our leaders are so out of touch with the facts—and with what the Islamic leadership itself says it plans to do—that they insist on putting words in Muslim mouths.

Is there a congenital blindness to the daily barrage of Kassam rockets falling on Israeli towns and villages? Is there tacit justification in the scores of attempts to send suicide bombers into Israeli cities? Is no one listening to what is being said on PA television or printed in PA textbooks that teach a deadly form of incitement to kill indiscriminately for the glory of Allah?

Recently an online video showed the variety of activities being carried on by the Israel Defense Forces. It showed Israeli soldiers carrying wounded comrades to field hospitals, manning military equipment, and doing what armies are called on to do in their daily routines and crisis situations. Most striking were the faces of these young soldiers. They were not the faces of fanatics. They are, in fact, the cream of Israeli society; and they are just kids, like yours and mine, who are willing to lay it all on the line for the survival of their country.

So in our discussions about how to achieve peace, let politicians and all the rest of us level the playing field and stick to the “art of the possible.”

by Elwood McQuaid
Emissaries of the Devil

For more than 2,000 years, the great imitation has gone on. And over the same period, millions upon millions have placed their hopes for health, happiness, economic prosperity, and communion with deity in the hands of a parade of false messiahs—self-ordained saviors cut more from the image of the coming Antichrist than from the true and living God. These are men who bear all the attributes of “the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world” (1 Jn. 4:3).

Of relatively recent vintage was a man calling himself Rev. General Jealous Divine (1880–1965), who emphatically declared that he was God. And although he rallied a reported 2 million people to adopt him as the immortal Father Divine, he nevertheless kept the appointment all mortals must keep: He died and reckoned with the judgment to come. A portion of Divine’s legacy lived on in the teachings of another infamous false messiah, Jim Jones, who made the claim of being the reincarnation of Father Divine. Jones even based some of his doctrines on Divine’s preposterous teachings. Yes, this was the same Antichrist look-alike who led some 900 “believers” to a Kool-Aid-laced death at Jonestown in the jungles of Guyana in 1978.

Now a new contender for messiah has entered the fray. The latest to claim, “I’ve met God and he is me” is Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda, a 60-year-old Puerto Rican-born immigrant who operates from his Growing in Grace Church in Doral, a suburb of Miami, Florida. For starters, Miranda declares, “I am the second coming of Christ, that messiah that they’ve been waiting for. . . . He came and he disappeared in me. He integrates me. Since then I’ve been teaching mysteries in the Bible.”

It may not, therefore, be surprising that the self-anointed messiah would come up with some ideas that the masses are waiting to hear, namely, that there is no devil and no sin. He says Jesus took that all away. In answer to a question posed by CNN’s John Zarrella, “messiah” Miranda said emphatically that he is “much greater” than Jesus of Nazareth because he is doing greater things than Jesus did. He also says he will not die: “No, no, I will not die even if you tried to kill me.”

So, in his no-devil and no-sin scheme of things, what is Miranda’s opinion of churches and their message? “I’m so tired of the lies of so-called Christians today because if they call you a sinner, we feel hurt that someone would call you a sinner because Jesus died for sins; it’s very contradictory that someone would call you a sinner.”

In claiming that his followers are God’s true chosen people—a burgeoning “super race”—Miranda reportedly declares his purpose to be “to close down every church so the true church can begin. You could say I’m leading the greatest reformation that has ever happened.”

So much for the Jesus/God segment of his teaching. In stage two, the pseudo messiah has taken on another persona by titling himself the Antichrist. Justification for this particular label is that he and his followers are antichrists because their teachings supersede those of Jesus Christ. Consequently, Miranda sports a 666 tattoo, and his followers are often found standing in line at tattoo parlors waiting to be body-etched with 666.

Now claiming followers in the millions, particularly in Central and South America, Miranda says he is worshiped as God in some 30 countries.

Of course, the bottom line in all of this is that Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda is merely one more charlatan who, in his turn, will die. With him will go his over-inflated ego, his pockets full of personal enrichment, and the dashed hopes of those whom he deluded—a tragic scenario that will undoubtedly be repeated numerous times in the future with the same debilitating effect.

What we can learn from this episode is the reality of an insidious, satanic program of deception and delusion that is emblematic of the closing days of history as we know it. And we can say with certainty that we have been warned sufficiently to avoid being snared by men claiming to be God’s messengers, while in reality they are agents of the Devil. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber (2 Pet. 2:1–3).

The Devil is alive, but he is by no means well. And he imparts his insidious sickness of soul to his innumerable emissaries who even today stalk the planet in search of people who are willing to believe a lie. ⋆
TIME TO RENEW?

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The headline read, “New Jersey School Stages Practice Hostage Drill—Portrays Killers as Fundamentalist Christians.” This was not something out of a Michael Moore movie. It was, according to news reports, a real-time drill staged to prepare local agencies to handle another Columbine. That, you will remember, is when two students shot up their local high school outside Denver, Colorado, in 1999, killing 13 people and wounding 24 others.

Burlington School Superintendent Chris Manno praised the New Jersey drill saying, “You perform as you practice. We need to practice under conditions as real as possible in order to evaluate our procedures and plans so that they’re as effective as possible.”

However, this drill should have sent a chilling message to conservative Christians because the hostage-taking attackers were depicted as “members of a right-wing fundamentalist group called the ‘New Crusaders.’” According to an article by David Levinsky in the March 23 Burlington (NJ) County Times, the “Christian gunmen” were “seeking justice because the daughter of one had been expelled for praying before class.”

In response to the “disaster,” faculty, local emergency personnel, and county officers were dispatched to rescue the “hostages” and evacuate the building.

While county officials praised the exercise as the first live test of their ability to respond to extremist attacks, they ignored the fact that praying before class is not only lawful but the right of every student regardless of religion. Bob Pawson, national coordinator of the Scriptures in Schools Project, contested
the claim that the drill anticipated a possible reality when in essence it was nothing of the sort. Pawson, a New Jersey public school teacher, called the drill an excuse to denigrate Christians with “a grotesque scenario saturated with Christian-bashing prejudice and bigotry; a scenario which could never possibly occur.”

The incident, thoroughly unsophisticated in its bigotry, was hatched from a secularist culture of hatred for Christians, which allows such vicious episodes to be considered acceptable in some circles. After all, all evangelicals are regularly savaged and ridiculed without consequences. So it is no surprise that the national news media takes little note of such incidents.

Silence from the left-leaning Fourth Estate has prevailed for so long that few are surprised or outraged at the lack of balanced reporting when such events transpire. It’s simply the same story one more time. Why, however, are more evangelicals not sounding an alarm over where this phenomenon is taking us? Have we become self-inflicted victims of tunnel vision? Or are most evangelicals so uninformed that they are ignorant of the serious problems looming over the horizon? Perhaps this is why many Western Christians have developed the tunnel vision that extremely limits their perception of what it means to taste the type of suffering that occurs outside the reality of their own experiences.

But there is a world of suffering out there where believers know precisely what Paul was talking about. They experience it every day. There is Darfur, Southern Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Eritrea, India, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Iraq, China, Vietnam, Somalia—and a list too long to register—where death, starvation, unspeakable atrocities, and rotting jail cells are the cost of being a Christian.

Yet there is a virtual pale of silence on the subject among evangelicals. Why? Have we chosen to live in a state of denial? Is there no spirit of caring for those who exist outside our little circles of life? Do we choose to live in blissful ignorance instead of living with the truth of what our world is coming to? As painful as it may be, we will all one day be forced to face our obligations. Like it or not, the tide is running toward us; and there is no way to escape it.

A Lack of Context

A problem we must address is what one might call a lack of historical and cultural context. For example, the apostle Paul in his epistles repeatedly referred to the suffering of fellow believers: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29).

The apostle was speaking to people who lived every day with severe persecution and suffering for their faith in Christ. Theirs was a world dominated by pagan forces dedicated to wiping them out by every means possible. In the West, our situation is different. So far, we are safe, are comfortable, and live in relatively stable conditions. Thus we tend to relate passages concerning biblical suffering to our existing circumstances, which are trivial by comparison. The persecution experienced by the early church cannot be reduced to merely sniping criticism or social shunning at the hands of those who found faith in Christ distasteful.

Also, we seem inclined to internalize the concept of suffering and relate it to a transient, personal state of mind that, while unpleasant, cannot compare with the biblical situation. Perhaps this is why many Western Christians have developed the tunnel vision that extremely limits their perception of what it means to taste the type of suffering that occurs outside the reality of their own experiences.

When the Moral Compass Is Broken

In America, we have lately become fragmented by arguments over what constitutes acceptable conduct and conversation and which elements in the culture are granted a pass on reprehensible, offensive behavior. And while journalists huff and puff over solutions to our problems to suit all parties, it is safe to say the problems will not likely be corrected because there is now no moral compass by which to set a corrective course. Morally and functionally, it is every man for himself; and everything goes, as long as it makes a profit.

In the Western world, standards of proper conduct were established and maintained on a Judeo-Christian foundation. That foundation has been the cornerstone of success for the democratic process. The radical Cultural Revolution, however, has jackhammered away much of that foundation. To the purveyors of indecency and social and moral degradation, the only standards and rules that apply are those that they fashion themselves. There are no prescribed standards and absolutes. Thus, with a considerable assist from liberal theologians, the proverbial applecart has been overturned; and the so-called bigots and intolerant pockets of resistance are now identified as those of us who fear God and don’t fit the mold of politically correct conformity.

Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to create a fantasy of fundamental, right-wing, wild-eyed Christian hostage-takers and call it an “as real as possible” example of a situation that would require SWAT teams to subdue. Say the same about any other group or minority on the planet, and you’d spend the rest of your life in court or hiding out to escape lifetime social detention.

A Lesson From History

On April 15, 2007, Israelis and Jewish people the world over paused to observe Holocaust Remembrance Day. Thousands gathered at the memorial to the Holocaust at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for the commemoration. As always, the theme was quite properly “Never Again.”

Ironically, at the same time, there was a move in some schools in Great
Equally disturbing is a report that the UK has decided to stop using the term war on terror. The reason given is that it strengthens terrorists by making them feel part of a larger struggle. British International Development Secretary Hilary Benn reasons that terrorists are not an organized enemy with a clear identity and a “coherent set of objectives.” Rather, said Benn, they are a “small number of loose, shifting and disparate groups who have relatively little in common apart from their identification with others who share their distorted view of the world and their idea of being a part of something bigger.”

In other words, we’ve badly overstated the case and there is no global war of terror. We’re simply dealing with a ragtag band of misfit thugs who want to puff up their own egos through our use of the term. Not only is such a view an extreme case of denial, but it also will reap dire consequences for those ostrich-like thinkers who insist on thrusting their heads into the sand.

So What’s the Message?

First, we must recognize that we do not live in a tolerant, loving, caring, want-to-do-the-right-thing world. In fact, much of humanity doesn’t have a clue about such niceties. And hostility toward serious believers is growing more intense each day.

Second, we cannot create Christian cocoons, or safe zones, that minister only to those we can touch or feel. We must have a coherent understanding not only of the needs of those in our circles—be it church, family, or friends—but of conditions outside our immediate spheres. To have a “worldview,” one must be exposed to the

continued on page 14
Freedom of speech is not a right for Christians in many parts of the Muslim world. Compass News Direct has reported a gruesome example of the price Christians in a host of countries pay to express themselves.

On April 18 five young Muslim radicals stormed a Christian publishing office in southeastern Turkey and took the three Christians there hostage. After binding them to chairs, the attackers methodically dismembered them alive, cut their throats, and then attempted to flee. Two of the victims—Necati Aydin, 36, and Ugur Yuksel, 32—were Turkish converts from Islam. Tilmann Geske, 46, was a German citizen.

Under police interrogation, all five of the attackers admitted responsibility, saying they were motivated by “nationalistic and religious feelings . . . We did this for our country. They [Christians] are attacking our religion.”

Although the men claimed they had slain the Christians in defense of their country, Turkish authorities failed to agree or justify the atrocity as having anything to do with patriotism. Government leaders quickly denounced the murders and promised a full investigation.

According to Turkish law, it is perfectly legal to evangelize as long as there are no proven political motives. However, in spite of government guarantees, some officials have been accused of turning a blind eye to hostility against non-Muslims and even openly criticizing missionary activities. Questions have also been raised over the reluctance of local police and prosecutors to investigate threats and vandalism against Christians and churches.

Patriotism and love of country are not at the root of such outrageous behavior. The root is religion—in this case, Islamic fanaticism. There exists in almost every country violent people who are willing and even eager to slaughter innocent Christians. This fact is especially true of those who are professedly aggrieved by others who have left religions they did not choose for themselves but, rather, were born into and therefore considered adherents for life—like it or not.

For radical Islamists, choosing Christ and Christianity is a capital offense punishable by death; thus the motivation for such infamous acts as the bloody murders in Turkey.

These self-appointed protectors of Islam are willing to attack and destroy as they see fit, all in the name of their religion. Therefore, with the surge of an international crusade to establish a global, Islamic caliphate, few safe havens now remain.

Nowhere are Christian leaders issuing religious decrees (fatwas) against offenders of Christ and the church. It is ours, rather, to encircle our believing family worldwide with prayer and tangible acts of love and mercy to show the world that Christ and Allah are not the same. And neither are their followers.
One of the best-known names in filmmaking for children is that of the late Walt Disney. By bringing to life such great children’s stories as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Pinocchio, Disney promoted the idea that all your hopes and dreams would come true if you simply wished hard enough, worked hard enough, or received a little help from an outside source—like a fairy godmother.

It was not altogether a bad message, providing we understand that Disney dealt with fairy tales. But it implied that some kind of benevolent force or power exists out there to make our wishes come true. This is an extremely childlike approach to the reality of life; but unconsciously, it has become modern America’s standard understanding of God: that He exists only to make our dreams come true.

That, of course, is a lie. God does not exist to make our dreams come true. Nor does He exist so that we may be fulfilled or happy.

But, you may ask, “Doesn’t God love me so much that Jesus His Son died for me?” Yes, absolutely. God’s love is not the issue. It is our self-image that is the problem: We think we deserve God’s love, believing we are special.

The apostle Paul wrote, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). The point of this verse is not merely God’s love, but our sin. God loves us despite our sin and the fact that we are sinners. To skip over this aspect of the gospel is to embrace a lie about ourselves that contends we are basically good, merely a little off track; but with God’s help, we can make our dreams come true. This idea is truly a fairy tale.

The Deception

Paul told the Roman church that fallen mankind “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (1:25). Paul was referring to Genesis 3 in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent deceived Eve and she and Adam ate of the forbidden tree and sinned. What was the nature of the serpent’s deception? It involved three lies: (1) that God’s Word concerning the consequence of death was untrue, (2) that God was not to be
trusted and did not have mankind’s best interests at heart, and (3) that man could become like God (Gen. 3:1–7).

The awful result of Adam’s sin was not only that God’s Word was fulfilled, as death then entered the human race, but that mankind’s nature became depraved in heart, mind, and body—total depravity (Rom. 1:18–3:18). Consequently, everyone is born spiritually separated from God, and every concept we have about God and ourselves—apart from God’s revelation of the truth through Jesus Christ—is self-deception and a lie. We are helpless to save ourselves because we not only lack the ability, but we are at the same time self-deceived into thinking that we can save ourselves and that we are not so bad.

Paul wrote that fallen humanity now worships “the creature,” rather than the Creator. The phrase the creature here probably means “created things,” as referred to in Romans 1:23: “an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” Paul, of course, had in mind idolatry, which was rampant in the Roman Empire. We would like to think that, in the Western world, we are past idolatry; some would even like to think we are past “religion.” But if one no longer worships actual idols or an invisible God, all that remains is humanity. Today, in Western circles at least, man is understood as the only savior of mankind. This view is truly self-deception.

The Kosmos

The apostle John referred to “the world” (Greek, kosmos) in a special sense. He did not mean the physical creation per se but, rather, the spirit of the beings in the world—Satan, demons, and mankind—who are in rebellion against God (Eph. 2:1–3). Satan is so deceptive, however, that he either plays on man’s pride to create self-aggrandizing religions or he inculcates the idea that people do not need God and can save themselves, both physically and spiritually.

The essence of this deception is that people are not really sinners (1 Jn. 1:5–2:2). John described “the world” as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (2:16). This last characteristic, “the pride of life,” is the one that prompts people to say to God, “I don’t need you. I can do it on my own.” This, of course, is the lie from Genesis 3 (cf. Jn. 8:44).

John warned believers not to love the world, for anyone who loves the world does not love God (1 Jn. 2:15). Any notion that we can approach God with any type of essential worthiness of our own is a lie. The wonderful truth, however, is that if we come to Jesus Christ honestly, confessing our personal sin and helplessness, He will forgive and cleanse us based on His work on the cross (1 Jn. 1:9–2:2). But if we do not realize how helpless we really are, we actually minimize the full atonement that Christ has brought through His death.

The danger of Christians thinking that somehow Christ died for us because we deserved to be saved perverts the gospel. Not only does that position minimize our defects as humans, but it also reduces the magnitude of God’s grace to us. The definition of grace is “undeserved favor.” Unfortunately, many people see God’s grace as merited, thinking, We are really good people at heart; we’re only human and not perfect. However, the gospel of Christ is not only that we are separated from God spiritually but that we also are evil, self-deceived, self-centered, selfish individuals who dare think we deserve something from Him.

Beating the Curse

The failure of the “isms” (Communism, Nazism, etc.) in the 20th century initially led to worldwide despair, especially when it looked like a nuclear holocaust was imminent. After all, it seemed evident that mankind was not getting better and better every day. Unfortunately for the Western world, this loss of hope in civilization’s progress was tied to a sort of Christian Postmillennialism, so Western society’s failure to bring peace and progress to humanity was also seen as a failure of the Christian model for Western civilization. Today, in our post-Christian, postmodern world, people have lost hope of finding ultimate truth in Christian morality and scientific progress.

Finding objective truth—something outside of mankind—is now deemed a false hope. So a consortium of science and humanism has replaced objective truth. And this consortium sees mankind as in control of its destiny and scientifically able to eventually defeat the ultimate enemy: death. In this new consortium, religion—or the belief in
God or a Savior outside of humanity—is seen as the root of all evil.1

As we saw back in Genesis 3, the consequence of sin is death, not merely spiritual separation from God but also the certainty of physical death. One does not have to probe too deeply into the world of human science to see that the goal today is to “beat the curse.” Through genetic and DNA manipulation, scientists want not only to eradicate disease but ultimately to enable individuals to live forever.2

Of course, reducing human suffering through science has been the calling of the medical profession since Hippocrates. In and of itself, this goal is good. But in the new humanistic model, compassion for humanity is not derived from a respect for individuals as made in the image of God, for there is no God. Rather, it is derived from a purely utilitarian approach: survival.

After Adam and Eve’s fall, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden and so from the Tree of Life. The theology is that God saw that the worst thing for fallen humanity would be to live forever in a fallen state by having access to the Tree of Life. Therefore, it was best that man be driven from the Garden, then given the opportunity to repent and restore his relationship with God, and then die physically with the hope of resurrection to a new, glorified body. Living forever in a fallen body is not salvation. It does not beat death, for fallen man is eternally dead in his heart no matter how long he physically lives.

The Gospel

In explaining the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17), the apostle Paul spent the first part of his explanation arguing that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23).

Without understanding not only our spiritual separation from God but also our own depravity, we will never truly understand God’s grace to us. The gospel states that an individual’s faith in Christ’s work of atonement satisfies God’s wrath concerning his or her sin so that these individuals can be justified in God’s sight. Moreover, God also creates in each of them a new person with a new heart through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. In other words, God’s salvation goes to the root of our problem as humans; it handles not only the guilt of our sin, but also the source of our sin: our depraved hearts.

Our faith in Christ involves the belief that He not only can save sinners through His death, but that He also can make our spiritually dead hearts eternally alive through the power of His resurrection (6:1–11). Believers then look forward to Christ’s coming, when sin and death will be totally eradicated from our lives. God’s salvation ultimately regenerates all of our depravity—our hearts, our minds, and our bodies.

But this is a work of God, by His grace. We do not deserve it, and we cannot accomplish it on our own (Eph. 2:8–9). That is why Jesus Christ is the world’s only hope of salvation. Only the gospel can change men’s hearts.

Fairy tales traditionally are told to children because adults know they are not really true. Unfortunately, the Western world has believed the fairy tale that God not only does not exist, but that mankind is able to save itself. Just as the Tower of Babel was ancient civilization’s attempt to become equal with God, so modern man is attempting to play God. The Bible is clear: just as God judged mankind’s pride at Babel, so will He judge this present world’s rebellion as pictured in the future Babylon (Rev. 17–19). However, despite humanity’s rebellion and wickedness, “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (Jn. 3:17).

Endnotes

1 See Richard Dawkins’ works, The God Delusion and The Selfish Gene, whereby he not only dismisses the idea of God as a type of insanity, but determines that mankind’s survival will depend on its own ruthless selfishness.


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“Then They Came for Me” from page 10

facts of life in the wider world fellow believers occupy.

As a former pastor, I would suggest that it is essential to weave into pulpit and teaching presentations information (even if it is unpleasant) that affects us and our extended Christian family, meaning believers around the world.

Third, as people charged to obtain and exercise discernment, we must understand the facts, trends, and prophetic implications that are developing. We can only do so if guided by a biblical intimacy that means being grounded in the Word.

I am reminded of the words attributed to the Rev. Martin Niemöller, a German pastor during World War II who fell out of favor with Hitler, was arrested for treason, and spent time in concentration camps. He wrote the following:

First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.3

Then they came for me. May that never be said of us because of our failure to stand up, speak out, and extend a hand of help to the oppressed.

3 Barry Rubin, “Good-bye to Western Civilization,” The Global Research in International Affairs Center (GLOBIA), April 13, 2007.
4 “Benn speech: key quotes,” BBC News <news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/656389.stm>.

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Your Footprint

We all leave footprints on the sands of time, made by the imprints of our devotion to Christ and the effect of our lives on others. And the impressions we leave behind enhance the lives of our friends and loved ones, giving them footprints to follow.

Thoughtful estate planning is one means we have to make an imprint that helps others recall our priorities. For example, consider the effect of a plan that provides for family members and leaves resources for the Lord’s work through The Friends of Israel.

When you include The Friends of Israel in the final disposition of your estate, you declare to your family and friends that you believe in and care about the mission of The Friends of Israel.

Your parting gift becomes a clear declaration of your values and priorities. Estate gifts are especially valuable because they often come at critical times. They provide the extra boost to the budget that can make the difference between moving ahead or having to cut back on programs. Estate gifts can be designated for a specific purpose or they can be unrestricted for use where needed most.

There is something about a well-planned estate gift that influences others to “go and do likewise.” When you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received of the goods of this life—only what you have given. By God’s grace and careful planning, your footprint can be one worth following.

(Please complete and return this reply form.)

☐ Please send me free literature about remembering The Friends of Israel in my estate plan.
☐ Please contact me about a personal visit. The best time to call me is: ________________
☐ I have provided for The Friends of Israel in my will or other estate-planning document.

Dear Friends of Israel:

☐ Please send me your free information on The Friends of Israel’s gift annuity program.
☐ Please contact me to discuss it further. The best time to call me is: ________________
☐ Please provide me with an annuity quotation.

Name: __________________________________________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: ______ Zip: __________ Phone: __________________

Date of Birth: ____________________________ (Suggested minimum age of 60)
Name of Joint Annuitant: __________________________________________________________________

Date of Birth: ____________________________ (Suggested minimum age of 60)

Possible Amount of Annuity: __________________________________________________________________ (Minimum amount $5,000)

Please call regarding details of a deferred payment gift annuity. Mail this form to The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
A terrible scream penetrated the camp. The terrified natives shouted, “Beware brothers, the devil is coming!” But the warning cries would prove of no avail, and sooner or later agonizing shrieks would break the silence, and another man would be missing from roll-call next morning.1

It was March 1898, and 31-year-old engineering student John Henry Patterson was in Kenya to build a railway bridge over the Tsavo River. Soon after his arrival, two ferocious, man-eating lions began terrorizing him and his workmen. Patterson wrote in his journal, “Nothing flurried or frightened them in the least, and except as food they showed a complete contempt for human beings.”2

So cunning were these beasts that the native workmen came to believe they were really devils in the shape of lions. By the time they were killed, they had devoured about 140 rail workers.

Scripture warns that Satan, like a lion, is also a predator that tirelessly stalks his victims. The apostle Peter, who learned by personal experience what it’s like to be in Satan’s grip, warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. Mt. 16:23).
Overcoming Satan requires daily, moment-by-moment vigilance. A life of faith in Jesus Christ is a life of relentless spiritual conflict. And if you fail to equip yourself, you will reap the consequences. Satan’s goal is to devastate humanity; but even more, to wreck the lives of biblical Christians.

Therefore, Christians must learn and apply three essentials to stand against the Evil One: Every Christian must (1) maintain a firm position in the conflict, (2) apply the proper protection needed for the conflict, and (3) always maintain the right perspective of the conflict.

**A Firm Position**

The lions of Tsavo were kings in their own land. To them, everyone was fair game. Scripture calls Satan “the ruler of this world” and “the god of this age” (Jn. 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4). Still, his reign is subject to God’s will (Job 1:12). With that in mind, the first lesson in warfare is to learn all you can about your enemy: “Give [no] place to the devil, . . . lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (Eph. 4:27; 2 Cor. 2:11).

Sadly, many Christians are ignorant, especially in Bible doctrine. Like lions, Satan and his demons prowl for opportunities to spread false teaching. The greatest defense is to study, know, and practice God’s Word daily. Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31–32). Satan is a liar (v. 44). The key is to measure all things by the Word of God.

It was an awful sight to find the gruesome remains of a workman who had been seized by the Tsavo lions. John Patterson hunted the lions using an English bolt-action .303 caliber rifle and 12-bore (gauge) shotgun. He had them in his sights many times, even striking them on occasion. Still they lived on. In desperation, he knew he had to marshal all his gun training and skill to kill them.

We, too, must use specific weapons against Satan. Though different, they require practice and skill to be used competently.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3–4).*

Our war gear is found in Ephesians 6:11–18. The imagery is of the tough Roman soldier. To stand against the Evil One, Christians must, without dispute, put on “the whole armor of God” (v. 11).

**Belt.** The first line of defense is “truth” (v. 14). The term means to have a mind free from pretense and falsehood. Satan depends on lies and deceit. Putting on the “belt of truth” is strong protection against hypocrisy.

**Breastplate.** A Roman soldier wore a breastplate to protect his heart and vital organs. A Christian is to wear the “breastplate of righteousness.” Satan is an accuser, constantly pointing out the unworthiness of Christ’s followers (Rev. 12:10). This tactic could be extremely discouraging.

But Christ dealt with the charges against us by imputing His righteousness to us: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). So there is no need to agonize: “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” (1 Jn. 3:20).

By allowing God to conform us to the image of His Son, His holiness is displayed as a daily, strong defense; and we “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

**Shoes.** A sturdy, hobnailed sandal gave a warrior confident footing. However, it was dangerous on smooth surfaces due to lack of good traction. Christ’s followers obtain the security of sure footing through the gospel of peace: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, arose again the third day, and was seen by many (1 Cor. 15:3–6). The enemy has many smooth-looking, counterfeit doctrines and programs; and believers must take care not to slip into his traps. The good news of Christ is the only solid surface on which to stand.

**Helmet.** The helmet was also purposeful. It had a neck guard in the back to protect the neck from any blows. The cheek guards on each side protected the face, and a brow guard defended against downward hits to the head or face. Obviously, this gear was crucial.

The “helmet of salvation” points to our “hope of salvation” (1 Th. 5:8). The word hope means having the “joyful, confident expectation of eternal deliverance.” The Evil One aims for a

continued on page 21
by JAMES A. SHOWERS

The Coming Counterfeit

(Digital illustration and composition, Thomas E. Williams)
About $62 million in bogus U.S. bills made it into circulation in 2006, largely due to technology that makes digital printing of fake money much easier. In fact, USA Today reported that counterfeiting has increased 69 percent in three years. Unfortunately, to people who cannot tell the difference, a counterfeit appears to be the genuine article.

Satan is the master of the counterfeit. And in the last days, he will possess such power over Earth that most people will not realize they have placed their faith in a fake. In an attempt keep the earth in its corrupted state for eternity and thus avoid his own eternal judgment, Satan will establish a visible, political form of his kingdom by using a counterfeit Christ (messiah). Then he will use the political control to seek the elimination of Israel.

Israel is critical to Satan’s end-times strategy because if he could eliminate Israel, then Messiah could not return to Earth to rule on the throne of King David, as promised in Scripture (Isa. 9:7). Thus Satan would prevail over God and prevent the Almighty from completing His plan of redemption for humanity. Of course, he will not prevail. But he will deceive millions before he plunges to his defeat.

**Signs and Wonders**

Just as Jesus had great power from God to perform miraculous signs and wonders while on Earth, Satan’s counterfeit messiah will use his demonic power to do miracles. Just as Christ was able to communicate effectively and influence the common man, Satan’s pseudo messiah will possess remarkable communicative and persuasive abilities. Just as Christ was killed, rose from the dead, and promised to return a second time, so, too, will Satan’s man be killed. His mortal wound will be healed, and the world will believe that he died and was brought back to life. And most important, just as Christ came to be worshiped, Satan’s counterfeit will also be worshiped.

Satan will begin by introducing his counterfeit messiah, the Antichrist, who will come “with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Th. 2:9). The Rapture of the church and ensuing removal of the restraining work of the Holy Spirit will pave the Antichrist’s way (vv. 1–12). Without the restraining work of the Holy Spirit, the world will fall away from God into worldwide apostasy (v. 3). Satan will seize this opportunity and move quickly to establish a visible, political form of his kingdom and seek to make it permanent.

According to the prophet Daniel, this kingdom will be a revived form of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:41–44; 7:7). It will be a federation of 10 regions or divisions of nations that will rule the world (Rev. 13:7). The Antichrist will rise to power and seize control of the entire revived Roman Empire (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 13:1). And as Satan’s human agent, he will be empowered to perform amazing wonders “with all unrighteous deception among those who perish” (2 Th. 2:10).

In other words, the Antichrist will use unbridled satanic power to deceive the world into believing he is the Promised One.

Initially, Satan will align the revived Roman Empire with the apostate religion of the Western world to gain worldwide support for the Antichrist’s leadership. However, the alliance will be temporary until Satan’s counterfeit Christ has consolidated his power. Eventually, the Antichrist will break the alliance and replace the apostate religion with the worship of himself (Rev. 17:16).

These events will occur over a seven-year period known as the Tribulation. At the midpoint, Antichrist will be killed, and it will appear this mighty man of peace was cut down before his work was finished (13:3). With the pseudo messiah now dead, Satan’s scheme to stymie God’s plan of redemption would seem to be in jeopardy.

At the same time, Satan will suffer another loss: a defeat in his war with Michael the archangel and the angels of heaven. As a result, Satan and his demons will be cast out of heaven permanently and confined to Earth (12:7–12). Knowing his time is short before Messiah Jesus will return, the Devil will increase his wrath on Earth, using all means possible to prevent Jesus from coming (v. 12).

First he will heal the Antichrist’s deadly wound (13:3–4). The counterfeit messiah will then have died, “risen,” and come a second time. Moving swiftly to consolidate his political power, he will kill three of the 10 kings in the revived Roman Empire (Dan. 7:24). The remaining seven kings will pledge allegiance and submit to the Antichrist. To complete his coup, he will break his alliance with the Western apostate religion and eliminate it (Rev. 17:16). He then will have control to rule the world.

Next, through Antichrist, Satan will establish a religion to exalt and glorify himself, aided by the False Prophet who will act as a counterfeit Holy Spirit (13:11–15). Empowered by Satan, the False Prophet will perform signs, wonders, and miracles to deceive the world and force humanity to worship the Antichrist. It is he who will require everyone to take the infamous mark of the Beast: He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666 (vv. 15–18).

**Satan’s Trap for Israel**

With his political and religious power consolidated, Satan will now concentrate on eliminating Israel.
He actually will put his strategy into motion three and one-half years earlier with the signing of a covenant between Antichrist and Israel (Dan. 9:27). This covenant will appear to initiate a period of unprecedented security in modern Israel; it also seems to open the door for rebuilding the Temple and resuming the Old Testament sacrifices. It will promise the peace and security Israel has long sought, as Antichrist promises to protect Israel from its enemies.

However, the covenant will turn out to be a deceitful trap set by Satan. As a result of the agreement, Israel will let down its guard and put its trust in Satan’s man. During the first three and one-half years of the covenant, Israel’s confidence in the Antichrist will appear to be well founded. When the kings of the North and South arrive to make war with Israel, the Antichrist will come to Israel’s defense with his armies and defeat them soundly (11:40–45). Subsequently, he will defend Israel at the battle of Gog and Magog, although God will intervene to destroy the kings’ armies before the Antichrist arrives (Ezek. 38—39).

After his “resurrection” and consolidation of power, Antichrist will violate his covenant with Israel, putting a sudden end to the sacrifices and offerings in the Temple (Dan. 9:27). Then he will desecrate the Temple by placing his throne there, declaring himself to be God and demanding everyone worship him (Dan. 7:8, 20, 25; 11:36–37; 2 Th. 2:3–4; Rev. 13:4–8, 11–17).

Those who refuse to worship him will be killed. Antichrist also will erect an image of himself in the Temple, which Christ referred to as the “abomination of desolation’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (Mt. 24:15). Antichrist will defame the sacred place where Israel worships; but that is only the beginning.

He will unleash a period of unparalleled persecution on Israel, referred to as the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:4–7; Mt. 24:21–28). The Bible warns Jewish people to flee into the wilderness. Antichrist’s purpose will be to secure Satan’s political kingdom on Earth by annihilating Israel and cutting it off from being a nation so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered (Ps. 83:4). Without Israel, the Messiah could not return to rule on David’s throne (Isa. 9:6–7) and Satan would avoid his eternal judgment.

Antichrist will carry out his anti-Israel campaign for three and one-half years, reaching a crescendo with the Battle of Armageddon, which is actually a military campaign that will last for several weeks or months (Dan. 11:40–45; Joel 3:9–17; Zech. 14:1–3; Rev. 16:14–16). Antichrist will assemble his armies from the nations of the world to complete the elimination of Israel.

With Israel on the verge of annihilation, it would seem that Satan is poised to accomplish his objectives. However, God has a better strategy. He Himself will rescue Israel.

When there seems to be no hope, those Jewish people still living will turn to God with all their hearts and call on Him to deliver them (Hos. 6:1–3). During this time millions of Gentiles will perish. And only one-third of Israel will survive the Antichrist’s persecution (Zech. 13:8); but God will again have mercy on Israel (1:16).

Answering Israel’s cry for salvation, Messiah will return to Earth in the same way He left: in the clouds (Mt. 24:30; Acts. 1:9–11). The great Son of David will slay the Antichrist and destroy the armies of the world that sought to annihilate the Jewish people (Joel 3:12–13; Hab. 3:13; Zech. 14:12–15; 2 Th. 2:8; Rev. 14:19–20). The prayer of Psalm 122:6 seeking “the peace of Jerusalem” will finally be realized.

Neither Satan nor his counterfeit will succeed. Just as fake money is ultimately disposed of because it is of no value, so will they be. Their destination is the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20–21). But God will elevate Israel to a position of honor over all the nations of the world, and Israel will experience unprecedented and true peace and prosperity with Messiah as its Lord and King (Zeph. 3:20; Zech. 8:23).

ENDNOTES


3 In both visions where Daniel foresaw the Roman Empire, there are 10 kings who represent a kingdom composed of 10 rulers or divisions out of which will arise the Antichrist. Since the Roman Empire never was comprised in that manner, this part of the vision reflects a future, revised form of the Roman Empire.


Facing the ‘Lion’ from page 17

head blow to plant seeds of doubt and despair. But a true believer’s helmet is firmly positioned. First, faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross guarantees salvation from the penalty of sin (2 Tim. 1:9). Second, by walking in faith in the Lord, we have salvation from the power of sin (Phil. 2:12–13). Finally, we can look forward to our future salvation from the presence of sin: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Ti. 2:13).

Sword. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

On the right hip of every Roman soldier hung his primary weapon: a gladius. It was a relatively short sword that was sharp on both edges. In a trained warrior’s hand, it was deadly. The believer’s sword is the Bible. In fact, it was the Word alone that Jesus used effectively against Satan’s attack in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1–11).

When studied and applied, God’s Word is the ultimate defense against the Evil One’s trickery. To speak the Word with authority is the best offense to pull down Satan’s strongholds (Isa. 49:2).

The lions of Tsavo stalked their prey in complete silence. The horrific roar came after their victim was cornered or killed. Satan also is silent and persistent; he doesn’t alert the child of God to his presence. But when he snares his victim in sin, then he roars in glee. Therefore, a properly protected Christian must be alert at all times, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18).

The Right Perspective

The Tsavo lions were terrifying. From nose to tip of tail, they measured about nine feet, eight inches long. Patterson wrote that they would try to scare him by glaring in his direction, showing their teeth in an angry snarl.

Satan, too, seeks to intimidate us with his ferocious growl. What we need is Christ’s perspective of the conflict. Satan is not equal to God. As a created being, he has limitations (Ezek. 28:12–19). He is powerful, but not all-powerful (Rev. 12:8; 20:2). He cannot be everywhere at once. Instead, he rules over subordinate demons worldwide who do his bidding (Mt. 12:24; Eph. 6:12). Nor does he possess God’s omniscience (1 Chr. 28:9). He is not all-knowing.

Consequently, although the Devil is an ardent antagonist, he should not terrorize us. He is no match for Christ, who has already provided our victory through the power of His shed blood (Rev. 12:11). Only in Christ is there deliverance from Satan’s power (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Christ, who dwells within all who have truly been born again, is greater than Satan (1 Jn. 4:4).

John Henry Patterson eventually got his lions. They are on display in America at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. Even now, looking into their dark, cold eyes evokes terror. But they are dead and cannot harm anyone. One day the Devil will be cast into the eternal darkness of the Lake of Fire, never again to torment the faithful (Rev. 20:10).

Until that day, no matter how difficult life’s challenges, we can be confident that we have the necessary armor to face the “lion” and be more than conquerors. After all, nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:37–39).

ENDNOTES

1 J. H. Patterson, The Man-Eaters of Tsavo and Other East African Adventures, Project Gutenberg Etext <gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/tsavo010.txt>.
2 Ibid.

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Satan’s Lies

There is no God.
The Bible is merely myths written by men.
I’ll get to heaven my way.
I’m not a sinner. I’m a good person.
Jesus is just no more and no less.

God’s Eternal Truth

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God” (Ps. 14:1).
The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork (Ps. 19:1).
The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts (Ps. 10:4).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6).

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (Jn. 3:36).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:8).

For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin (Eccl. 7:20).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9–11).

And Thomas answered and said to Him [Jesus], “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28).
# Satanic Lies

Jesus is just a man, no more and no less. I don't need to go to church. I'll live my life as I please. I'll do things my way. I don't believe in heaven or hell. We are the result of evolution.

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# Eternal Truth

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9–11).

And Thomas answered and said to Him [Jesus], “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28).

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Heb. 10:25).

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Prov. 14:12).

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. . . . And the dead were judged according to their works. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12–13, 15).

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:13–14).

And Jesus answered and said to them, . . . “from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them [people] male and female’” (Mk. 10:5-6).

digital illustration and composition, Thomas E. Williams).
Authors always seem quick to entice readers with the promise of revealing the real truth behind some Bible “mystery.” When I last checked Amazon.com for books with both the words mystery and Bible in the titles, I found no fewer than 1,959. Many, I presume, are simply wild speculations by those who lack serious belief in Scripture’s inerrancy and divine inspiration.

With that prologue, however, let me say that there is a true mystery in Acts 8. While Philip the evangelist preached the gospel throughout Samaria, he met a man named Simon, a magician whose dark practice of the magical arts had astonished many and gained him a wide audience. When Philip preached Jesus Christ, Simon’s followers left him, believed in the Savior, and began to be baptized. Luke, the human author of Acts, noted, “Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip” (v. 13).

But the story doesn’t end there.

After noticing the apostles’ powerful, supernatural ability to bestow the Holy Spirit on believers in Samaria through the laying-on of hands, Simon began to lust after the same power (vv. 18–19). When he tried to purchase it from the apostle Peter, he earned one of the most severe rebukes found in the New Testament (vv. 20–23).

The answer to these questions is more than mere Bible trivia. It is a key to understanding the dangers of heresy and false spirituality that plague 21st-century popular culture and that have infected current ultraliberal Bible “scholarship.”

So here is the mystery: Was this former sorcerer a true believer in Christ, and what became of him after verse 24?

The answer to these questions is more than mere Bible trivia. It is a key to understanding the dangers of heresy and false spirituality that plague 21st-century popular culture and that have infected current ultraliberal Bible “scholarship.”

**Prince of Heresy: The Mystery of Simon of Samaria**

**The Rise and Fall of Simon Magus**

History records that this same Simon surfaced years later as “Simon Magus,” a heretical cult leader who appeared during the development of the early church and founded a competing pseudo-Christian sect. The early church fathers who wrote in defense of the true gospel after the apostles’ deaths and sometimes were martyred for it, wrote extensively about Simon Magus. Irenaeus attributed the rise of heretical Gnosticism to Simon, whom he described as a propagator of false knowledge. (Gnosticism emphasized the esoteric attaining of “secret knowledge” of God.) Justin Martyr condemned Simon’s teachings, and Hippolytus related that Simon had created an
extensive Gnostic philosophy and tried to mimic Christ’s resurrection by having himself buried alive with the promise of being raised three days later. However, things ended poorly—and finally—for him when the “miracle” failed.2

The early church fathers quoted extensively from ancient, heretical religious writings that were rife with mention of Simon Magus: the second-century apocryphal book The Great Exposition, supposedly written by Simon (though more likely by his disciples), and the third-century apocryphal Acts of Peter and Pseudo-Clementine literature. The Great Exposition spoke openly about Simon’s status as a pretender-redeemer; the others show Simon as Peter’s archrival, fighting with him to the death in Rome where Peter supposedly foiled Simon’s attempt to fly in the air by sending him crashing down to the earth.3

Gnosticism as a heretical sect slowly faded, but the significance of Simon as a progenitor of false spirituality lived on for nearly two millennia through depictions in art and culture. Michelangelo drew a sketch of Simon’s mythical battle with Peter; 17th-century artist Avanzino Nucci painted a scene depicting Peter’s disputation with Simon; and numerous other artists used Simon Magus as a subject, with Simon even appearing in the architectural features of cathedrals. Dante’s The Divine Comedy mentions Simon in Canto XIX in his section on the interiors of hell:

Woe to thee, Simon Magus! Woe to you, his wretched followers! Who the things of God, which should be wedded unto goodness, them, rapacious as ye are, do prostitute for gold and silver in adultery.

The Rise of Skepticism

But then something happened with the approach of the 20th century. Simon Magus, who had been viewed for almost 2,000 years as a paragon of heresy, was given a kind of historical pass. Typical of liberal church histories that began to doubt his real influence is this one:

Theories [of the church fathers] about the origins and sources of Gnosticism (which they liked to trace back through a succession of teachers to Simon Magus, as portrayed in the narrative of Acts 8:9–24) were mostly produced to serve the needs of their polemic... their understanding and handling of Gnostic ideas could be biased and unsympathetic even when their reporting was faithful.4

Notice that the motives of the Fathers are cast in doubt, not the accuracy of their writings concerning Simon Magus. The same several theologians and church historians quoted above (from Union Theological Seminary, a bastion of liberal religious thought) also reluctantly admitted, “The sources these writers use [often are] trustworthy and their reporting [is] accurate.”5

Another reason for the decline in Simon’s status as a heretic arises from the fact that the very concept of heresy has fallen out of fashion. Heresy (false doctrine) implies there is true doctrine. But liberal scholarship has attempted to reduce doctrinal creeds and the fundamentals of the faith to total irrelevancy. Self-professed liberal John Shelby Spong has boldly pronounced that Christians must face “a devastating realization—namely, that the primary creedal doctrines of the Christian faith were built to address a human condition that is simply not true.”6

Robert Funk, founder of the ultraliberal Jesus Seminar, wrote that the rise of “heretics” really began only when dissenting bishops refused to subscribe to official “orthodoxy” at the Council at Nicea in 325.7 For some reason, Mr. Funk, who admits the Apostles’ Creed may be as old as the second century,8 doesn’t see the irony in that timing: The Creed—which predated Constantine’s Nicene Council by more than 100 years—was created to codify the fundamental beliefs of the early church and to distinguish them from the heresies that threatened to distort the historical truth about Jesus and the true message of the gospel.

Funk’s last distortion (we might call it a historical “heresy”) has been mirrored in Dan Brown’s wildly popular and famously inaccurate novel, The Da Vinci Code. One of the book’s characters proclaims, “The early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.” Even more to the point: “Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those [Gnostic] gospels that spoke of Jesus’ human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike.”9

It is no wonder that popular thought in the 20th and 21st centuries should forget the moral behind the story of Simon, the sorcerer from Samaria. When the possibility of objective theological truth is doubted and history

I S R A E L   M Y   G L O R Y
is rewritten with an antiliberal bias, the idea of doctrinal truth becomes archaic—an outdated curiosity.

**The Sorcerer’s Reemergence**

At the same time liberal scholarship was attempting to make Simon Magus irrelevant, a new phenomenon was arising that openly celebrated his heretical influence. In 1875 Helena Blavatsky launched a new movement called “theosophy”; and the Theosophical Society was established, which contended that one can only know God through mysticism.10 The movement’s tenets bore a powerful resemblance to the ancient teachings of the Gnostics and to the philosophy of Simon Magus in particular. G. R. S. Mead, a leading theosophist in the early 20th century, wrote, “The present revival of theosophical enquiry throws a flood of light on Simon’s teachings, whenever we can get anything approaching a first-hand statement of them, and shows that it was identical in its fundamentals with the Esoteric Philosophy of all the great religions of the world.”11

While theosophy as a formal movement died out, its Gnostic roots remain; and they continue to energize and inform the religions of the New Age movement.12 The worldwide success of *The Da Vinci Code* and the more recent publicity regarding the so-called “Gospel of Judas,” a Gnostic text spotlighted by National Geographic, are evidence that the fraudulent doctrines of Simon Magus and his ilk, long thought to be dead, are now prowling the halls of religious academia and parading in the streets of popular culture.

**Why Truth Matters**

Despite the appearance of conversion, was Simon of Samaria really a closet heretic with corrupt motives that he kept concealed until after his dramatic interchange with Peter in Acts 8:18–24? The historical facts strongly support that conclusion. And more than one Bible commentator, including F. F. Bruce, has doubted the sincerity of Simon’s profession of faith.13 In fact, some important clues in the biblical text help us conclude that Simon’s profession of faith was not sincere. His “conversion” came only after he began to lose his audience to Philip (Acts 8:11–12). We are told that Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritan believers to impart the Holy Spirit (v. 17); yet Simon, who had been referenced by name in verses 10–13, is not named as one who received the Holy Spirit.

More important, Simon’s actions evidenced the rotten fruit of an unregenerate heart. Peter accused him of “wickedness” and being “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (vv. 22–23). Further, when Peter instructed Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness, Simon failed to do so. Instead, he begged Peter, “Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me” (v. 24).

Simon’s lips do not reveal heartfelt repentance, merely a desire to avoid judgment. The text of Acts 8, coupled with the early Fathers’ outrage concerning Simon, whom they considered the prince of heresy, lead us to conclude that Simon’s heart never left the pagan tendencies of a sorcerer. After his superficial brush with Christianity, he merely adapted his corrupt philosophy to feed off the newly forming church of Jesus Christ, as a parasite feeds off its host. Gnosticism, which used the name of Christ but exalted the false idea of achieving divinity through secret knowledge, suited his predilection toward the mysterious, esoteric dark arts.

Such false professions of faith are not unique in the biblical record. In Genesis, Cain’s sacrifice had the appearance of obedience; but it concealed a corrupt heart and a self-willed approach to God. In the New Testament Gospels, Judas walked daily with Jesus’ disciples, and they apparently had no inkling he was a traitor and spiritual imposter. The proliferation of cults, spiritual gurus, and false religions is a constant challenge to the church. Yet the lesson of Simon Magus is clear: False prophets and teachers are the most dangerous when they appear to follow familiar practices and Christian traditions, while still holding ideas that are antithetical to Scripture. We are warned, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

But there is yet another reason to heed the lesson of Simon the Samaritan. The Lord admonishes us to cling diligently to that which is true: “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17). Let us discern the truth and practice it and cling to Jesus, the One who came to save us.

**Endnotes**

1 Dr. Charles Ryrie explains that God generally bestowed the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith in Christ; however, in the case of the Samaritans, the Lord chose the apostles from Jerusalem as the vehicle for transmission of the Holy Spirit. The method acted as a uniting bond and helped ensure there would be no separate, rival Samaritan Christian sect. *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978) 1568, n. Acts 8:14–17.


5 Ibid.


8 Ibid, 43.

9 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 233–234. The proliferation of cults, spiritual gurus, and false religions is a constant challenge to the church. Yet the lesson of Simon Magus is clear: False prophets and teachers are the most dangerous when they appear to follow familiar practices and Christian traditions, while still holding ideas that are antithetical to Scripture. We are warned, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

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13 Bruce, 183–184.
**DEALING WITH THE DEVIL**

Most Americans don’t think in terms of demon possession. We think in terms of disease. If we see a young man beating his head into the ground or throwing himself into a fire, we do not automatically consider the man demon-possessed; we say he is mentally ill. We give complex medical names to multiple personality disorders and various psychotic behaviors and try to treat these problems with unpronounceable, expensive, mind-altering drugs.

Missionaries to Third World countries, however, have a different perspective. They understand that not all these illnesses can be treated medically; some must be treated spiritually. “Look at his eyes,” a missionary friend once told me as he showed me a photograph of a man to whom he was ministering in New Guinea. “He is demon-possessed. The eyes give it away.”

I’ve heard many a missionary speak of demon possession. But perhaps the most amazing account—and the most helpful—came from a man (I’ll call him John) who spent many years preaching the gospel and planting churches in the jungles of New Guinea. It was through a frightening experience that he learned how to deal with the Devil and how to help those of us who live elsewhere do likewise.

While walking alone to a native village, John began to hear loud, horriﬁying shrieks echo through the air. As the terrifying noises grew closer and louder, everything around him grew darker; and he was seized with fear. Soon he could see nothing in a world dominated by wild animals, poisonous snakes, and quicksand; and he could hear nothing but the blood-curdling screams penetrating the jungle. Now in utter darkness, he slowly felt himself sinking deeper and deeper into the ground. “I’ve stepped into quicksand, he thought, and I will surely die.”

His life flashed before him and thoughts of his wife, his children, and all the people to whom he would never have an opportunity to say goodbye. As he was praying to God for help, he suddenly yelled at the top of his lungs, “Greater is he that is in [me] than he that is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4, KJV).

Instantly the screaming stopped and bright sunshine lit the sky. John looked down, saw he was standing on a log, stepped off it, and continued his walk to the village. From then on, he said, he was a changed man. He realized more fully than ever the power of Jesus Christ. So John began memorizing Scripture as never before. Using the pattern Jesus set for us in Matthew 4 when He was tempted by Satan, John began using the sword of the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit to resist the Devil. “Try to use a verse appropriate to your situation,” he said.

So I did. One day I went to my favorite bookbinder in Princeton, New Jersey, near my home, to have a name embossed on a Bible I was giving as a birthday gift. It was spring, and the little shop was piling in stacks all over the floor, both in the back shop and up front. You could hardly walk around there.

I had never seen such a mess, and the girl at the counter treated me like an unwanted intrusion. Suddenly I became unreasonably angry and began to tell her off—with the Bible in my hand! Then I remembered John.

When she went out back, I slipped into a far corner of the room, prayed, and whispered aloud, “I resist you, Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is written, ‘The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God’” (Jas. 1:20). Instantly my anger evaporated, and I could not believe I had felt so provoked. I apologized to the girl and told her to take as long as she needed. And I went home praising the Lord. My husband has had similar experiences.

The apostle James was serious when he wrote, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (4:7). Jesus Himself did not use His divine, supernatural power to deal with Satan. Instead, He used the Word of God and thrust it at Satan like a dagger by speaking it out loud. Here are the steps to take:

1. **Stop.** Stop what you’re doing and assess your situation. Not everything is spiritual warfare. If you are under spiritual attack, God will let you know.

2. **Pray.** We have no authority on our own. All our authority comes from Christ. Nor do we have authority to rebuke the Devil. But through Christ, we can resist him. So ﬁrst, you must pray and ask God to enable you to resist through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. **Speak.** Neither Satan nor any member of his evil brood is omniscient. Only God knows your thoughts. Satan cannot read your mind. So when you resist, you must speak out loud.

4. **Recite.** Use the sword of the Word. Recite a Bible verse that is appropriate to your situation. This, of course, entails memorizing Scripture. Each week John would write verses on note cards that he carried with him on his walks through the jungle. He would memorize a set of cards each week.

Understanding that we can resist the Devil is not a recipe for treading where angels fear to go, but it is a way to identify spiritual warfare and have victory in your walk with the Lord.

*by Lorna Simcox, editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.*
The Master Deceiver’s High,” he uses all the evil talents and tricks at his disposal in a multi-pronged attack that has discouraged and deceived the vast majority of the human race (Isa. 14:14).

Today God is denied, Jesus is rejected and mocked, and Christians are viewed as intellectual pygmies. Such is the Evil One’s master plan: to denigrate God and make Him totally irrelevant, to have Him openly denied in our schools and rejected by the vast majority of our populace, and to convince people—who constitute the crowning achievement of God’s creation—that they merely evolved.

Disgrace Jesus. Satan also wants to disgrace God’s Son, Jesus. Hollywood portrays Him as a weakling or a mere human who struggled with lust and sexual problems. His birth is celebrated, but most people have no understanding of the actual importance of Christmas. Instead, the “winter holiday,” as many refer to it, is a time of merrymaking while rejecting the fundamental roots of the celebration.

The Master Deceiver’s incarnation is the reason for the season, but Satan has so thoroughly blinded the world’s eyes that few people understand its vital significance. Christmas carols have been edited; and only those dealing with snowmen, sledding, and decking the halls are allowed in our public forums. Manger scenes and even secular symbols, such as Christmas trees, have become weapons in Satan’s battle to expunge Christmas from the human psyche.

Discredit Christians. We who name the name of Christ are among Satan’s most hated targets. Christians are often parodied; laughed at; and portrayed as uninformed, unenlightened, and almost utterly clueless human beings. People today worship science and technology, and those who would question either are marginalized.

Many of our political leaders perceive that Christians are public enemy number one. These leaders reject Christian morality and values and our desire to train our children. They reject Christian...
education and actually teach that we are the ones infecting children with phobias and antiquated philosophies.

Satan has done his work well. And unfortunately, many believers are afraid to defend their faith, pray in public, and stand up for biblical truth.

Destroy Israel. Not the least of Satan’s goals is to destroy Israel and the Jewish people. God has promised that Israel will survive (Jer. 31:35–37). But in the interim, the Jewish people and their beloved homeland face unprecedented horrors at the hands of Islamic terrorists and our own politicians. The world seems to bow and scrape before Islam and religious fanaticism and to accept all beliefs as legitimate—except for the only two based on God’s Word: Judaism and Christianity.

Discourage Prayer. As Apollo 8 neared the time to blast out of lunar orbit and begin the trek back to Earth, the man in charge of Houston’s Mission Control was concerned. He knew what could go wrong and how many variables had to work perfectly for the tiny spacecraft to leave the moon, fly through space, reorbit the earth, and land safely back home.

At one critical point, as the astronauts prepared for the burn that would enable them to exit the moon’s gravitational pull, this man suggested that everyone at Mission Control be quiet as he prayed for the safe return of our men.

A year later, when James Lovell commanded the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission, Houston and the world prayed for our astronauts’ safe return. And God graciously granted that request.

Prayer is a final area the Evil One seeks to discredit. He entices people to believe they are the captains of their own ships and the masters of their own destinies. Today people view praying as antiquated, a sign of weakness, and a waste of time. After all, if there is no God, why waste time talking to Him?

The Bible, of course, warns us that all these things will occur in the last days.

The apostle Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned these prophetic words in A.D. 66:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unhateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim. 3:1–5).

Satan is a powerful foe, but we have an omnipotent God who reminds us, “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). We who name the name of Jesus are to combat the Devil with the empty cross, the empty tomb, and the resurrected Savior. Our faith in Jesus overcomes the world (1 Jn. 5:5).

by Thomas C. Simcox, Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.
How Satan is portrayed in any generation largely depends on how seriously he is taken by the prevailing culture. Today’s culture, with its cynical bent, appears not to take him too seriously. In a recently published book of popular cartoon art, Satan is depicted as a mischievous, red-faced character handing out accordions at the entrance to hell. But nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible warns us that Satan is the embodiment of evil and the authority behind the present world system. And his names tell us everything about him.

Created as the highest in the hierarchy of angelic beings, his name Lucifer hints at his original beauty and splendor (Isa. 14:12). Isaiah detailed the conceit that turned God’s most impressive servant, this “son of the morning,” into His most tenacious enemy. In contrast to the familiar stereotype of an ugly horned demon with a pitchfork, Ezekiel 28 describes Satan in his original grandeur. Covered with a stunning array of precious stones reflecting and diffusing surrounding light, Lucifer’s glory was unparalleled in God’s creation (v. 13).

Although other names capture the essence of Lucifer in his fallen state, Satan is the proper name most closely associated with this defiant, evil being. It describes his character in opposition to God and actually means “adversary” or “opponent.”

Leading a seditious revolt, Satan determined to challenge God’s authority and thwart His purpose in the world while deceitfully turning people’s hearts against the Almighty. Since his fall near the beginning of recorded history, he has worked behind the scenes, manipulating world events and carrying out his malevolent campaign against God (Jn. 8:44; Rev. 12:9).

Taking the form of a serpent, he coerced Eve into questioning and ultimately defying God’s direct command, dragging humanity into his all-consuming war against God. No doubt, it was his captivating beauty and audacious charm that appealed to Eve. The name Serpent exposes the beguiling nature of Satan’s character. Using his extraordinary beauty to his advantage, he continues to recruit unregenerate humanity in rebellious activities against God. His tactic has not changed even today. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light for the purpose of deception (2 Cor. 11:14).

The Bible also calls him Dragon, which not only describes his current power, but also that which will become fully realized during the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Filled with rage and knowing his time is short, Satan will burst fully onto Earth’s scene, as described in the pages of Revelation. Attempting to destroy God’s covenant people along with Messiah Himself, he will inflict unprecedented terror on the earth (Rev. 12:12).

Translated “accuser” or “slanderer,” the Greek word diabolos, or Devil, hints at the threat Satan poses to mankind. His activities are twofold: He (1) slanders God before people, as he did with Eve in the Garden of Eden, asking, “Has God indeed said . . . ?” (Gen. 3:1) and (2) falsely accuses believers before God, as in the book of Job (2:4–5).

The name Devil also connects him to demonic activity throughout the world. Although there are many demons, there is only one Devil who directs the affairs of these evil beings (Mt. 12:22–30). Using demons, the Devil manipulates world events, not only to thwart God’s purposes, but also to beleaguer all who maintain loyalty to Him.

Other names associated with his authority over the demonic world are Belial and Beelzebub, which correctly communicate his leadership
as “the ruler of the demons” (Mt. 12:24). With the power of the demonic world at his command, it is easy to see why the Bible describes him as “god of this age” and “the prince of the power of the air” (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2).

Peter warns, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). He is like a ravenous lion circling a flock, looking for an opportunity to snatch unprotected sheep. The Greek word for “devour” conveys the idea of gulping down or swallowing something whole. He is determined to destroy utterly. This aspect of Satan’s nature is encapsulated in the names Abaddon in the Hebrew and Appolyon in the Greek—both defined as “destroyer.”

Satan is a real being. Although our culture often glubly portrays him presiding over the torture of souls in hell, the truth is that he is actually doomed to punishment there himself. His fanatical aspirations of unseating the sovereign God of creation will ultimately come to nothing when he is judged by Christ and cast headlong into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10).

**Endnotes**

1 Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 2:35.
3 W. A. Criswell, Expository Sermons on the Epistles of Peter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 102.

by Charles McCracken, 
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**Welcome to Vermont**

Barbara Serra, formerly with Britain’s Channel Five News, in the London studio of al-Jazeera TV. She will now broadcast from the Arab-run network on its 24-hour English-language channel. (Tom Stoddart/Getty Images).

**David and the Adversary**

Many believers are unaware of the magnitude of the spiritual war that goes on all around us. Satan and the forces of darkness are waging a vicious battle against God, the Jewish people, and the church of Jesus Christ. In his effort to corrupt and destroy the church, Satan sees to it that Christians are tortured, mutilated, and persecuted while the world looks the other way. But before the church arrived in Acts 2, Satan concentrated the bulk of his efforts on trying to corrupt and destroy Israel.

The word Satan is Hebrew and means “adversary.” Since his rebellion, the angel Lucifer has been the satan, or adversary, of the Lord and His servants.

King David of Israel learned of this reality in 1 Chronicles 21:1–30: “Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number [take a census of] Israel” (v. 1). On the surface, this action might not seem like such a bad thing. But David was to trust in God, not in his military strength. In yielding to this temptation, David blatantly rejected the Lord. Even David’s chief general, Joab—not known for his spirituality—opposed this action and tried unsuccessfully to talk David out of it (v. 3). The result was that the Lord became angry and sent judgment because David evidenced a lack of faith in God’s divine protection.

Often we find ourselves facing similar temptations because Satan is our adversary, too. He is bent on separating us from the blessing, security, and joy that are present when we trust in and rely on the Lord alone. We must not “number our fighting men” and set out on our own; we must trust God and remain under His protection. For when we step out on our own, we become vulnerable to the Evil One who provokes us to distrust the Lord and all He has promised to accomplish.

David repented, but the cost of his faithlessness was great. As believers, we must be aware of our adversary and understand his intentions and methodology. We also must endeavor to withstand his onslaught and remain faithful to our loving Lord, who will always remain faithful to us: “If we are faithless He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

by Thomas C. Simcox
Running From God

God chose Jonah the prophet to deliver a divine message of impending judgment to the city of Nineveh. Upon receiving this call, however, Jonah did not head toward Nineveh but immediately traveled in the opposite direction to Joppa where he quickly boarded a Phoenician ship bound for Tarshish, paid his fare, and set sail across the Mediterranean Sea. In so doing, he attempted to flee from his divine mission to Nineveh.

Chapter 1 reveals how God dealt with His disobedient prophet.

Facing the Storm

Soon after embarking from Joppa, the ship encountered a storm of hurricane force that threatened to destroy the ship and all on board. The storm came directly from the hand of the Lord:

*But the Lord sent [hurled] out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep (vv. 4–5).*

The winds beat against the ship with such force it almost tore the ship apart. The well-seasoned sailors quickly surmised that this was no ordinary storm, and they were overcome with great fear. In a panic, each sailor cried out to his heathen god for help; but the prayers were to no avail. Next, the sailors hurriedly hurled the ship’s cargo overboard, hoping to lighten the vessel enough to ride out the storm.

Meanwhile, physically and emotionally exhausted from fleeing to Joppa, Jonah had fallen sound asleep in the lowest part of the vessel and was oblivious to the raging storm beating against the ship.

The ship’s captain, disturbed by Jonah’s indifference, found the sleeping prophet below deck. “What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish,” he declared (v. 6).

Either the captain was awestruck that the prophet could sleep so soundly through such a life-threatening storm, or he was indignant that Jonah was asleep when he should have been praying to his God for survival. The captain’s rough words most likely startled Jonah awake. However, there is no indication the prophet was moved to respond in prayer, whereas the heathen sailors were praying fervently to their gods.

A number of observations can be made from Jonah’s disobedient response to God’s call. First, the Lord hurled the storm at the ship to get Jonah’s attention, but the prophet was insensitive to both God’s message and the danger that awaited him and the sailors. Second, Jonah’s rebellion not only affected him, but all those with whom he came in contact. Third, the need was so great that pagan sailors prayed, but Jonah did not. Fourth, ungodly men saw the need of the hour, but God’s prophet slept through the crisis.

Seeking a Solution

Although the desperate sailors offered up much prayer to their gods and jettisoned the cargo to save their vessel, their efforts were futile. The violent storm raged on. Upon reflection, the sailors concluded that someone on board was responsible for bringing divine wrath on them. They said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah” (v. 7).

Casting lots was an ancient custom in the Near East. Jews and Gentiles alike often cast lots to determine the divine will on an issue. Pebbles or pieces of wood were marked, put into a receptacle, and withdrawn randomly in an effort to make a fair decision. (See Leviticus 16:8, 10; Numbers 26:55; Joshua 7:14; 18:10; Esther 3:7; Proverbs 16:33; Nahum 3:10; Matthew 27:35; Luke 1:9; and Acts 1:26.)

So the sailors cast lots to see who was guilty, and the lot fell on Jonah. But they took no action until they received more information from the prophet. They interrogated him with five questions: “Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” (v. 8).

Jonah quickly divulged his identity: “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD [Jehovah], the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land” (v. 9).

The prophet’s answers revealed a number of things. First, Jonah said he feared “the Lord.” He was being disingenuous, however, for if he really feared God he would not have rebelled against Him. Second, he...
made it clear that Jehovah was the true, sovereign God of heaven who ruled the universe. Third, he believed that his God created the sea and land and thus controlled the elements of the world. Fourth, Jonah told the mariners that he had fled from the Lord’s presence (v. 10).

Upon hearing Jonah’s answers, the sailors realized that Jonah’s God had brought the storm. “Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, ‘Why have you done this?’” (v. 10). The seamen became extremely frightened because they understood that God’s discipline of the prophet was threatening to destroy them. They were also angry with Jonah for putting them in such a situation.

**Acting for Survival**

Realizing the sea was growing more tempestuous, the terrified sailors cried out in great fear: “What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?” (v. 11). Since Jonah’s God had caused the tempest, they logically asked the prophet how they could appease his God and thus bring calm to the sea.

Jonah did not hesitate to answer: “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me” (v. 12).

Jonah knew in his heart that the storm had come because of his rebellion and disobedience, and he admitted his guilt to the sailors. Jonah believed that by sacrificing his own life, God would calm the sea and spare the innocent men. Whether God had told Jonah to take this action or he intuited that it would calm the sea is unknown. It is not unreasonable for Jonah to have believed that dying at sea would free him from his commission; and apparently he preferred perishing to preaching to the cruel and brutal heathens of Nineveh.

The sailors, however, did not immediately take Jonah up on his offer. Instead, they rowed harder, hoping to outride the storm. But the harder they rowed, the more turbulent the sea became (v. 13). Realizing their efforts were futile, they cried to Jehovah for survival: “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You” (v. 14).

The sailors’ extremely fervent prayer reveals that they recognized Jehovah was the true and living God—the only One who could save them. They also recognized that He alone created the land and sea and was sovereign over life. Furthermore, they prayed that God would not hold them accountable for taking Jonah’s life, an action they considered to be the shedding of innocent blood. Lastly, since God had acted out of the good pleasure of His own will and allowed the storm for His own purposes, the sailors prayed that Jehovah would spare their lives.

After praying, they were convinced that Jonah should be cast overboard: “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging” (v. 15).

The calming of the sea greatly affected the sailors. It revealed that the God of Israel was, indeed, the true and living God; that Jonah’s God heard and answered their prayers; that Jonah’s God was omnipotent, able to control the elements of earth; and that Jonah’s God could accomplish what their gods could not. Thus all the sailors understood that the raging sea was directly related to Jonah’s rebellion and disobedience to his divine commission.

Immediately the sailors made a commitment to the Lord: “Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows” (v. 16). Filled with great awe and reverence for Jehovah, the sailors worshiped Him.

The text would lead one to believe that these sailors converted to God or possibly incorporated Jehovah into their polytheistic religion. In any case, they zealously made sacrifices. Their vows were expressed by offering a sacrifice (literally, “they sacrificed sacrifices”). It is doubtful these were animal sacrifices because they were at sea and had thrown the cargo overboard. It is possible that the sailors vowed to offer sacrifices once they arrived on dry land or that they immediately made sacrificial vows to serve the Lord.

What a contrast between Jonah and the heathen sailors. The sailors believed the God of Israel and worshiped Him, but Jonah had become a spectacle of spiritual defeat. From the moment he decided to flee from his divine commission, the course of his life spiraled downward. Jonah went down to Joppa to flee from God’s presence, then down into a ship, down into the lowest part of the ship, and was thrown down into the sea where he sank like a rock toward the bottom.

Upon being cast into the sea, Jonah no doubt believed that death awaited him; but such was not the case. Jonah would not die: “Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (v. 17).

Jonah could not flee from the Lord’s presence, as we’ll see in the next chapter.

It is impossible to run from God. Jonah tried, and he paid more than the full price for his trip: He was chastened by God, suffered spiritual depression, had a near-death experience, and caused others around him much misery.

Like Jonah, all who are disobedient to the Lord will not only face severe storms in their lives, but also bring suffering to those around them. We need to run to God, not from Him!
God Is Moral

(Part 11)

Previously, we examined evidence that showed a total human being (body and soul) comes into existence at the moment of conception. Thus an abortion at any time after conception involves the taking of a personal human life and, therefore, is murder.

Now we will examine a biblical passage that confirms that conclusion and observe several consequences of abortion.

A Significant Passage

Exodus 21:22–25 has significant implication concerning God’s view of abortion. It records a judgment of the Mosaic Law that God required of Israel:  

If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, . . . if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Thus, if a man who was fighting accidentally struck a pregnant woman and caused her child to be born prematurely, he was to be punished.

Several significant facts should be noted concerning this required judgment. First, if death resulted for the mother or her offspring, the man who struck her was to be executed. There was no distinction of guilt for death of the mother or death of the offspring. Even if the offspring alone died, the man was to be executed for his action that caused the death. And the action that caused the baby’s eventual death was the man’s accidental blow to the woman while her child was still in utero.

Second, since God required the same penalty of death for the death of either the mother or offspring, and since the blow that caused the death of the offspring was delivered while the child was in the mother’s womb, it can be concluded that God regarded the child in utero to be as fully a human being as the pregnant mother. It also indicates God has the same concern for the life and well-being of the offspring in the womb that He has for that of the mother.

Third, although in the Mosaic Law God usually did not require the death penalty for unintentional, accidental death, in this instance He did. He thereby required the same penalty as He did for murder. Thus God regarded this kind of death of a pregnant woman or her offspring as equivalent to murder, at least in effect.

Historically, governmental law and the Bible regard murder as the willful, premeditated killing of a human being by another. The historic view of abortion has been as follows: abortion is the willful, premeditated act of killing offspring while in the mother’s womb in order to obtain a type of premature delivery from the mother’s body without live birth. Since Exodus 21:22–25 indicates God regarded a child in utero to be as fully a human being as the mother, then it can be concluded that He regards abortion as the willful, premeditated killing of a human being by another and, therefore, murder.

Consequences of Abortion

The practice of abortion produces serious consequences, both immediate and future.

Consequences for Unborn Offspring. Abortion involves at least two consequences for unborn offspring. First is the excruciating experience of the procedure. According to the brochure Abortion: Some Medical Facts, published by the NRL Educational Trust Fund, six procedures are used to induce abortion.1

1. Suction aspiration, used in most abortions, uses a powerful suction tube in the uterus. It dismembers the baby, rips the placenta from the uterus, and sucks the body parts into a container.

2. Dilatation and curettage, used mainly during the seventh to 12th weeks of pregnancy, dilates or stretches the cervix for the insertion of a loop-shaped knife that cuts the baby’s body into pieces and cuts the placenta from the wall of the uterus.

3. Dilatation and evacuation, used when the child is as old as 18 weeks and has bones, uses forceps to remove the child from the uterus by twisting and tearing away and slicing away the placenta.

4. Salt poisoning, the second most widely used method, is employed after 16 weeks of pregnancy and involves injecting a concentrated
salt solution through the mother’s abdomen into the amniotic fluid sac around the baby. The child is poisoned by breathing in and swallowing the salt solution and usually dies after an hour.

5. Prostaglandins (hormones that assist the birth process) are injected into the amniotic sac around the child, usually during the second half of the pregnancy. They prompt violent labor and the premature birth of a baby usually too young to survive. Salt or other toxins may be injected first to guarantee the baby will not be delivered prematurely alive.

6. Hysterotomy, similar to a cesarean section, involves making an incision into the uterus if the salt-poisoning or prostaglandin methods fail to kill the baby. If the baby survives this procedure, then the question becomes, “How, when, and by whom is the child to be killed?”

These are the historically used abortion methods. More recently, the partial-birth abortion has been developed. It involves maneuvering the baby so that all of its body except its head can be delivered. Once the baby’s head is lodged in its mother’s cervix, forceps are inserted to crush the infant’s skull or the skull is sliced open with a sharp instrument. Then the baby’s brain is sucked out of its skull. Sometimes the result is that the infant is dismembered and decapitated.

Contrary to what many abortion advocates insist, all of these methods cause severe pain for the baby. Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand, an Oxford and Harvard trained neonatal pediatrician and pain expert, testified that unborn babies experience pain more acutely than adults and fully born infants. He said that by the 20th week of the pregnancy, a baby has developed all the nerve and brain functions to feel pain but not the mechanisms to deal with it. He specifically stated that the partial-birth abortion causes “prolonged and excruciating pain” for the baby.

The second consequence of abortion for the unborn child, of course, is death.

Consequences for the Mother. Although abortion advocates claim that abortion is safer for a woman than childbirth, the brochure Abortion: Some Medical Facts, states, “The experiences of private physicians and gynecologists do not support the validity of this claim.” It indicates that negative consequences from an abortion “include both physical and psychological complications.”

The most common physical complications include “hemorrhages, laceration of the cervix, uterine perforation, inflammations of the reproductive organs and menstrual disturbances.” Long-term physical complications that may occur later include “sterility (the chances of which multiply with successive abortions), increased risk of ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, an inability to carry a pregnancy to term, and difficulties in future labor and delivery.” Obviously, “death of the mother is the most serious of all physical complications. The risk of death is greater as the duration of pregnancy increases and the complexity of the abortion procedure expands.”

Psychological consequences include “guilt, . . . anxiety, depression, sense of loss, anger and deterioration of self image, . . . nightmares, flashbacks to their abortion experience and imaginations of their aborted children,” and “divorce and even suicide.”

Consequences for Society. Abortion contributes significantly to a declining population trend that has long-range, serious consequences for the world. According to an article published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Some 59 countries, comprising roughly 44 percent of the world’s total population, are currently not producing enough children to avoid population decline, and the phenomenon continues to spread. By 2045, according to the latest UN projections, the world’s fertility rate as a whole will have fallen below replacement levels.

This trend will greatly affect “the global economy and balance of power.” As birthrates decline, the number of workers who produce goods and support the economy and the elderly will decrease, while the number of dependent elderly increases. This situation will cause severe government budget strain; “massive government borrowing”; the imposition of increasingly higher productivity levels and tax burdens upon the remaining workers “to pay for old-age pensions and health care”; a shortage in funds for research, development, and education; and a decrease in motivation for starting new businesses. Could such conditions prompt euthanasia programs to eliminate the elderly at a certain age?

The decline in birthrate will “make military actions increasingly difficult.” There will be fewer youths available for the armed services, and the rising cost of pensions and health care will deprive the military of funds to purchase weapons, pay soldiers, and maintain preparedness.

As birthrates decline, nations resort to immigration to obtain workers. That situation can prompt “security concerns” and “cultural backlash against immigrants.” What can happen to a nation when immigrants outnumber native citizens?

Europe is an example of problems generated by a declining birthrate and worker immigration. Wrote Don Feder:

Europe is augmenting its shrinking workforce with recruits from North Africa and the Middle East . . . Western Europe has gone from a Muslim population of 250,000, 50 years ago, to 20 million today. While native Europeans are not producing enough children to maintain their population, “European Muslims have large families”; and most of these Muslims “are quite serious about Islam.” Thus Europe has imported “an immigration jihad.” Several observers claim that Europe’s secular-humanistic rejection of Christianity is the cause of its declining birthrate. Feder stated

continued on page 37
This appears to be a marvelous idea, for New York and the country need native-born Arabic speakers. They have a role in the military, diplomacy, intelligence, the courts, the press, the academy, and many other institutions—and teaching languages to the young is the ideal route to polyglotism. As someone who spent years learning Arabic, I am enthusiastic in principle about the idea of this school, one of the first of its kind in the United States.

In practice, however, I strongly oppose the KGIA and predict that its establishment will generate serious problems. I say this because Arabic-language instruction is inevitably
laden with pan-Arabist and Islamist baggage. Some examples:

Franck Salameh taught Arabic at the most prestigious American language school, Middlebury College in Vermont. In an article for the Middle East Quarterly, he wrote: “Even as students leave Middlebury with better Arabic, they also leave indoctrinated with a tendentious Arab nationalist reading of Middle Eastern history. Permeating lectures and carefully designed grammatical drills, Middlebury instructors push the idea that Arab identity trumps local identities and that respect for minority ethnic and sectarian communities betrays Arabism.”

For an example of such grammatical drills, see the just-published book by Shukri Abed, Focus on Contemporary Arabic: Conversations with Native Speakers (Yale University Press), one chapter of which is titled “The Question of Palestine.” Its intensely politicized readings would be unimaginable in a book of French or Spanish conversations.

The Islamist dimension worries me as well. An organization that lobbies for Arabic instruction, the Arabic Language Institute Foundation, claims that knowledge of Islam’s holy language can help the West recover from what its leader, Akhtar H. Emon, calls its “moral decay.” In other words, Muslims tend to see non-Muslims as non-Arabs, and learning Arabic as a step toward an eventual conversion to Islam, an expectation I encountered while studying Arabic in Cairo in the 1970s.

Also, learning Arabic in and of itself promotes an Islamic outlook, as James Coffman showed in 1995, looking at evidence from Algeria. Comparing students taught in French and in Arabic, he found that “Arabized students show decidedly greater support for the Islamist movement and greater mistrust of the West.” Those Arabized students, he notes, more readily believed in “the infiltration into Algeria of Israeli women spies infected with AIDS . . . the mass conversion to Islam by millions of Americans,” and other Islamist nonsense.

Specifics about the KGIA confirm these apprehensions, including its roster of sponsors and enthusiasts. The school’s key figure, principal-designate Dhabah (“Debbie”) Almontaser, has a record of extremist views, as William A. Mayer and Beila Rabinowitz have shown atPipeLineNews.org.

Arabs or Muslims, Ms. Almontaser says, are innocent of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: “I don’t recognize the people who committed the attacks as either Arabs or Muslims.” Instead, she blames September 11 on Washington’s foreign policies, saying they “have been triggered by the way the USA breaks its promises with countries across the world, especially in the Middle East, and the fact that it has not been a fair mediator.”

At a community meeting with the New York Police Department commissioner, she berated the NYPD for using “FBI tactics” when informants were used to prevent a subway bombing, thereby polarizing the Muslim community. For Ms. Almontaser, it appears, preventing terrorism counts less than soothing Muslim sensibilities.

She calls George W. Bush a “nightmare” who is “trying to destroy the United States.”

Rewarding these views, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a for- eign-funded front organization, in 2005 bestowed an honor on Ms. Almontaser for her “numerous contributions” to the protection of civil liberties.

Her intentions for the KGIA should raise alarms. An Associated Press report paraphrases her saying that “the school won’t shy away from sensitive topics such as colonialism and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis,” and she notes that the school will “incorporate the Arabic language and Islamic culture.” Islamic culture? Not what was advertised—but imbuing pan-Arabism and anti-Zionism, proselytizing for Islam, and promoting Islamist sympathies will predictably make up the school’s true curriculum.

To express your concerns about this planned Arabic school, please write the New York City chancellor, Joel Klein, at JKlein@schools.nyc.gov.

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The Foundations of Faith from page 35 that Europe has rejected “Judeo-Christian morality”: In the Bible, procreation isn’t optional. The first commandment is to be “fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” . . . Having lost their faith and embraced an ethic of radical autonomy, Europeans stopped going to church, stopped taking the Bible seriously, stopped believing in the future and stopped having children . . . Having abandoned Christianity, Europe is trading the cross for the crescent.”

James P. Gannon wrote:

Among the consequences of Europe’s abandonment of its religious roots and the moral code that derives from them is a plunge in its birth rates to below the replacement level. Abortion, birth control, acceptance of gay marriage and casual sex are driving the trend.

Rejection of God’s truth has serious consequences.

ENDNOTES

4 Dawson, 24.
5 Abortion: Some Medical Facts.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.

Renald E. Showers is an author and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
The Old Testament often describes people’s encounters with the Lord in human form and how those experiences helped them come to know Him on a personal basis. Examining some of those passages can help us know the godly entity who revealed Himself to these ancient saints, speaking to them face-to-face, as a man speaks to his friend.

God and Abram

The Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1).

The Lord appeared to Abram (later called Abraham) and called Himself El Shaddai (English, “almighty” or “all sufficient”). The Lord was about to make a covenant with Abram in which He would promise to give him many descendants, to be His God and the God of his descendants, and to protect his descendants and give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting inheritance.

Abram understood that it was God—in bodily form—who stood before him, and he fell on his face (v. 3). Scripture describes the encounter as a real, face-to-face event, not as a dream or vision. Also important: Abram was still alive afterward.

The Lord presented Himself as El Shaddai because of the great significance of this name. The dot in the Hebrew letter d doubles the letter. El means “God” in Hebrew. The root of the word Shaddai is shdd and means “victorious and assertive.” So El Shaddai means, “I am the Lord who is victorious and the One whom all are to fear and obey.” However, since the second letter d is silent, the word sounds like shadai, which comes from shad, the Hebrew word for “breast.” Therefore, El Shaddai sounds like the God who provides all our needs, just as mother’s milk provides every need of a newborn. God’s message to Abraham and to us is that He is almighty. He can provide for all of our needs. We must trust Him, believe in Him, walk in holiness and purity before Him, and present all our needs to Him. Our lives depend on Him.

The name El Shaddai appears 48 times in the Old Testament, 31 times in Job alone. And every time it appears, it refers to the godly entity that men are able to see face-to-face.

God and Jacob

Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply: a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.” Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him. Jacob described his encounter with El Shaddai. The blessings he detailed are similar to the promises El Shaddai
gave Abraham in Genesis 17. The Lord gave Jacob the same blessings to show us that He will fulfill all the promises He gave Abraham through Jacob and his seed. Jacob identified El Shaddai with God Himself. (See also Genesis 28:2–5; 48:3–4.)

**God and Moses**

And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them” (Ex. 6:2–3).

God clearly was telling Moses, “When I appeared to your forefathers, I revealed Myself to them as El Shaddai, the entity they can see and still live.” This passage sheds light on Exodus 33:10–11 where Moses met the Lord face-to-face but was not allowed to see the face of the other entity (vv. 19–20).

According to the Lord’s words, El Shaddai is one of the entities that compose the Godhead and is the One whom men are allowed to see face-to-face.

**How Did El Shaddai Appear?**

According to Genesis 18, El Shaddai appeared as an ordinary man. Genesis 18:1–2 prepares us for the revelation of the Lord to Abraham by the terebinth trees of Mamre in Hebron (cf. 13:18). Abraham was sitting at his tent door in the heat of the day when he saw three men coming toward him. He ran to them and bowed.

Abraham spoke to one of the men: “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant” (v. 3). The structure of the Hebrew text makes it clear that Abraham addressed one of the three as Adonai. The word Adonai is presented in plural, masculine form and serves as an expression of reverence. However, the rest of the verse indicates that the word refers to the Lord. Abraham said to Him, “If I have now found favor in Your sight.” The words Your sight are masculine singular, not plural, indicating that Abraham was speaking to the Lord Himself. Abraham saw Him face-to-face and lived; therefore, the person he saw was El Shaddai. El Shaddai appeared to Abraham as a man, like any other man.

The rest of the encounter reinforces the argument that the Lord appeared to Abraham in human form. In verse 10 the Lord spoke to Abraham and promised him that Sarah would give birth to a son. Sarah heard the promise while inside the tent and laughed “within herself” (v. 12). In other words, she laughed in her heart, rather than aloud. Sarah knew she was far too old to bear children, too, was very old. But she did not know that it was God speaking to Abraham.

The fulfillment of such a promise would involve a great miracle; and since Sarah was unaware that one of the three was the Lord Himself, His words sounded like a joke to her. (Scripture nowhere says the Lord also revealed Himself to her face-to-face.)

Then the Lord asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? . . . Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you . . . and Sarah shall have a son” (vv. 13–14).

In verse 15 Sarah denied that she laughed. But the Lord knows what is in our hearts and therefore said to Sarah decisively, “But you did laugh!” In other words, “You doubted my promise.”

“You laughed” in Hebrew is tsaklkhkt. Therefore, the name of their son became Yitskhak (Isaac, also spelled Yitzhak in English), meaning “will laugh.”

After the Lord and the two men who came with Him finished eating, they arose and looked toward Sodom. The Lord said He had come down to examine the deeds of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 16–21). The men went to Sodom, while Abraham still stood before the Lord. (A similar story is documented in Genesis 11:5.)

After the two men departed, the famous negotiations began between the Lord and Abraham over saving the righteous of Sodom. These end with the verse, “So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place” (v. 33).

The two men who left Abraham and went to Sodom were angels sent to save Lot and his family from the destruction the Lord was about to rain on the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The word angel does not always describe a winged image; it usually refers to a messenger.

Unfortunately, rabbinical Judaism does not take a Scriptural stance regarding the identity of Abraham’s important visitor. It maintains the position that all three men who visited Abraham were angels.

This explanation does not follow God’s Word. The Word teaches clearly that El Shaddai, the godly entity whom people are allowed to see, appeared to Abraham in the form of a man. Readers must decide to whom they should listen: the wisdom of men or the explicit Word of God.

Meno Kalisher is a native of Jerusalem and pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly.

![A TREE for a LOVED ONE](https://example.com/tree.jpg)

_Did you know there’s a special way you can express your condolences, thanks, or respect for someone? For only $10 per tree, you can have trees planted in The Friends of Israel Forest in Jerusalem. You’ll receive a beautiful certificate that you can send as a tangible expression of your gift. Won’t you take this opportunity to provide a living memorial for a family member, friend, or associate? You may even wish to plant one or more trees in their honor or on your own behalf. It is a thoughtful and meaningful way to say “I care,” and you will share in helping to make the desert of Israel bloom._

(Use enclosed envelope.)
Jews attacked in Jaffa

Five young, unarmed Israeli soldiers who stopped for ice cream in Jaffa after a day at the beach were attacked recently by 10 Arabs. They managed to drive away.

Jewish residents have been leaving Jaffa, which borders southern Tel Aviv, because Arabs have been routinely assaulting and threatening them as Hamas flags flutter from Arab windows, Arutz-7 reported.

"Jaffa is where modern Zionism began. It was Tel Aviv before Tel Aviv became Tel Aviv," said Yisrael Zeira, head of Rosh Yehudi, a Tel Aviv-based organization for promoting Jewish education and values. He said Islamists recently held a rally in Jaffa to reaffirm their aim to take over the city and drive the Jews out.

Rosh Yehudi plans to send 15 religious Zionist families to live there this summer in hopes of bolstering the morale of Jaffa's remaining Jews. In addition, it will establish a religious school and an office for organizing tours of Jaffa for Israelis, schoolchildren, and tourists.

Medical tattoos

To avoid errors in medical operations, Dr. Arik Kahane of Assuta Hospital in Tel Aviv has developed a tattoo patch that will make perfectly clear which organ is to be operated on. When a leg, hand, lung, kidney, or other paired organ is to be operated on, confusion often develops as to which side of the body requires the treatment. The tattoo is to be pasted onto the correct organ or side of the body. Made in Israel, it is colored blue and reads, "Operate Here." After approximately a week, it wears off.

‘Small wall’ campaign begins

Unknown to most visitors to the Western Wall, the remnant of the Temple compound extends to the north far beyond what they can see—and a campaign is under way to publicize the fact and improve conditions at the Kotel HaKatan, the small wall. Above the Western Wall tunnels, near the Iron Gate entrance to the Temple Mount and on Temple Mount floor level, is an open area facing a short segment of the Wall. This is the Kotel HaKatan.

Though it is off the beaten track, it is actually considered holier than the familiar Western Wall plaza because of its closer proximity to the Holy of Holies of the Temple Mount.
Muslim leaders vowed in April to murder Americans, Jews, and everyone who refuses to submit to Islam but accused Judaism of being a bloodthirsty religion. To heighten the irony of the Muslim claim, the following also occurred that month:

- Four Muslims tortured, mutilated, and killed three Christian men in Turkey in a publishing house where they were preparing notes for a Turkish study Bible.
- The Muslim speaker of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Legislative Council prayed, "Allah, take hold of the Jews and their allies, Allah, take hold of the Americans and their allies... Allah, count them and kill them to the last one and don’t leave even one."
- The Muslim terrorist organization Hamas called for the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers.
- A Muslim wrote a newspaper article that said suicide operations fulfill Allah’s wishes because Allah demands “the extermination of the Jews which is good for the inhabitants of the worlds [sic]."
- A Hamas spokesman said violence and murder, not negotiations, will “liberate” the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and “Palestine.”
- It came to light that the PA’s new 12th grade history textbooks have eliminated all mention of the Holocaust.
- Hamas television broadcast a new video encouraging Palestinian children to “carry the knife” and become terrorists and showed a dramatization of the four-year-old daughter of female suicide bomber Reem Riyashi singing to her dead mother and vowing to follow in her mother’s footsteps.

Meanwhile, Jewish doctors in Israeli hospitals treat Palestinians and Palestinian terrorists—free of charge.

Ancient Temples. However, it is hard to get to, has no trappings of a holy site, and is not protected 24 hours a day. Arab children ride their bicycles and Arab women walk through with their shopping bags.

A no-littering sign has been erected, “but what we really want,” said an ad hoc committee, “is a sign saying that this is a holy site and that it should be treated appropriately.”

Hamas seizes U.S. weapons

Hamas recently hijacked three truckloads of American weapons intended for the Fatah party headed by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, reported WorldNetDaily.com.

“We obtained the U.S. weapons and will keep hijacking any assistance the Americans provide to Fatah,” said a Hamas spokesman.

WorldNetDaily said the last confirmed U.S. weapons transfer to the Palestinians “took place in May 2006 and consisted of 3,000 assault rifles, but WND reported multiple other transfers later were delivered to Fatah, including a cache of 7,000 rifles last January and about 8,000 assault rifles in February.”

Hamas told WorldNetDaily in January that it intended to capture a portion of the $86.4 million in aid the United States pledged to bolster Fatah and that it would attack Israel with the American-made weapons.

Seeing Fatah as the better of two evils, the United States sent the weapons to bolster Fatah in Gaza. However, said WorldNetDaily, “Hamas has reportedly won most battles against the U.S.-backed militias.”

The two terrorist organizations have been fighting each other since Hamas took control of the PA in 2006. Hamas now controls the northern Gaza Strip and has been launching rockets regularly into nearby Israeli communities.
Where had they gone? For many months I had not seen the ultra-Orthodox from the Chabad-Lubavitch movement who were trying so hard to convince people that their late leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson from New York, was the messiah. They always came with brochures and much literature.

I was wondering if they had left for good when I heard a knock on my door. Who, of all people, should be standing there but several ultra-Orthodox men. And who was with them? One of their well-known rabbis, a man who had argued with me and shouted at me concerning my faith while I was on a crowded bus with my wife a few years earlier. I will never forget how he treated me. He did not know upon whose door he had knocked and was greatly surprised when I answered.

“You see,” he said, trying to appear in control, “we have come to visit you.” With him were two young assistants whom he was instructing in how to witness to people concerning their belief that Rabbi Schneerson, who died in 1994, is the messiah.

So I asked them, “What news do you bring?”

“Important news,” said one of the young men. The rabbi remained silent, waiting to see how his pupils would do. They began to speak about their “messiah,” Rabbi Schneerson, whom many people in Israel no longer want to hear about. “Do you believe he is the true messiah?” one asked me.

“You have believed a lie,” I replied. “You do not know the truth about God, so you have fallen into deep sin and believe a great falsehood.”

Nervously, the men looked at their rabbi. “Did you hear what he said about our holy messiah?” they asked him. Then they asked me, “Why do you speak against such a holy one?”

“You are worshiping blindness,” I said. “And you will become spiritually blind, as your teacher has become.”

“How do you know that you follow after the truth?” one asked.

“Because I follow only the Bible,” I replied. “I believe only in Almighty God, as is written in the Bible. Is the Bible not holy enough for you that you spend so much time reading books rabbis have written instead of reading the Bible? I am certain that you go to the synagogue three times each day to pray, do you not?”

“Yes,” they replied. “This is an important obligation for us.”

“And do you pray from the depths of your heart or from prayer books that rabbis have written?”

“Of course, we pray from prayer books. Is this not good enough for you? How do you know how to pray
with whom you speak?” he asked his pupils. “Do you know in whom he has believed?”

When they said no, he declared, “This Man! He believes in This Man!” meaning Jesus.

Then the students wanted to know how I came to believe in Jesus. So I told them! It was a great opportunity for me to explain the true way of salvation. I opened my Bible and began reading to them all that is written about the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah 53. They listened, reading along with me while glancing at the rabbi, waiting to see what he would do. But he did nothing. Then he said, “It would be better if we left.”

“Why?” they asked. “We are reading the Bible. Is it forbidden to read the Bible?” But they went, telling me, “We want to see you again.” Please pray they return and that we can have another long conversation about the Lord.

“I pray before the Lord, from my heart; and I am sure my prayer is received in heaven.” I showed them the important chapter of Deuteronomy 6, where it is written,

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart (Dt. 6:4–6).

They recite these verses many times each day. But in fact, they do not understand what they say because they read so quickly.

We had a nice conversation. I gave them each a piece of cake and a cup of coffee, and we sat and talked. This hospitality apparently surprised them greatly.

One young man remarked, “We know you are against us. Yet you receive us warmly, as friends. How can this be?”

“I believe in Almighty God,” I said. “With Him there is no hatred, only love.”

Now the rabbi stirred, emerging from his calmness. “Do you know without a prayer book?” one asked.

“Why?” they asked. “We are reading the Bible. Is it forbidden to read the Bible?” But they went, telling me, “We want to see you again.” Please pray they return and that we can have another long conversation about the Lord.