Israel My Glory

September/October 2007

A MINISTRY OF THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL GOSPEL MINISTRY, INC.

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G
ive no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Jews, Gentiles, and the church: three entities, three objectives. This issue features indispensable facts you need to know about the church. Our knowledgeable authors explain how the church was anticipated in the Old Testament and began in the New with a clear commission to take the gospel message into every corner of the world. Finding out about the church’s future, the Rapture, marriage supper of the Lamb, and mission in the Millennium round out a perfect picture of who we are, what we are to be doing, and what’s in store. Want to understand the church? It’s all here. (Cover: background, Bob Elsdale/Getty Images; digital composition and enhancement, Thomas E. Williams)
A question raised at a recent Day in the Prophetic Word wasn’t related to Bible prophecy, but it was a good question nonetheless. What is The Friends of Israel doing to reach young people?

In recent years we have run children’s programs concurrently with regular sessions of our prophecy conferences to expose youngsters to our teaching ministry. While their parents attend the conference, the children learn Bible lessons that focus on the Jewish background of Scripture and enjoy crafts related to biblical and Jewish themes and music with a Jewish flavor. Said a grateful parent recently, “It was evident in conversations with our daughters that they were learning the Bible in its historical and Jewish context. This made us smile from ear to ear.”

We are, in fact, committed to teaching children about God’s eternal plan as it unfolds through the Jewish people. In Eastern Europe we host summer camps for youth, many of whom have little or no understanding about the Creator God or His imperatives for life. Campers come from as far away as Russia and the Ukraine to our camps in Poland and the Czech Republic. They come with their parents and teachers to participate in camping experiences filled with meaning and purpose—daily Bible studies, sports, games, craft projects, singing, cultural programs, and special excursions to the Jewish Museum in the old Warsaw Ghetto in Poland. All activities are designed for maximum physical, social, and spiritual challenge. At the close of our camp in Poland, a thankful parent shared, “We will continue to teach our children to pray and to read the Bible.”

One of The Friends of Israel’s most exciting outreaches is our four-week Israel Youth Adventure. Guided by experienced FOI staff, these young people (18 and older) walk where Jesus walked, learn about God’s love for the Jewish people, pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and immerse themselves in the land of Israel.

Our summer 2007 group spent close to half its time there working on a kibbutz as an expression of its support for Israel and the Jewish people. The youths also toured biblical and historical sites, hiked the Holy Land, participated in an archaeological project, and found ways to exalt our Lord Jesus Christ in the land of the Bible. Experiences like these frequently lead to life-changing decisions and commitments, including that of lifetime service for Jesus Christ.

Our Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS), a full academic year of in-depth study of God’s Word on the campus of Philadelphia Biblical University, is likely our most important ministry in preparing tomorrow’s leaders. Although many of our students come directly from high school, many are also young and middle-aged adults. The courses are grouped into four areas: biblical, doctrinal, historical, and practical, with a strong emphasis on the historical and Jewish cultural background of Scripture.

Students testify that the most exciting component of the program is the study tour to Israel in the spring. That is when the Bible comes alive, and our students develop an appreciation for the history and culture of the Jewish people and their vital role in God’s plan.

We also have an internship program for recent college graduates. Their training includes:

1. Instruction in The Friends of Israel’s mission and philosophy of ministry.
2. Work projects at our international headquarters in New Jersey.
3. Hands-on ministry with our field personnel.
4. Service projects in the Jewish community.

To accelerate The Friends of Israel’s commitment to reach the next generation, veteran worker Bruce Scott has been appointed to the new position of staffing coordinator for North American Ministries. Bruce will interact with and assist young people who have a heart for the ministry and who may be led to serve with The Friends of Israel.

As we communicate truth to the younger generations and challenge them to serve Christ, we think of the apostle Paul’s words to Timothy, his son in the faith:

*These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity* (1 Tim. 4:11–12).

William E. Sutter is executive director of The Friends of Israel.
almost immediately announced its game plan for the new “Hamastan.” Israel had already assured a Jewless ministate when it dismembered the Jewish communities there in August and September 2005, forcing 8,000 Israelis out of Gaza. Now Hamas is dealing with the next class of infidels: Christian Arabs.

In a June 19 WorldNetDaily (WND) article titled “Christians Warned: Accept Islamic Law,” Aaron Klein reported what the future holds for Christians gullible enough to believe they could live in Gaza with the same freedoms they had under Israeli governance.

A militant Hamas leader told WND that Christians can only live safely in Gaza if they accept Islamic law. The speaker was Sheik Abu Saqer, leader of Jihadia Salafiya, an Islamic movement that recently opened a “military wing” to enforce Muslim law there.

Christians in Gaza, Saqer declared, who dare to engage in “missionary activity” will be “dealt with harshly,” WND reported. Of course, women will be expected to follow the rules of Islamic dress and will not be allowed in the streets without acceptable garments. His threats came two days after a church and Christian school were attacked following Hamas’s seizure of power in the territory.

“I expect,” the sheik declared, “our Christian neighbors to understand the new Hamas rule means real changes. They must be ready for Islamic rule if they want to live in peace in Gaza. . . . The situation has now changed 180 degrees.”

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About 2,000 Christians remain in the Gaza Strip. But those numbers will soon diminish significantly.

Any assessment of Islamic extremism will reveal a pattern of oppression and exclusion of any who differ from Islam’s religiously intractable position. Therefore, any who operate under the delusion that Islamists will promote or even tolerate other faiths are badly mistaken.

To propose that terrorist organizations like Hamas be recognized as peace partners and responsible caretakers of the people over whom they rule is an embarrassment to freedom-loving people and sends a clear message to our enemies. The message is that it is okay to tell Christians and other minorities that they can kiss freedom goodbye, pack up, and get out—all with the blessing of liberal Western religionists and politicians who blindly countenance jihadist imperialism.

Gaza: a case in point.

Palestinian medics attend to a wounded Palestinian boy at al-Najar hospital in Rafah in the Gaza Strip after Muslim gunmen opened fire at a school run by the UN (Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images).

For years realists on Middle East affairs said a Palestinian state would become a platform for radical Islamist terror and that the most dangerous merchants of death would populate the ministate created by the disastrous decisions finalized in Oslo, Norway, on August 20, 1993. The accords resurrected and certified terror kingpin Yasser Arafat as the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization and sole representative of the Palestinian people. Thus began the era of jihad that continues to this day.

Fourteen years after Oslo, we are reaping the whirlwind of that awful agreement. Citizens of the Gaza Strip now know the force of diplomatic improprieties that crush lives and destroy future serenity.

In a recent, vicious coup, the Hamas terror organization seized control of Gaza and almost immediately announced its game plan for the new “Hamastan.” Israel had already assured a Jewless ministate when it dismembered the Jewish communities there in August and September 2005, forcing 8,000 Israelis out of Gaza. Now Hamas is dealing with the next class of infidels: Christian Arabs.

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Gaza: a case in point.

by Elwood McQuaid
How Fair Is the Fairness Doctrine?

There is a move afoot to resurrect the misnamed Fairness Doctrine and impose it on conservative broadcasters. If it is successful, liberal politicians will debilitate Christian radio and virtually shut down sources unfriendly to their agenda for a politically correct, leftist America.

Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) said he overheard two prominent, left-leaning senators discuss reinstating the Fairness Doctrine to “fix” talk radio. “They said,” Inhofe stated, “We’ve got to do something about this. These are nothing but far-right extremists. We’ve got to have balance. There’s got to be a legislative fix for this.’’ The “far-right extremists” are conservative talk-radio personalities who have kept Americans abreast of the real facts of life on important issues affecting the country.

The Fairness Doctrine came into being as a regulation of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1949. It required broadcasters to “afford reasonable opportunity for the discussion of conflicting views of public importance.” After a number of controversial skirmishes, however, the FCC later withdrew the regulation. In a 1974 unanimous decision by the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote, “Government-enforced right of access inescapably dampens the vigor and limits the variety of public debate.”

The FCC decided in 1987 to scrap the policy, saying it “restricts the journalistic freedom of broadcasters” and “actually inhibits the presentation of controversial issues of public importance to the detriment of the public and the degradation of the editorial prerogative of broadcast journalists.”

Several months prior to this decision, President Ronald Reagan vetoed legislation that would have turned the Fairness Doctrine into law. However, the move did not stifle promoters of bureaucratic control of the airwaves. In 1991 some congressmen tried to resuscitate the Doctrine, but President George H. W. Bush threatened another veto.

In the heat of the current political campaign, the Fairness Doctrine has been dragged out again, this time by liberal congressmen who want to silence conservative talk radio and deprive it of control of its own programming.

Interestingly, talk radio has become the most potent force for conservative expression in America. When the Fairness Doctrine was first proposed, the country had 2,881 radio and 98 television stations. By 1989 the number had grown to more than 10,000 radio and 1,400 television stations. Since then, there has been a veritable explosion of information sources, making it impossible for a single school of thought to monopolize public opinion.

What nettles liberals is their lack of success in promoting their agenda. In the free market of radio, millions of people are rejecting the social, political, and antimititary radicalism served up by the “mainstream” media and are tuning in to broadcasts they believe are more fair and balanced.

As a matter of fact, liberals attempted to launch anticonservative programming with little success. The heralded return of talk-show host Phil Donahue in 2002 on MSNBC was touted as a liberal counterweight to Fox News. But after six months of dismal ratings, the show was cancelled. After the Donahue show tanked, the head of a news television consulting firm reportedly said, “The political talk show format has yet to prove—and may never—that it can support a liberal voice.”

But the failure of liberal talk radio in the marketplace has not dampened the spirits of its political bedfellows who want to restrict freedom of expression. In June Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) introduced a bill in the House prohibiting the FCC, for at least one year, from using federal funds to impose the Fairness Doctrine on broadcasts featuring conservative radio hosts. The Pence bill was adopted 309–115.

Pence, himself a former radio talk-show host, commented on his Web site: “Bringing back the Fairness Doctrine would amount to government control over political views expressed on the public airwaves. It is a dangerous proposal to suggest the government should be in the business of rationing free speech.”

The bottom line for Christian broadcasters is the implicit danger of being regulated by bureaucrats who are hostile to evangelical Christian convictions on spiritual and biblical issues mandated in the Word of God. Freedom of speech is the glorious gift we have been given in our democratic society. But with the full frontal assault of radical forces against evangelical and traditional biblical standards, you can be sure a revived Fairness Doctrine would be grossly unfair to the public expression of conservative Christian beliefs.
The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

Statement of Activities
Year Ended December 31, 2006

Changes in net assets:
Public support and revenue:
Public support:

Contributions:
- General ministry contributions ...................................... $4,142,165
- North American ministry contributions ........................... 1,155,338
- Foreign ministry contributions ....................................... 904,636
- Institute of Jewish Studies ............................................. 46,026
- Gift portion of annuities .................................................. 310,849
- Legacies ........................................................................... 494,689
- Gifts-in-kind ..................................................................... 12,117
Total public support .............................................................. 7,065,820

Revenue:
- Ministry publications, audio and video ............................. 1,549,808
- Conferences and special functions .................................... 77,452
- Interest and dividends ...................................................... 102,026
- Other revenue .................................................................. 8,329
Total revenue ...................................................................... 1,737,615
Total public support and revenue ........................................ 8,803,435

Expenditures:
Program services:
- Outreach ministries ......................................................... 4,077,799
- North American ministries ................................................ 1,581,083
- Foreign ministries ........................................................... 1,118,279
- Institute of Jewish Studies ................................................. 82,125
- Conferences and special functions .................................... 259,669
Total program services ....................................................... 7,118,925

Supporting services:
- Management and general ................................................ 1,296,667
- Stewardship and fund raising .......................................... 359,098
- Total supporting services ................................................ 1,655,765
- Total program and supporting services ............................ 8,774,690
- Change in net assets from operating activities .................. 28,745

Other changes in net assets:
- Realized gain (loss) on investments ................................... 4,421
- Gain on the sale of investment property held for sale ........................................ 100,380
- Change in actuarial value of gift annuities and trusts ........... 279,715

Changes in net assets ............................................................. 413,261
Net assets at beginning of year ............................................. 3,100,727
Net assets at end of year ....................................................... $ 3,513,988

Our financial statements are audited by the accounting firm of Lambrides, Lamos & Moulthrop Co., Certified Public Accountants. Their report on the audit for the year ended December 31, 2006, was rendered on March 29, 2007, with an unqualified opinion. The above figures are taken from that report.
Rome’s mission was a symbolic necessity. A paltry few Jews atop a sterile rock 1,200 feet above the desert floor by the Dead Sea were no threat to the empire. The issue was their defiance of Caesar, who considered survivors a threat to Roman supremacy and a potential rallying point for others with seditious tendencies. Therefore, he dispatched the legion for a single purpose: to finish it with the Jews. In the end, however, Rome was deprived of victory because the Jewish survivors finished it themselves by committing mass suicide.

The story of Masada and the place’s existence today are sobering monuments to perpetual war between imperialists and those seeking only to maintain order and live in peace. That the conflict has survived so long should surprise no one, and the stakes remain the same.

I remember most vividly the words often repeated on that visit: Never again. They are credited to poet Yitzhak Lamdan who, in the 1920s, wrote an epic poem presenting Masada as the last stronghold of the Jewish people. He concluded it with the words Masada shall not fall again.

As was the case with the Roman contrivances—the siege ramp and the stone walls built to ensure that no one would escape off the mountain—the Jews of Judea saw themselves surrounded by enemies pledged to their destruction. So ingrained in the nation’s psyche was the commitment to survival that, until a few years ago, the Israel Defense Forces Armored Corps and paratroopers would make a torchlight pilgrimage to Masada’s summit to take their oath of

When I first walked the snaking path that winds its way to the summit of Masada nearly four decades ago, a special feeling permeated the atmosphere. Looking down from the plateau of the old Herodian fortress and remembering what took place there two millennia ago is a heart-stopping experience. It was there that Roman legionnaires spent three years in the scorching heat of the Judean wilderness to subdue 960 Jewish survivors at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Pursuing the Finish-It Principle

Masada, in Israel’s Judean wilderness (Harvey Lloyd/Getty Images).
service. The ceremonies concluded with the cry, “Masada shall not fall again!” Their promise to the State of Israel was that survival would be assured by commitment, vigilance, and the strength to finish conflict with victory.

Years later I heard the same sentiments from Israel’s military and political leaders. No one enters a military conflict without intending to finish it. That fact reminds me of my father’s words to me as a boy. “Never,” he often said, “get into a fight you don’t intend to finish.” In this day of “time outs” and “let’s discuss it,” such advice may appear primitive or ant-social. In the world I inhabit, more than 60 years ago, however, bullies were not mollified by kindness or dialogue. You either defended yourself or ran away. And running was never more than a temporary solution.

The Finish-It Option

Today we seem to be foundering in a sea of inconclusiveness. Nothing ever seems to be finished. Prof. Barry Rubin, director of the Global Research in International Affairs Center (GLORIA) in Herzliya, Israel, offered an explanation in an article titled “The West Is Losing Because It Thinks Itself the Enemy.”

Rubin commented on conclusions of former UN envoy Alvaro de Soto who left the Middle East, blaming the United States and Israel for Hamas’s fanaticism.

De Soto, wrote Rubin, embraces the argument that “these [terrorist] movements are not motivated by an extreme doctrine, a thirst for power, and a desire to loot but by ‘unspeakable social conditions’ through which ‘small groups of exploiters and imperialists, through their terrible deeds, have driven millions of people out of their minds. Perhaps a population has been humiliated beyond human endurance.’”

De Soto’s theme embodies threads of a fundamental ideology now paralyzing any realistic appraisal of events. It runs something like this: Terrorists and murderers deserve no-fault status because their victims are really the perpetrators; their victims forced them to become evil, suicidal fanatics because of social deprivation and injustices that compelled the adoption of genocide as a desired instrument of retribution.

And while the democracies fret in UN committees over what we collectively have done to cause such depraved “reactions,” the killers continue to wreak unremittent havoc to suit their purposes.

At the root of this problem lies (1) a failure to acknowledge the existence of evil and (2) a lack of moral capacity to dictate what should be done about it.

Think of the many times these days when indifference or the lack of response to a horrible crime elicits the frustrated cry, “Where’s the outrage?” or “Why isn’t something being done about this?”

The answer is that we have abandoned our forefathers’ road map to moral perspicuity and social and political conduct. That road map to structure, order, and stability was transmitted by the standards articulated in the Word of God. Morality was not defined by individuals or parties but by distinct principles that regulated what was right and what was wrong.

The liberal news media, as well as political and religious figures, often speak of “moral equivalency” when discussing the Middle East. The “moral equivalency” they invoke is a misnomer. But the term does confirm their failure to recognize the existence of a rational moral order that sees the difference between good and evil. There is no moral equivalence between homicide bombers and the busload of innocent schoolchildren they deliberately slaughter.

The prophet Habakkuk described a similar condition in the seventh century B.C. His was a time when evil had upset the order of things, and it appeared everything was turned upside down. The righteous were viewed as evildoers, good was regarded as evil, right became wrong, and corruption and disorder saturated the land. “Therefore,” the prophet lamented, “the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds” (Hab. 1:4).

When “everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” the result was one of the most chaotic, immoral, and spiritually bankrupt eras in the history of Israel. The book of Judges records it as a time of moral decline repeatedly identified as “evil in the sight of the Lord” (2:11; 3:7; 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).

Matters were corrected only when men and women of character rooted out the evildoers. In a manner of speaking, they finished it.

It’s a lesson to be learned. Appeasement and concessions will not buy off those bent on destroying your society and mutilating your way of life. Endless dialogue and inconclusive nonsolutions only grant tyrants time to mock weakness and sharpen their weapons.

The current situation in the Gaza Strip makes the point. Hamas is a terror organization that has vowed since its inception to destroy Israel in the name of religion. Nevertheless, Palestinians tolerated, then embraced it. The time came when Hamas, listed as an official terrorist entity by America and others, was allowed into the Palestinian political process. The result was the military insurrection by which Hamas took control of Gaza.

In June al-Qaida’s deputy leader called on Muslims around the world to fortify Hamas with weapons, money, and attacks on U.S. and Israeli interests; and he urged Hamas to unite with al-Qaida’s “holy warriors” after the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the Associated Press reported that he told Hamas leaders to institute Islamic Sharia law in Gaza saying, “Taking over power is not a goal but a means to implement God’s word on earth.” By “God’s word” he meant the Qur’an.

Clearly, evil is a progressive malady. If tolerated, it will eventually consume the entities that allow it to feed off them.

The Jesus Example

Some may say the finish-it principle is not very Christian. Oh, but it is. It was a principle Jesus lived and served in the most exemplary fashion.
Critical Issues Facing Today's Churches
by Renald E. Showers

As a person who loves the church and has been privileged to minister in numerous local churches for more than four decades, I have a deep concern regarding the directions that many churches are going today.

I am convinced the most critical issues confronting churches are these: What should be the source of authority for determining the nature, purpose, and function of the church? And what are the nature, purpose, and function of the church?

Source of Authority

Is the source of authority to be (1) a market-driven philosophy; (2) the opinions of the people in the pews; or (3) God, through the revelation He has given in Scripture concerning the church?

In essence, the market-driven philosophy says, “In order to reach the unsaved, we must make the church relevant to them by conforming it to their concept of relevancy.” This approach allows the unsaved—who the Scriptures declare are the children of Satan (1 Jn. 3:10)—and the world’s wisdom, which God declares is “foolishness” and “futile” (1 Cor. 3:19–20), to play a key role in determining the church’s nature, purpose, and function.

Using the notions or opinions of churchgoers as a source of authority has a great pitfall: Every congregation consists of people with many different levels of biblical knowledge and spirituality and who hold many different opinions. And since most of the congregation probably has never studied what the Bible states concerning the church’s nature, purpose, and function, these differences militate against a proper consensus on this critical issue.

Clearly, God, through the revelation He has given us in Scripture, should be the ultimate and final Source of authority concerning the nature, purpose, and function of the church. Through the repeated expressions the church of God and the churches of God, the Bible clearly indicates that the church belongs exclusively to Him, not to the unsaved or the people of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Th. 2:14; 2 Th. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15).

The Bible teaches that God is the One who has the authority to add people to the church and to determine the functions individual believers are to have in accordance with the ways He has gifted them for ministry (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:28).

The Bible also indicates that God is the One who had the authority to...
Sacred to the Hindus of India are monkeys, cobras, cows, and other animal and plant species. Unfortunately, the same respect, to say nothing of reverence, is not extended to Christians. Hindu extremists apparently will stop at nothing in their war against the followers of Jesus.

Compass Direct News has reported a brutal attack on a Christian pastor in a suburb of Bangalore, in Karnataka state. On June 8 a mob of Hindu extremists beat Pastor Laxmi Narayan Gowda “and tried to set him on fire before parading him naked in the suburbs” of the capital city.

After barging into his home, they informed him that unless he and his family left the area, they would be assaulted. Compass Direct said the mob then left, but soon returned with 100 more people who forced their way into the pastor’s residence, where they beat him mercilessly in front of his wife and two children.

At one point they doused him with kerosene and began burning Bibles. An assailant threw one of the burning Bibles at pastor Gowda, but miraculously he did not catch fire. Compass Direct reported that the extremists then stripped him and marched him through the neighborhood with a board around his neck bearing the words I am the one who was converting people.

Pastor Gowda accepted Christ about 15 years ago. For the past 12 years he has ministered as a pastor and representative of the Global Council of Indian Christians.

Sam Joseph, a leader of the All India Christian Council (AICC), reported that by the time the pastor was pushed into the street, the mob had swollen to about 1,000 people who jeered, harassed, and joined in the attack. At least 250 Bibles were burned, while furniture and equipment in the house were vandalized. Pastor Gowda was hospitalized.

According to an informant, the attack was not a spontaneous outburst of religious fervor. It was planned and allegedly directed by an unidentified lawyer who suggested to the crowd that if it attacked as a group, there would be little if any prosecution. Local police arrived about an hour after the assault. But when Compass Direct filed its report, no action had been taken against the perpetrators.

Dr. Sam Paul, AICC’s public affairs secretary, said “extremists in Karnataka are emboldened as the police usually turn up after the incident. There are also times when the police encourage antisocial elements to harass Christians.” A police spokesman did say police asked the Christians to file a written complaint against the attackers, but the believers were reluctant to press charges.

A police inspector said the mob was made up of local people who did not belong to any extremist Hindu groups. The inspector claimed that Pastor Gowda’s neighbors attacked because they did not want Christian prayers and meetings to be conducted in his house. Informed sources, however, contradicted the explanation, saying the assault was motivated by resentment of Gowda’s conversion from Hinduism to Christianity and was a warning to others who might be tempted to do the same.

A revealing fact is that the mob was also bent on launching an attack on the Scriptures by burning Bibles, which tells us that God’s Word and the faith it produces are at the heart of the persecution in India and other places throughout the world.

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**A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World**

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

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**Pastor Laxmi Narayan Gowda recovering in the hospital from his brutal beating**

(Courtesy, CompassDirect.org).
The first day, May 24, A.D. 33, marked the spiritual birth of the church in Jerusalem. The second day, May 14, 1948, marked the national rebirth of Israel in Tel Aviv.

The first event supports the view that the church is neither a continuation nor a replacement of Old Testament Israel. The second event supports the view that God is not finished with Old Testament Israel.

The remainder of this article will briefly examine the circumstances and implications of each day.

The First Day

Both covenant and replacement theologians teach that the church has become God’s elect people, instead of Israel. But this is not the case, as seen by the following eight arguments.

1. The Promises Are Different.
   - The promises and provisions concerning Israel were basically earthly in scope:
     If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you (Ex. 15:26; cf. Dt. 28).

2. The Seed Is Different.
   - Abraham’s physical seed refers to Israel:
     Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called” (Rom. 9:7).
   - Abraham’s spiritual seed refers to the church:
     Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7).

3. The Births Are Different.
   - Israel celebrated its birth at the base of Mount Sinai (Ex. 19—20).
   - The church celebrated its birth at Pentecost (Acts 2). The author of Hebrews brings out the great contrast between these two entities (Heb. 12:18–24).

The promises concerning the church are basically heavenly in scope:
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1–3).

Left: “The Pentecost” by Baroque artist Adriaen van der Werff (Superstock). Above:
4. The Nationality Is Different.

- Israel belonged to this earth and to the world system.
- The church is composed of all nations and has no citizenship on Earth; its members are strangers and pilgrims:
  
  Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11).

5. The Relationship With the Father Is Different.

- God is never presented as the Father of individual Israelites in the Old Testament.
- God is presented as the Father of all New Testament believers:
  
  For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (Rom. 8:15; 1 Jn. 3:1).
- Israel is now under God’s judgment:
  
  But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” Just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day” (Rom. 10:21; 11:8).
- The church is free from all present judgment:
  
  And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:13-15).
- Israel was God’s servant:
  
  But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend (Isa. 41:8).
- The church, each born-again believer, is God’s son:
  
  But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (Rom. 8:15; 1 Jn. 3:1).

6. Does the Bible Offer Other Examples of Time Gaps in Divine Programs?

It does, indeed. There are at least three places where gaps of many centuries can be found in a single, short paragraph: Isaiah 9:6–7; 61:1–2; Zechariah 9:9–10.

Thus the answer to the original question is that the church has occupied that “time out” period between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel’s prophecy for the past 2,000-plus years.

— HLW
6. The Relationship With the Son Is Different.

- Israel is pictured as an unfaithful wife:
  “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the LoRD. “Return, a backsliding children,” says the LoRD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, o house of Israel,” says the LoRD (Jer. 3:1, 14, 20; cf. Isa. 54:1–17; Ezek. 16:1–59; Hos. 2:1–23).

- The church is pictured as a chaste virgin bride yet to be married in heaven:
  For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God” (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7–9).

- Christ was a stumbling stone to Israel:
  But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. And “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed (1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:8).

- Christ is the foundation and chief Cornerstone of the church:
  Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:4–5).

- Christ is Israel’s Messiah and King:
  Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (Jn. 1:49).

- Christ is the church’s Savior, Bridegroom, and Head:
  For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23).

7. The Relationship With the Holy Spirit Is Different.

- The Holy Spirit rarely came upon individual Old Testament Israelites.
- The Holy Spirit actually lives inside each New Testament believer: o r do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Cor. 6:19).

8. The Temple Is Different.

- Israel had a Temple:
  And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (Ex. 25:8).

- The church is a temple:
  In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21).

The above contrasts should make it crystal clear that the church is not Israel. Paul carefully distinguished these two separate entities when he wrote, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks [Gentiles] or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32).

The Second Day

“Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?” says the LoRD. “Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?” says your God ( Isa. 66:7–9).

At sunrise on May 14, 1948, Great Britain’s flag, the Union Jack, was hauled down from its staff over Government House in Jerusalem. The presiding British high commissioner, Lt. Gen. Sir Allen Gordon Cunningham, then left the Holy Land for the last time amid a 17-gun salute. That same day, Jewish Agency Chairman David Ben-Gurion drove to 16 Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv—a white, modern, two-story art museum. There, at exactly 4 P.M., before some 400 individuals who included Jewish religious and political leaders plus members of the worldwide press, he read Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Britain’s 28-year rule of the Holy Land would end at midnight, and the modern State of Israel would be born.
In an adjoining room, a symphony orchestra played “Hatikvah,” Israel’s national anthem, while people wept.

At 5 P.M. on that same day in New York City, the UN General Assembly hastily convened an emergency meeting to consider the war clouds due to unleash their fury in the Middle East at 6 P.M. New York time (midnight in Israel). The UN had one hour to do something. Suddenly, an amazing and unexpected news bulletin arrived from Washington. President Harry S. Truman had bestowed official U.S. recognition on the new Jewish state. The time was 6:11 P.M. in New York, but six hours later in Jerusalem. The British Mandate had just expired. Truman thus recognized the Jewish state 11 minutes after it had come into existence. His message read as follows:

This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the Provisional Government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel.¹

Three days later, on May 18, Russia recognized Israel. Thus, for the first time since September 8, A.D. 70, the Holy Land, by official Gentile action, again belonged to the Jews.

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¹ Truman Presidential Museum and Library <truman-library.org/photos/israel.jpg>.

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### GRAND SUMMARY OF THESE TWO ALL-IMPORTANT DAYS

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<tr>
<th>The Church Was</th>
<th>Israel Was</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promised (Mt. 16:18)</td>
<td>Divinely selected (Dt. 4:37; 7:7; 14:2; Ps. 33:12; 89:3; 105:6; Isa. 44:1; 48:10, 12; Rom. 9:4–5)</td>
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<td>Born (Acts 2:1–4)</td>
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<td>Established (Acts 3—28)</td>
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<td>Instructed (1 and 2 Tim.; Titus)</td>
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<th>The Church Is</th>
<th>Israel Is</th>
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<tr>
<td>Espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22–32)</td>
<td>Divinely but temporarily rejected (Mt. 21:23, 42; Rom. 11:5, 25)</td>
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<td>Warned (2 Pet. 2; Jude)</td>
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<th>The Church Will Be</th>
<th>Israel Will Be</th>
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<tr>
<td>Raptured (1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Th. 4:13–18)</td>
<td>Divinely and permanently restored (Acts 3:19–21; 15:14–18; Rom. 11:1, 26–27)</td>
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<td>Christ’s bride (Rev. 19:7–9)</td>
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<td>Reigning with Christ during the Millennium (Rev. 20:4–6)</td>
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<td>Sharing the New Jerusalem with saved Israel (Rev. 21)</td>
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This new work of God was something the Old Testament prophets never clearly understood. Although they did envision Gentiles submitting to the God of Israel, they never foresaw that both Gentiles and Jews would do so on equal footing. The apostle Paul explained:

*The mystery of Christ [Messiah] . . . in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel* (Eph 3:4–6).

In the present age, God dispenses His blessings to all who believe the gospel; both Jewish and Gentile people stand as equals before Him.

Paul illustrated this amazing truth by contrasting the Temple in Jerusalem with the new temple being built by Jesus Christ:

*Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation* (2:13–14).

The Temple barricade, called the *soreg,* formed a fence around the outer Court of the Gentiles to prevent Gentile access into areas where only Jewish people could go. Archaeologists have discovered a sign written in Greek that warned Gentiles against encroaching past this barrier. It reads,”No foreigner is to go..."
Aberrations

Some Christians, however, do not believe the church began at Pentecost. They see it as existing in the days of the Old Testament. Robert L. Reymond, a founding faculty member of D. James Kennedy’s Knox Theological Seminary, wrote, “The church in Scripture is composed of all the redeemed in every age who are saved by grace through personal faith in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.”

The King James Version of the Bible reflects this interpretation in its translation of Acts 7:38, which refers to the people of Israel as “the church in the wilderness.” This view assumes a strong continuity between God’s people before and after the cross. Wrote Reymond, “The true church of the Old Testament was the spiritual seed of Abraham.” Such theologians use the term Israel to identify the people of God in both Testaments, and they use the word church for both groups as well.

Although there are similarities and parallels between God’s people both before and after the cross, using the same terms to identify them confuses their differences. More important, the Scriptures never refer to Christians by using the name Israel, nor does the New Testament ever refer to the people of Israel as the “church” of Jesus Christ. Only those who subscribe to Replacement Theology are comfortable using the terms church and Israel interchangeably.

Some Jewish Christians fail to appreciate the unity of both Jewish and Gentile believers in the body of Christ. They rightly emphasize the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. However, they encourage submission to the Law of Moses and rabbinic traditions. In so doing, they erect barriers between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the form of dietary laws, rituals of worship, Sabbath keeping, and holy days.

In keeping Jewish laws and traditions, Messianic synagogues disrupt the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the one true church. Both Jesus and Paul firmly addressed these issues (Mk. 7:19; Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:9–11; Col. 2:16–17). The solution to the “gentilization” of the church is not to establish separate congregations composed mainly of Jewish believers who keep Jewish traditions. Rather, it is for Jewish and Gentile believers to welcome each other as equals in the church. Christian churches

Inset: Greek tablet, attached to the soreg, forbidding Gentiles to pass beyond that point (Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com). Artist’s rendering of Herod’s Temple (Stan Stein).
In 1866 Samuel J. Stone penned the words to the great hymn of the faith, “The Church’s One Foundation.” The opening words make a powerful statement about the church and its mission: “The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.” Rev. Stone understood clearly that the church is founded on Jesus Christ. It exists by Him and for Him.

And its mission is to proclaim Him by preaching God’s Word and living in a way that will draw unbelievers to Him. Doing so requires understanding of who Jesus is and what He requires of us.

When Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Mt. 16:13). Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). And Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock [Peter’s confession that Jesus is Messiah] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (vv. 17–18).

The Greek word used here for “church” literally means “called-out ones.” The Lord was going to call out a people to be part of a special group that He would put together.

And just prior to His ascension to heaven, Jesus Himself declared this group’s mission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (28:19–20). “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The Lord clearly gave the fledgling church its purpose statement. It was to go and to make disciples everywhere, both locally (in Jerusalem) and to the uttermost.

**Go and Preach**

The church is not a building. It is a collection of individuals redeemed from every nation, tongue, tribe, and ethnic origin who have been saved by God’s grace through faith. Its main objective is to make the Messiah (Christ) known to people everywhere. The Lord commissions all believers in Him to declare Him to the entire world.

The apostle Paul instructed his protégé Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). Timothy was to declare the gospel message even if his audience did not want to hear it.

The gospel is rarely popular. It is not usually sought after; and it is often viewed as divisive, harsh, old-fashioned, cruel, and extremely intolerant and inflexible by those who are lost and do not understand it.

But, actually, it is rooted and based in love. It is life transforming, direction altering, and offered freely to everyone without respect of rank or social status. The church’s ministry of evangelism should be freely available to anyone anywhere at any time. The message of the cross is the great equalizer, placing a peasant and a wealthy aristocrat in the same lost position and offering them the same salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Building on the ‘ROCK’**

Artist’s rendition of John the Baptist preaching (The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images).
Paul passionately shared the Lord’s heart regarding the gospel and evangelism with the church at Rome, namely: (1) our need, (2) Messiah’s work on our behalf, (3) the necessity to believe, and (4) the necessity to share what Christ has done for us:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 3:23; 5:8; 10:13).

Unsaved people cannot call on the Lord unless someone shares the Lord with them. So the church is required to go out and preach the Word:

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (10:14–15).

The apostle Paul’s heart beat for evangelism. His greatest desire was to see people saved. Consequently, he wrote that he wanted to “provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and blood” (11:1). We are to have the same zeal as he did to see people saved. In other words, Paul was willing to do whatever it took to get the job done. The lost should see the Lord in us and want what we have. Consequently, there must be a visible, noticeable difference between the church and the world.

**Live Holy**

If the church is going to “provoke” or arouse, within lost humanity a yearning to understand and obtain salvation, believers must be holy, which literally means “unique, different” and “separate” from the surrounding world.

Peter addressed this issue in his first epistle: “He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:15–16). The Bible is adamant that the Lord is holy. As Christians, we sing about God’s holiness and we talk about His holiness, but we don’t actually appear to live as though we believe He is holy.

Holiness implies separation. In Hebrew, the word for “holy” can also be translated “sanctify” or “sanctification,” which implies separation. Paul likened this separation to serving in the military:

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3–4).

Holiness unto God requires separation from the world and all it holds dear. Believers are commanded, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 Jn. 2:15). We are also admonished not to be pressed into the world’s mold or image. If we are going to be lights in a sin-darkened world, we must maintain a healthy distance from Satan’s domain.

**Heed Doctrine**

The church also needs to “take heed . . . to the doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:16). Biblical doctrine addresses the church’s belief system as found in Scripture. Bible doctrine enables the followers of Jesus to understand His plan and revelation for our lives, as well as the future events of prophecy.

Down through its history, the church has battled schisms, heresies, false teachers, and false doctrine. It is imperative that the followers of the Lord Jesus understand the Bible, “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Believers must not flounder in their faith, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). The followers of Christ are to understand the Word, have doctrinal integrity, and “stand against the wiles of the devil” (6:11).

**Let the Spirit Be Your Guide**

Many believe their consciences are sufficient to guide them righteously through life. On the surface, the idea sounds feasible. But in reality, the concept is flawed.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their consciences became warped and sinful. Consequently, many people sear their consciences by perverting the truth and rejecting God.

The Scriptures command followers of Jesus to walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1). The Holy Spirit is to be our guide and teacher: “But . . . the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (14:26).

The Holy Spirit in a believer’s life should produce fruit, according to Galatians 5:22–23. The fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance) is a single, solitary item. The Bible does not designate “fruits” of the Spirit but “fruit,” a single entity that believers are to evidence in and through their lives. Believers are to be under the influence of the Spirit at all times, walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh.

**Appreciate the Victory**

In the lyrics to his great hymn of the faith, Samuel Stone saw the church’s struggle down through the ages. He saw Satan’s attacks, the heresies that have invaded the Body of Christ, and the constant warfare the church has endured. But the church will prevail, just as Messiah Jesus promised:

’Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

What a day of blessing it shall be
For the bride of Christ when the
Bridegroom comes for His beloved bride,
The church, and takes her to the home He
has prepared for her.

Meanwhile, we are to live holy lives on Earth, produce the fruit of the Spirit, and preach the Word so that others will come to know the great God whom we serve.

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Thomas C. Simcox is the Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.
The sky is not the limit! Those of us who have been born again are headed for a home that is out of this world. God has revealed His church’s glorious future; and like a great symphony, there are four movements: (1) the church’s translation, or Rapture; (2) its evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ; (3) its presentation at the wedding of the Lamb; and (4) its relocation to the everlasting Kingdom.

Here, then, is God’s prophetic plan. It should encourage us to live exclusively for Him today because, whatever our trials on Earth, He has prepared for us a glorious tomorrow.

The ‘Catching Up’

The next prophetic event on the church calendar is the Rapture. The term comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek word _harpidzo_, for the “catching up” of living church saints. Although _harpidzo_ refers explicitly to living believers only, the term _Rapture_ has been drafted to refer to the larger event in which Jesus will raise dead church saints and “catch up” to heaven the saints still living on Earth: “The dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Th. 4:16).

The phrase _in Christ_ refers to both Jews and Gentiles who have put their faith in Jesus as Savior and have thus been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (Rom. 6:1–11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:11–16). Theologically, then, the Rapture consists of (1) the resurrection of the deceased church saints and (2) the catching up of the living church saints.

It completes God’s earthly program for the church. This departure is one of two events that inaugurate the Day of the Lord and restart God’s prophetic program for the nation of Israel.

This reunion in the air corrects the separations that have affected the church since its inception at Pentecost. Originally separated from her Head (Jesus), who had ascended to His Father, the church soon experienced separation from other church saints who died.

Then followed geographical, doctrinal, denominational, and personal divisions. The Rapture will reunite all believers when “the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16–17). All personal, denominational, and theological divisions will be corrected as we experience the ultimate fullness of Jesus’ love.

Anticipation of this future reunion should encourage us to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3, emphasis added).

The Judgment Seat

Following the Rapture, the church will “appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done,
whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). This judgment may only involve the newly transformed, living saints, since Jesus may have evaluated the “dead in Christ” immediately after their deaths.

The purpose of this judgment is twofold. First, the quality of each believer’s works will be tested by fire (probably the glory of God, as seen in the case of Korah; Num. 16). The wood, hay, and straw will be incinerated, as Jesus completes the purification of His bride (Eph. 5:26–27). This personal and individual evaluation would seem to be private, since it is hardly likely that Jesus will subject His “betrothed” to public embarrassment in the courts of heaven.

Church saints have the opportunity to minimize this divine cauterization because every sin confessed here on Earth will be forgiven, cleansed, and forgotten. The more sanctified we are, the less purification we will need. This purification is not related to salvation, but to sanctification: our continuing conformity to the image of Jesus. All of us have motives and actions that we have not perceived from God’s perspective and, therefore, need this final cleansing—the removal of the “wood, hay, and straw.” When introduced into the presence of Jesus’ holiness, we will be embarrassed at these imperfections. Since there will be no tears in heaven, this cauterization will bring us great relief. Believers should endeavor to say, as did Paul, “For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:4).

Then our works that remain—those likened to gold, silver, and precious stones—will receive their just rewards. The works themselves will be rewarded, as well as their methodology (“let each one take heed how he builds,” 1 Cor. 3:10) and motivation (“the Lord... will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [motives] of the hearts,” 4:5).

Four imperishable crowns will be awarded for faithful service (9:25):

The crown of life, or crown of living, will be given for persevering under trials with God’s wisdom. The Lord has promised this crown “to those who love Him” (Jas. 1:12).

The crown of rejoicing will go to those who evangelize and disciple others (Phil. 4:1; 1 Th. 2:19–20).

The crown of glory will be given to those who faithfully shepherd some segment of Christ’s body (1 Pet. 5:1–4).

And the crown of righteousness will be given to those who love Jesus’ appearing—to those who live in such righteous purity that they are anxious to see Him (2 Tim. 4:8). Pursuing sanctification and good works maximizes our treasures in heaven.

The Wedding of the Lamb

Following her final purification and remuneration, Jesus will induct His bride (church) into the courts of heaven in preparation for the wedding of the Lamb.

It appears that the 24 elders seated on 24 thrones around the throne of God represent the church in heaven (Rev. 4—5). Clearly, they are glorified, crowned saints who are distinguished from (1) the four living creatures (4:9–10); (2) the hosts of angels (5:11–12); (3) the Tribulation martyrs (7:13–14); and (4) the 144,000 Jewish saints (14:3).

Inside the circle of these elders, the Lamb of God also appears in heaven’s throne room. It would appear that Jesus presents His bride to His Father before all the hosts of heaven. From this vantage point, the church will observe the unfolding of God’s judgment of the nations of Earth (Rev. 6—18).

After chapter 3, the church is no longer mentioned in Revelation, except for 19:7–8, where she has readied herself for the marriage of the Lamb, and 22:16, where she is in the eternal state. This wedding preparation seems to be the result of being cleansed and rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ so that she is now “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (19:8).

Here is positive motivation for faithful service to God while living on Earth. Many brides invest hundreds or
thousands of dollars for wedding dresses. How much more should the bride of Christ be willing to invest in her collective wedding garment. Every good work for which the church was created will adorn Jesus’ bride on that glorious day (Eph. 2:10).

It appears the wedding will take place in heaven, since it is placed here in Revelation 19 prior to Jesus’ return as King of kings to destroy His enemies and set up His Kingdom on Earth. Matthew 25:1–13 bids Israel to be vigilant to enter the wedding feast with the Bridegroom (and His bride) when He comes, indicating the reception will take place on Earth. The Kingdom, or at least its initial phase, seems to be likened to the wedding feast. So the bride is also presented to the earthly citizens of the Kingdom when the King returns.

### The Glorious Kingdom

During the Millennial Kingdom, Messiah Jesus will reign for 1,000 years as the glorified Lion of Judah and King of kings. The earth will be restored to near-Edenic conditions and enjoy the golden age of peace and prosperity promised by the Jewish prophets throughout the Old Testament.

The King will live in the restored city of Jerusalem with the glorified church saints as His bride who will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9–10). Apparently the church will assist in the administration of the Kingdom, since the 12 apostles were promised 12 thrones from which to judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:27–28).

After Satan’s final rebellion at the end of the Millennium, the present heavens and earth will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10–13). Then will come the new heavens and earth and the New Jerusalem that will come down from heaven, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:1–2). The New Jerusalem is associated with the church as bride:

> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (vv. 9–11).

This use of the term **bride** to describe the city seems to indicate the church will abide eternally in the New Jerusalem.

Since Israel has been promised the land as an everlasting possession, it appears that Israel will forever occupy the new earth around the city. There will be three gates in each wall of the city, each bearing the name of a tribe of Israel, which suggests the tribes will live around the city much like Israel’s wilderness encampment in the days of Moses.

Revelation 21:14 further identifies the city with the church: “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” The apostle John, who received the prophecies of the book of Revelation, added,

> But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light (vv. 22–23).

The Lamb will live in the city forever with His bride. This is the Father’s house of which Jesus spoke: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:2–3). The bride of Christ will enjoy this unique relationship of oneness with Jesus for all eternity.

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Ayaan Hirsi Ali is arguably the bravest and most remarkable woman of our time.

To understand why this 37-year-old woman is extraordinary, she must be assessed in the context of the forces pitted against her in her twin struggles to force the Western world to take note of Islam’s divinely ordained enslavement of women, and to force the Islamic world to account for it.

A series of incidents this year placed the forces she battles in stark relief. On May 6, Muslims shot up the Omaryah elementary school in Gaza. One man was killed and six were wounded in the onslaught. The murderers attacked because the UN-run school in Rafah had organized a sports day for the children, in which little boys would be playing with little girls.

The idea that boys and girls might play sports together was too much for the righteous believers. It was an insult to Islam, they said. And so they decided to kill the little boys and girls.

On May 3, in Gujrat, Pakistan, Muslims detonated a bomb at the gate of a girls’ school. Their righteous wrath was raised by the notion that girls would learn to read and write. That too, they felt, is an insult to Islam.

On April 28, U.S. soldiers in Iraq discovered detonation wires across the street from the newly built Huda Girls’ school in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad. They followed the wire to its source and discovered the school had been built as a deathtrap. The pious Muslims who constructed Hirsi Ali’s Challenge to Humanity
the school had filled propane tanks with explosives and buried them beneath the floor. They built artillery shells into the ceiling and the floor. To save the world for Allah, they decided to butcher little girls.

And the brutality is not limited to the Middle East. In April in Oslo, Norway, Norwegian-Somali women’s rights activist Kadra was brutally beaten by a crowd of men piously calling out “Allah Akhbar.” She was attacked for exposing the fact that inside their mosques in Norway, Norwegian imams praise female genital mutilation in the name of Allah.

Late last year Hirsi Ali published her memoir, *Infidel*. In describing her own life, what she actually explains are the two competing human impulses: conformity and individualism. In her own life, the clash of the two has been played out on the stage of Islamic ascendance and Western cultural collapse.

Hirsi Ali was born in Somalia to a politically active father who sought to free his country from Said Barre’s Marxist dictatorship. Forced to flee the country with her family, Hirsi Ali’s childhood in Arabia and Africa revolved along the axis of Islamic ascendance at the hand of the Saudi-financed Muslim Brotherhood and Khomeini’s Iran.

Hirsi Ali’s rebellion against Islam was personal, not political. As a young girl and later as a young woman, she found herself abandoned and stilled by the dictates of Islam just as her youthful spirit wished most to take flight. As a five-year-old in Somalia, she screamed in pain and shock when her grandmother tied her down and had a man with a knife mutilate her genitals.

Living in Saudi Arabia she was struck by the oppressiveness of the “true Islam.” Why, she wondered, were she and her mother and sister prohibited from leaving their apartment without a male relative escorting them? As an adolescent in Nairobi she wondered why the enjoyment she felt in the company of boys was sinful.

Why did her mother need to suffer the humiliation of polygamy? Why could she not choose her own husband? Why was she told by one and all that her normal human impulses to seek love, respect, and compassion and think for herself were sinful and evil?

As she puts it, “I could never comprehend the downright unfairness of the rules, especially for women. How could a just God—a God so just that almost every page of the Qur’an praises his fairness—desire that women be treated so unfairly? When the [Islamic teachers] told us that a woman’s testimony is worth half of a man’s, I would think, Why? If God is merciful, why did He demand that His creatures be hanged in public?”

Her impulse to rebel was matched by her impulse to conform. As a teenager, Hirsi Ali tried to be a faithful Muslim and even joined the Muslim Brotherhood. Embracing the notion of submission she began wearing a full-body burka.

But try as she might, she could not accept that her own will had no inherent value. She blamed the preachers for the terror she saw as a Muslim girl, believing they must be distorting the Qur’an. “Surely,” she writes, “Allah could not have said that men should beat their wives when they were disobedient? Surely a woman’s statement in court should be worth the same as a man’s?”

Yet, when she sat down and read the Qur’an on her own, she found that everything the preachers had said was written in the book.

At 21, Hirsi Ali emancipated herself. Fleeing from an arranged marriage to a Somali immigrant in Canada, she sought and received asylum in Holland. There, she embraced Dutch freedom and freedoms and quickly flourished in a true rag-to-riches immigrant tale. She learned Dutch fluently and began supporting herself as a translator. In just four years she had bridged the cultural divide between Africa and Europe and began studying political science with the crème de la crème of Dutch society at the University of Leiden.

A mere decade after her arrival, as a naturalized Dutch citizen, she was a public figure, an outspoken social critic of Islam in Europe. In January 2003, she was elected to parliament as a member of the conservative Liberal Party.

In Holland, Hirsi Ali found herself confronted by a kidnapper, a gentler type of cultural tyranny—the moral relativism of political correctness and multiculturalism dictated by the Left. Just as she rejected Islamic oppression in Africa, so in Holland she refused to submit to the will of the majority not to notice, judge, or take action against the misogynist tyranny and anti-Western culture of the Muslim minority.

Hirsi Ali’s labors brought her to Theo Van Gogh. In 2004 the two produced the film *Submission, Part One*. The short film shows a young Muslim woman wearing a see-through burka. Passages of the Qur’an permitting the abuse of women are written on her body. The woman prays in submission to Allah all the while noting her abject suffering in his name. At the end of the movie, the woman raises her head to Allah and calls into question the reasonableness of her submission.

The film’s provocative message placed both Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh’s lives in imminent danger. And on November 21, 2004, Van Gogh was butchered by a Dutch Muslim on the streets of Amsterdam. The murderer stabbed a letter into Van Gogh’s chest in which he threatened to murder Hirsi Ali “in the name of Allah Most Gracious and Most Merciful.”

While Hirsi Ali was forced to flee her home and live under armed guard in army installations, her message proved too much of a challenge for the Dutch establishment, which vomited her out last year. Her own party found a formality on which to revoke her citizenship and throw her out of the country and the parliament. Although the public outcry that ensued forced the government to restore her citizenship, the message was clear.

Hirsi Ali moved to Washington, D.C. As a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, she continues to warn the West of the dangers of Islam and of Western cultural disintegration under the tyranny of multiculturalism. In April her work brought an imam from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to call for her murder for the crime of apostasy.

In her life and work, Hirsi Ali personifies the central challenges of our time. She holds a mirror up to the Islamic world and demands that it contend with the evil it propagates in the name of divinity.

She holds a mirror up to the Free World and demands that we defend our freedom against the onslaught of moral relativism and cultural decline.

So, too, she demands our compassion for the women of Islam. She says we must see the suffering beneath the veil and work to alleviate it. Whether it means that we must challenge veiled women to explain why they ascribe to a faith that gives men the divine right to beat and rape women or simply hold Muslim communities in the West to the standards of freedom on which our civilization is based, the West must help these women free themselves from oppression.

Finally, in our own societies, we must protect and uphold voices like Hirsi Ali’s. For the past five years, Hirsi Ali has lived under threat of death for her views.

We must understand that only when she, and people like her, can walk the streets unafraid will we have properly defended our freedom.

This article originally ran in The Jerusalem Post. It has been reprinted by permission. Caroline Glick is an award-winning journalist and the Post’s deputy managing editor.
The Israelites were the beneficiaries of the first fast-food delivery service. Each morning during their 40 years in the wilderness (except on the Sabbath), a white substance tasting like “wafers made with honey” arrived from heaven and covered the ground (Ex. 16:31). At the end of the day (except on the Sabbath), anything left over became rank and infested with worms. In all that time, the Israelites never did know what the substance was. So they called it manna, Hebrew for “what is it?”

Like the manna that suddenly appeared to the children of Israel, so a new movement has appeared among evangelicals today. Many churches are aware of its presence and, in many instances, have adopted some of its novel worship styles. This movement—or as it is sometimes referred to, “conversation”—is called the emerging church (hereafter referred to as EC). (An asterisk indicates the word is defined in the glossary on page 31.) Yet when most evangelicals hear the term, they ask, as did the children of Israel, “What is it?”

Unfortunately, the question is far easier to ask than it is to answer. If you search the Internet for “emerging church,” be prepared for an overwhelming list of Web sites, discussion groups, and blogs. Brian McLaren, considered the “dean of EC,” is the founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in Spencerville, Maryland, and was listed by Time in 2005 as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America. The subtitle of his book A Generous Orthodoxy illustrates the difficulty in grasping an understanding of the movement. It reads, “Why I am a missional + evangelical + post/protestant + liberal/conservative + mystical/poetic + biblical + charismatic/contemplative + fundamentalist/calvinist + anabaptist/anglican + methodist + catholic + green + incarnation + depressed-yet-hopeful + emergent + unfinished Christian.”

McLaren makes the point that his brand of Christianity is like Teflon: nothing sticks. EC has no single model; instead it has “hundreds and thousands of models.” What is it, then? Will it benefit the church as fresh manna benefited the Israelites? Or will it be harmful, like the manna that rotted?

**A Postmodern Phenomenon**

According to the George Barna research group, one-third of America’s adults are unchurched. Barna projects that by 2025, only 5 percent of American Christians will express their faith through the local church. Young people are the least likely to describe themselves as Christian, and church attendance is declining by generation. The church undoubtedly is losing ground, a fact that should concern every Christian.

ECers believe the reason for this situation, at least in part, is because of a shift in the 1990s in epistemology (how people know things or how we think they know things). Until then, modernism was the worldview. The epistemology in modernism holds to a single moral standard and to absolute truth, science, and logic.
Postmodernists* (*post literally means “coming out of”) hold a different view: “What we ‘know’ is shaped by the culture in which we live, is controlled by emotions and aesthetics and heritage, and in fact can only be intelligently held as part of a common tradition, without overbearing claims to being true or right.”

Several pastors and concerned evangelicals noticed this apparent shift in culture and began to talk about changes they believed the church needed to make to reach this new generation. The concern echoed across the Atlantic into Great Britain, and the discussion was enlarged, extending into Australia and New Zealand. What emerged was an ongoing conversation, the term most ECers prefer. Because of these different views and ideas, it is impossible to make a corporate statement concerning the emerging church and have it be true of all those involved. ECers themselves would classify the conversation differently, depending on who was talking. There is no central office or specific spokesperson. There are, however, many popular and recognized ECers. There is also a Web site called Emergent Village.

**From Seeker to Savvy**

The popular model of the evangelical church at the close of the modernist era was the seeker-sensitive church. Started early in the 1980s primarily by baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964), its philosophy of ministry was to meet “felt needs.” Pastors wanted church to be attractive to a generation that was disillusioned with traditional church. Pews were replaced with theater seats. Choirs and hymnals gave way to worship teams singing praise songs. Organs were shut down, and drums and electric guitars were turned on. Casual dress replaced coats, ties, and dresses. Sermons were no longer preached behind large wooden pulpits. And the pastor, wired for sound, placed his Bible on a clear acrylic stand and used a computer to deliver his PowerPoint® “presentation.”

This style appealed to baby boomers, and these congregations grew quickly. As they grew, so did their facilities. Soon the church became a one-stop shop for spiritual and physical needs. Restaurants, cafes, bookstores, gyms, and children’s playgrounds all had their niches on the church “campus.”

Worship was performed in front of the audience, and the audience loved it. The atmosphere looked corporate; the staff, professional yet down to earth. The messages were less preachy, less doctrinal, and more related to everyday life. Bible, missions, and prophecy conferences were not on these churches’ calendars.

Then a new generation arose called Generation X. The Xers are quite different from their baby-boomer parents. They are postmodern, meaning globally savvy through constant exposure to “global news, global fashion, global music and global religions,” all transmitted instantly through our advanced technology.® They weren’t raised with TV, like their grandparents—or even cable, like their parents. They have satellite; TiVo®; and the ubiquitous, interactive, online communities of MySpace and Facebook. They meet each other over the Internet, connecting regularly with people around the world.

They don’t merely hear about wars and world conflicts on the evening news or read about them in the newspapers; they watch them happen live while eating dinner. They not only watch movies, they make their own using their computers. They don’t just collect music; they carry their entire, massive collections with them wherever they go on tiny, computerized marvels called iPods.

What most Generation Xers know about Christianity comes from what others say about it. Their views are shaped by the mass media and high-powered celebrities who portray Christianity negatively. They believe Christians are close-minded, intolerant, and dangerous. For the Xers, objective truth is relative; and Christians who espew statements about absolutes are bigoted and racist.

Although seeker-sensitive churches still thrive, this generation sees them as impersonal and materialistic—mirrors of corporate America, emphasizing buildings, money, and people. They say they want to see compassion, care, and concern and claim they “feel disenfranchised with nowhere to look.”

The emerging church seeks to combat that feeling. It wants to create an atmosphere of acceptance and a sense of welcome. The three Cs of EC are “celebrating, connecting, and coaching.”

EC congregations tend to be smaller and more intimate than seeker-sensitive or mega churches. Many Xers feel disconnected by precisely timed, well-tuned “worship hours.” They want to participate and feel connected. So EC churches deconstruct worship time and refashion it into a more “meaningful” environment. Often that means meeting in a darkened room lit only with candles. Wafting through the air might be finitely scented incense to heighten individual senses. Various religious symbols—such as icons, statues, and crosses—adorn the room, making the atmosphere more worshipful for Xers. The goal is to create participation in worship.

Many EC participants de-emphasize preaching a Bible message from a pulpit and opt to use the time for individual worship by setting up stations featuring a variety of activities. One station might feature a table for journaling; another might prompt quiet meditation and provide headphones so the worshiper can listen to quiet, soothing music. Other stations might feature art or poetry. Experiencing Jesus and connecting with a community of worshipers is the way to reach postmodernists, according to many in the EC.

**EC’s Nonconfrontational Position**

Since EC likes dialogue, those within it say, “All theology will remain a conversation about the Truth who is God in Christ through the Spirit, and about God’s story of redemption at work in the church. No systematic theology can be final.”® One EC writer put it this way: “This is what I believe, but I could be wrong. What do you think? Let’s talk.”

The emergent church is extremely interested in the metanarrative,* or “the big picture.” Much of the Bible, say
ECers, is a series of stories told from a particular perspective. There is reluctance to emphasize absolutes. A secular writer, commenting on the EC movement and postmodern Christianity, summed things up this way: “What makes a postmodern ministry so easy to embrace is that it doesn’t demonize youth culture—Marilyn Manson, ‘South Park,’ or gangsta rap, for example-like traditional fundamentalists. Postmodern congregants aren’t challenged to reject the outside world.”

Emergents are less likely to confront culture when it clashes with biblical truth. Tony Campolo, for example, explained to a reporter why he wrote his book Speaking My Mind: “My purpose in writing the book was to communicate loud and clear that I felt that evangelical Christianity had been hijacked. When did it become anti-feminist? When did evangelical Christianity become anti-gay? When did it become supportive of capital punishment? Pro-war? When did it become so negative towards other religious groups?”

Keep in mind that, because of the fluidity of the movement, not all ECers believe this way. But much of the conversation tends in this direction.

Sometimes EC’s strong desire to be creative in worship intimidates more traditional people. Dr. David McLeod, dean of systematic theology at Emmaus Bible College in Iowa, stated it well: “It’s not the bells and whistles of EC that concern me. It is the way they handle the Bible. It [the Bible] is the Word of God, and it is absolutely true.”

Acts 2:42 and Colossians 3:16 provide absolutes in worship while allowing flexibility. It is fair to say that one can be true to the text without creating a cookie-cutter church.

Those within EC encourage believers to live an authentic, Christlike life. A common expression today is “Let’s get real.” It is also a wonderful exhortation for followers of Christ, for God indeed looks at the heart. The apostle Peter said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). And the book of Hebrews urges us to look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (12:2).

The emergent church is probably here to stay. We should be familiar enough with it to see if it departs from the fundamentals of the faith. A thought to ponder is this: If the culture changes, does the message have to change? How far does the messenger go to adjust his delivery? Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). Each local assembly must be evaluated against the Word. If a church rightly divides the Word and preaches truth while simply adjusting the “bells and whistles,” it is like the sustaining manna for the children of Israel. If, however, in the name of culture, it adopts humanistic elements and departs from the truth of the Word, then it will be like spoiled manna that reeks with a terrible stench.

END NOTES

1 Dan Kimball, The Emerging Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 14.
4 Kimball, 48.
5 D. A. Carson, Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 27.
6 Kimball, 59.
8 Carson, 38.
10 Ibid.

Steve Herzig is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel.

‘PLAYTIME’ IN IRAQ

A terrified 4-year-old Iraqi boy cries as older boys gleefully stage his mock execution in Baghdad, Iraq, in July. It is uncertain whether these “games” are influenced more by the ongoing violence or by the Muslim culture that glorifies jihad and death (Hadi Mizban/ AP Photo).
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Historically, church saints have looked to God to take them up to meet the Lord in the air at any moment (1 Th. 4). Furthermore, said theologian David L. Larsen, “Neither John the Baptist nor the Lord Jesus redefined the Kingdom promise; nor did they transfer it or cancel it for Israel.”

Such resolute statements emanate from a strict adherence to a historical-grammatical interpretation of God’s Word. However, the emerging church (EC) relies heavily on the Bible’s narratives and stories and less on biblically definitive language. Thus a Zionist view of Scripture, which teaches that Jewish people are a literal people who were promised a literal land where a literal King will set up a literal Kingdom on Earth, is not enthusiastically embraced by most emergent churches. Said one self-described ECer, “We don’t believe that any one theology gets it absolutely right.”

In November 2006, best-selling author Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in California and enthusiastic supporter of EC conversation, went to Syria and met with its dictator, Bashar Assad. Among his critics was Paul Proctor, whose insightful comments were published on newswithviews.com: “What Warren was doing in Syria is what he’s been doing all along here in America and around the world with the dialectic church— withholding inconvenient truths about sin and the call to repentance for the sake of Results and Relationships. Going soft on sinners is his specialty! That’s how you “build bridges,” exponenntially grow churches and dialectically achieve “unity in diversity”— by putting absolutes aside and dialoguing differences away until everyone’s conscience is seared and conviction vanishes in the ambiguity of religious relativism.

EC followers see themselves as missional. (See glossary on page 31.) They desire to evangelize. They want to demonstrate genuine love and concern for all people, a goal that is both admirable and biblical. When Jesus told His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel,” He did not limit the outreach to a particular color, age, gender, or religious background (Mk. 16:15). However, the question needs to be asked, “What gospel?”

Jesus said it simply in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” To consider the conversation of men to be as valid as the Word of God paves the way for a false gospel.

And since the EC philosophy soft-pedals doctrine in favor of a worship experience, it is highly likely that many EC churches are producing a younger generation— Generation X—that has little knowledge of the absolutes of Scripture and no particular understanding of, or love for, Israel and God’s Chosen People.

ENDNOTES

by Steve Herzig
Glossary for the Emerging Church Movement

**Absolutism:** theory of objective values; a philosophy in which such values as truth and morality are absolute and not conditional based on human perception.

**Conversation:** expresses the desire to interact and share ideas between individuals who are traveling the road with Jesus while living in a postmodern world. No person or group speaks officially on behalf of the emerging church. Those within the movement prefer this term for the concept it implies.

**Deconstruct:** another word for change. If the church seeks to reach the postmodern world, it must change how church is done. What has been done in the past must be broken down and rebuilt.

**Emergent Village:** an organization begun in the United States and United Kingdom in 2001 to fund the theological imaginations and spiritual lives of all who consider themselves a part of the broader movement. An intellectual and philosophical network, it has its own Web site: www.emergentvillage.com.

**Emerging Church:** a worldwide, informal group of pastors and church leaders who believe that change is a constant feature in our world. They believe the church must change and adapt to our postmodern world. Most within the “conversation” understand what they are emerging from (modernism) far better than what they are emerging into. While there are no official spokespeople, there are a number of advocates who lecture on the “movement.”

**Epistemology:** how we know things; the method or means of attaining knowledge.

**Metanarrative:** universal guiding principles, systems of thought, grand stories that control and interpret reality; the big story.

**Missional:** a key word within the emerging church. It denotes a desire to be a participant with God in the lives of unbelievers. The emerging church believes we live as Christ among people and participate in God’s work of reconciliation.

**Modernism:** a worldview (epistemology) spanning about 350 years from 1650–2000. It emphasizes rationalism, science, technology, and empiricism (the belief that knowledge and truth are derived from experience and observation, especially as used in the scientific method). Modernism holds to a single moral standard, where truth is absolute. Individualism is highly valued, and the use of logic is the norm. The “conversation” believes this view comes across as harsh.

**Postmodernism:** a worldview (epistemology) characterized by an aversion for absolute truths; an age in which knowledge is shaped by culture and community is valued more than individuals. Postmodernism is enamored with words like diversity, tolerance, subjectivity, and humility. It supposedly comes across as gentle.

**Pluralism:** the existence of groups with different ethnic, religious, or political backgrounds within one society.

**Relativism:** the belief in standards that move according to circumstances. Right and wrong are not always right and wrong, and truth and falsehoods are not always that way. It is normal for a postmodern person to think relatively.

**Reconstruct:** what happens after the changes are made in order to reach the postmodern generation.

Note: Much of this information came from Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church by D. A. Carson and The Emerging Church by Dan Kimball.

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Pursuing the Finish-It Principle

From page 9

To be sure, His arena was spiritual rather than political; but the principle is the same. Christ set out on His mission of redemption fully aware of the trials, suffering, and agonies He would endure along the way. But He persevered without wavering until He could say from His cross, “It is finished.” Thus was completed the greatest campaign against evil ever waged on this planet. And in finishing it, He certified the eventual, total triumph God promised and the future reign of the Messiah from David’s hallowed throne.

His was the ultimate finishing blow to all that has and will beset the planet—the ultimate finish-it proclamation.

For now, however, we must live with the realization that the law of the secular world is the law of the jungle. Aggressor nations are carnivorous. The strong survive; the weak perish. Those who wish to survive must show strength and determination. Doing so involves sacrifice and often-unpleasant actions. But in the present, ugly reality of things, talk alone is more a way to the graveyard than to utopia.

These principles should have been engraved in the minds of Western leaders for more than 60 years following the “peace in our time” folly of appeasement in the Hitlerian era. That self-imposed hallucination ultimately cost in excess of 50 million lives, and the scars can still be seen in the thousands of acres of white crosses that mark the graves of our fallen heroes.

But for all of the agonies brought about by the mud and blood of the conflict remembered as World War II, there is something to say for the character of the combatants and those who led the forces of emancipation. They refused to stop short of the finish line. In their minds, the only viable action was to obtain the enemy’s total surrender. War was something freedom-loving people did not initiate. But when it was thrust upon them, they deemed “finish it” the only desirable option.

It is, I think, for good reason that those who carried the weight of that war are remembered as “the greatest generation.” The guiding philosophy of finishing well stands as the greatest legacy they passed to us. Are we losing the will or integrity to follow in their footsteps?

“Never forget” is not an option but an obligation.

Elwood McQuaid is executive editor for The Friends of Israel.
Jonah’s Prayer and Promise

In February 1891, the crew of the whaling ship Star of the East harpooned a sperm whale. In its death throes, the whale swallowed a man by the name of James Bartley.

A day and a half later, Bartley’s shipmates—who thought James had drowned—found him unconscious in the whale’s belly. Describing his experience, Bartley said he could breathe easily inside the whale, but the heat was unbearable. In fact, his appearance was completely altered. The whale’s gastric juices had permanently bleached his hands, feet, and face to a livid white.

The account of Jonah and the “great fish” has been greatly ridiculed by Bible critics who believe it is impossible for a fish to swallow a man, let alone for a man to survive in a fish’s belly for three days. Others, who embrace the Bible’s veracity, attempt to counter these critics by claiming the account is simply an allegory or a story to reveal a moral truth, not the description of a real event.

However, there are well-documented incidents where men like James Bartley were swallowed by whales and survived to tell their stories. Furthermore, Jesus Christ accepted the account as historical fact: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mt. 12:40). Jesus said Jonah’s experience was an illustration of His death. Thus, more than 750 years after the fact, Jesus validated the account’s authenticity.

To deny the story of Jonah is to call Christ’s statement a lie and thus deny Jesus’ claim to deity. Jonah 1:17—2:10 clearly states that God appointed a great fish to swallow the prophet; and in so doing, He spared Jonah’s life. In the fish’s belly, Jonah realized he was incarcerated in a pit of death and that his only hope of deliverance was total dependence on God. Instinctively, the disobedient prophet thanked God for sparing his life, repented, and rededicated his life to the Lord.

Jonah’s Supplication

We read, “Now the Lord had prepared [appointed or assigned] a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (1:17).

This fish could have been a sperm whale, white shark, or other huge fish that God especially prepared and appointed to swallow Jonah.

In fact, a sperm whale large enough to swallow a man was captured off Knights Key, Florida, in 1912 and is on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It is 45 feet long, weighs 30,000 pounds, and has a mouth 38 inches wide. In the whale’s stomach was a fish that weighed about 1,500 pounds.

Undoubtedly, there are fish capable of swallowing men alive. The question is, “Did Jonah actually die and come back to life, or did he survive three days and nights in the fish without dying?” Some conservative scholars believe Jonah did die and was resurrected from the dead, while others believe he lived through this experience.

Those who believe Jonah died use Jonah 2:2 as a proof text. It reads, “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried.” In the Old Testament, Sheol is where departed spirits went after death. So some contend Jonah actually died and cried to the Lord in prayer while in Sheol, and God answered his prayer and brought him back to life.

Although many conservative scholars hold this position, it nevertheless is more likely that God kept Jonah alive. The prophet probably referred to the fish’s belly as Sheol because he was in the lowest pit of darkness, believing that death was imminent. Or he could have meant that the fish’s belly resembled the netherworld where the Old Testament dead resided. Since it was God who prepared and appointed the great fish to swallow Jonah, God also would have supplied what was necessary to preserve the prophet’s life.
This prayer had six key features:

1. **Recitation.** First, Jonah reviewed his situation in the storm: “For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me” (v. 3). In his physical distress, Jonah came to realize God’s sovereignty over his life. He instinctively knew that by God’s will, the lot the sailors had cast fell on him; and thus they had thrown him into the sea (1:7, 12, 15).

2. **Submission.** In the throes of death, Jonah submitted to the Lord: “Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple’” (2:4). Earlier, Jonah had wanted to flee from God, but now he realized the folly of his sin and cried out for God’s presence.

In faith, Jonah appealed to God for mercy. His experience brought him to repentance, and he looked toward God’s holy Temple hoping to find forgiveness. In Jonah’s day, it was to the Temple that a repentant sinner came to offer a sacrifice for his sin in the hope that God would mercifully forgive him.

3. **Description.** Continuing to describe his suffering, Jonah said, “The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings [foundation or base] of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me; the deep closed around me; the waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; the great fish snatched the prophet from his watery grave, delivering his soul from “the pit” (Sheol) of death; and Jonah cried out, “O LORD, my God” (v. 6).

4. **Supplication.** Jonah told of seeking the Lord while at death’s door:

“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple. Those who regard [honor and worship] worthless idols forsake their own Mercy” (vv. 7–8).

Entombed in the fish’s belly, Jonah felt his life ebbing away. It was then the runaway prophet came to the end of himself. Remembering the Lord, he cried out to God as his only hope for survival. The prophet testified that God heard his prayer of repentance as he looked to the Lord for help in the face of death.

Why did Jonah mention the folly of worshipping worthless idols? Because of this experience, Jonah realized his rebellion against God’s will had become like an idol in his heart. He also realized that those who worship idols abandon all loyalty to God and sever themselves from His grace, loving-kindness, and mercy.

5. **Rededication.** Jonah expressed appreciation for his salvation and promised to pay what he had vowed: “But I will sacrifice to You with the hope that God would mercifully forgive him.

Running from God’s call brought Jonah to the horrifying situation in which he found himself. In the jaws of death, the prophet then saw where his sinful pride and self-will had landed him. And he cried out to God in repentance. Upon being saved from death, he lifted his voice in thanksgiving to God for sparing his life and gratefully promised to offer sacrifices and keep the vows he had made the same commitment once they came to believe in the true God of Israel, and He saved them from death (1:16).

6. **Appreciation.** Jonah concluded his prayer with “Salvation [deliverance] is of the LORD” (2:9). No other words were more fitting to summarize the prophet’s experience. Jonah was correct in his theology. Only the Lord can save. Often it takes a near-death experience for people to realize and appreciate that “salvation is of the LORD.”

Ironically, Jonah was overjoyed at God sparing his life; but later, as we shall see, the prophet was angry with God for saving Nineveh.

**Jonah’s Survival**

The prophet’s prayer was answered once he repented of his disobedience: “So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land” (v. 10). Many unanswered questions remain regarding Jonah’s experience. It would seem that after swallowing Jonah, the fish headed back to Israel (possibly to Joppa) to deposit him safely on dry ground.

In contrast to Jonah’s hesitancy to obey God’s command, the fish obeyed immediately and vomited the prophet onto shore. Jonah was chastened and suffered much through this experience, but he was saved from his watery grave by God’s grace and power. This lesson will serve him well, as the prophet is again commissioned to go and preach to Nineveh.

It is interesting to note that God used six miracles to bring Jonah to repentance. He caused (1) a violent storm (1:4), (2) the sailors to pin-point Jonah through the casting of lots (1:7), (3) the sea to become calm (1:15), (4) a fish to swallow Jonah (1:17), (5) the fish to swim to shore (2:10), and (6) the fish to vomit Jonah out onto dry ground (2:10).

A great transformation took place in the fish’s belly as God answered Jonah’s prayer. After promising to keep his vows, Jonah was ready to implement the divine purpose to which God had called him. Rebellion against God’s will must be dealt with. Let us learn from Jonah’s experience.

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**ENDNOTE**

1 John Phillips, Exploring the Minor Prophets (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1998), 146.

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God Is Moral
(Part 12)

The Bible reveals that our eyes have great moral significance and, therefore, are of concern to God. They are the primary organs by which we receive knowledge and perception of the universe and everything in it. Although God has the ability to see inside our hearts (our inner control centers), as human beings, we are limited to looking at outward appearances (1 Sam. 16:7; Isa. 11:3). As a result, “Of all the physical organs of the body, the eye was considered one of the more important.”

The Significance of the Eyes

The Bible indicates that eyes significantly influence the moral character of human hearts. Ephesians 1:18 refers to the “eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” The Greek text literally says, “the eyes of your heart.” It thereby signifies a connecting relationship between eyes and heart. Job referred to such a relationship when he requested that God weigh him on honest scales to see if his heart “walked after [his] eyes” (Job 31:6–7).

Scripture presents the following concepts of the heart as:
- The center of man’s inner life.
- The source of all the forces and functions of soul and spirit.
- The dwelling place of feelings, emotions, desires, and passions.
- The seat of understanding.
- The source of thought and reflection.
- The seat of the will and source of resolves.

“Thus,” wrote Johannes Behm, “the heart is supremely the one centre in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct.”

The eyes relate to the human heart in two significant ways: They both influence and reflect its moral condition.

The Eyes’ Influence on the Heart

Jesus Christ indicated that eyes have a major influence on the moral condition of the heart: “The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light” (Lk. 11:34).

Jesus signified that the human eye is a lamp. A lamp is not light. It is an instrument that dispenses light. Thus Jesus was saying that, as a lamp, the eye has the function of dispensing knowledge or perception to a human being.

The word translated “good” means “pure.” It has “the sense of ‘single, undivided loyalty.’” Thus the “good” eye is one that is morally pure because its focus is single, undivided loyalty to God and His truth. It will dispense knowledge and perception of God and His truth to the human heart.

Consequently, a person who has a “good” eye will be full of light. The word light in Jesus’ declaration “is the element and sphere of the divine.” Figuratively, it is the light “that illuminates the spirit and soul of man, is generally the element in which the redeemed person lives, rich in blessings without and within.” Thus “to be filled with Christian truth means to be walking in the light.”

By contrast, Jesus declared, “But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness” (v. 34). The word translated “bad” means “evil” or “wicked” and refers to what “is characterized by its antithesis to God and His will.” Thus the “bad” eye is one that is morally evil because it focuses on what is “contrary to God,” does not seek God and His truth, and refuses to be guided by Him. It will dispense to the heart knowledge and perceptions that are self- and world-centered and contrary to God and His truth.

As a result, someone with a “bad” eye will be full of darkness. Jesus used the word translated “darkness” figuratively to connote “the darkening of the mind or spirit, of ignorance in moral and religious matters.” The meaning included “everything that is at enmity with God, [both] earthly and demonic.”

Through this contrast between the good and bad eyes, Jesus emphasized the following truth: The moral character of the human heart is influenced greatly by what the eyes look at and focus on. Eyes that focus on God and His revealed existence, nature, and truth will greatly influence the heart toward moral purity and goodness.
By contrast, eyes that focus on what is contrary to God and His truth will greatly influence the heart toward selfishness, greed, moral impurity, and wickedness. What the eyes see can affect emotions and desires, including sexual desires and desires for false worship (Num. 15:39; Isa. 3:16; Ezek. 20:24; 23:16). The sin nature (a disposition of enmity against God, cf. Rom. 8:7) is indelibly inscribed in every heart from conception onward and produces deceitfulness and wickedness in the heart (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:1, 9). It wants the eye to look at things that will turn the heart toward selfishness, greed, moral impurity, and wickedness.

As the eye exposes an individual’s heart to these things, the sin nature is stimulated to exercise controlling power over the will of the individual to prompt him to sin: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin” (Jas. 1:14–15). King David’s sin of adultery, as a result of seeing another man’s wife bathing, is an example of the eye influencing the heart toward moral impurity (2 Sam. 11:1–4).

In light of these contrasting influences of the eye upon the heart, Jesus issued the following warning: “Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light” (Lk. 11:35–36).

The word translated “take heed” means “to look at critically as the judge does.” The person who does so “will make a critical decision between the eternal and the transitory and keep from what presents itself to the eye because he knows something better.” The idea is this: “Test whether the light in you is darkness.” In other words, test to see if the light inside you has been tainted or compromised by darkness—if it has darkness mixed in with the light as a result of what your eyes have seen.

The Heart’s Reflection in the Eyes

The eyes also relate to the heart in that they reflect the heart’s moral condition. F. J. Stendebach wrote that the “eye is associated with the heart. The eye is accordingly a concentrated expression of the personality, of people’s disposition toward God, human beings, and the world about them.” In other words, the eye is the instrument through which “the human ‘soul’ is revealed.” Through Jesus’ statement “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed . . . an evil eye,” Jesus indicated that eyes reflect the heart’s moral condition (Mk. 7:21–22).

Various biblical descriptions reflect this truth:

**Evil Eye.** The word translated “evil” in the Old Testament “seems to denote the inner condition of people who reject God and do things contrary to God’s will.” It is the inner condition characterized by “moral deficiencies, moral qualities that injure oneself or others, or a condition that is below par.” It normally leads to “abuse of people and exploitation of their property.”

In light of this concept of evil, the “evil eye” is “the ‘wicked,’ ‘envious,’ ‘covetous,’ ‘greedy,’ ‘avaricious eye.’” It reflects a heart consumed by “insatiable greed for riches; inordinate, miserly desire to gain and hoard wealth.”

Thus Proverbs 23:6–7 says, “Do not eat the bread of a miser [literally, “a man with an evil eye”], nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.”

Proverbs 28:22 states, “A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him.”

Jeremiah 22:17 declares, “Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, for shedding innocent blood, and practicing oppression and violence.”

A man who agreed to work for a certain amount of money, but later insisted he should receive more, had an evil eye (Mt. 20:15). The next article will consider other types of eyes that reflect the moral condition of the heart.

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E N D N O T E S

3. Ibid., 612.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 854.
12. Ibid., 855.
13. Ibid., 854.
15. Ibid., 415.
16. Ibid., 416.
18. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 855.
21. Ibid., 854.
22. Ibid., 856.
23. “poneros,” in Friedrich and Bromiley, 6:551.
26. Ibid., 415.
27. Ibid., 416.
30. Ibid., 855.
31. Ibid., 854.
32. Ibid., 856.
33. Ibid., 854.
34. G. Herbert Livingston, “ra’a, ra,” in Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 2:856, 854.
35. Ibid., 855.
36. Ibid., 854.
appointment Christ “to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22).

Since God, not the unsaved or the people of the church, is the exclusive Owner of the church, He is the only One who has the authority to determine what the nature, purpose, and function of the church should be.

Nature of the Church

Through the use of several terms in the Bible, God revealed what He intends in this regard.

To Be Holy. Ephesians 5:25–27 declares that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her so that “she shall be holy” by nature. The word translated “holy” means “to divide, which would cause us to think of what is marked off from the secular.”7 The opposite of holy is profane. That term refers to “ordinary life, and thus self-evidently comes to mean ‘common’ (1 Sam. 21:5 f.; Ez. 22:26; 42:20; 44:23).”8 Thus to be holy means to be divided or marked off by being different, distinct, and sometimes even unique from what is secular, common, or ordinary in this world.

When used of God in the Bible, the word holy “comes to have the meaning of divine, and thus becomes an adjective for God (Isa. 5:16; 6:3; Hos. 11:9).”9 It presents “the innermost description of God’s nature (Isa. 63).”10 In other words, as the holy One, God by nature is totally different, distinct, or unique from all of creation. In Hosea 11:9 He “appears in moral antithesis to the nature of man: ‘I am God, and not man, holy (qadosh)’ in the midst of thee.”9

Ephesians 5:27 and the combination of truths that God is holy by nature and that He is the church’s exclusive Owner and the only One who has the authority to determine what the church’s nature should be prompts the following conclusion: God intends the church to be holy.

In other words, it is to offer people something different from what the world system, dominated by Satan, offers them on a daily basis (Lk. 4:5–6; Jn. 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; 1 Jn. 5:19). The church is to be “in” the world but not “of” the world (cf. Jn. 17:14–16).

That this is precisely what God intends is inherent in the word translated “church” (ekklesia) in the New Testament. It means “called out” and implies that God has called out the universal and local church from Satan’s godless world system—not physically but in the sense of being different in nature from that system. Thus the church is to function according to God’s wisdom, not the world’s.

In fact, Christ commanded believers to go “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). He ordained that the church evangelize primarily by going into the world where the unsaved are. If you want to catch fish, you go where the fish are. Evangelism is not to involve the church changing its nature to attract unsaved people into its services to get them saved. That method reverses the order of evangelism that Christ ordained.

The fact that God intends the church to be different in nature from the world system means He never intended the church to adhere to unsaved people’s concepts of relevancy. Christians who believe that to reach the unsaved they must conform the church to the world’s concept of relevancy will thereby defile the church’s holy nature. They use the world’s wisdom instead of God’s wisdom to do the work of God’s church.

By contrast, the apostle Paul emphasized that God wants His work to be done with His wisdom, and he warned us about the serious consequences for anyone who defiles the church with the world’s wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17–25; 2:4–7, 12–14; 3:16–20; 2 Cor. 1:12; 10:3–5).

To Be Sanctified (Eph. 5:25–26). The word translated “sanctified” is closely related to the concept of holy. Sanctification is exclusively the work of God, and “the sanctifying power rests exclusively on the holiness of God.”11 Whatever is sanctified is “separated from what is profane and set in a consecrated state.”12 Ephesians 5:25–26 indicates that God has consecrated the church to function using a different wisdom from that of the godless world system.

continued next issue

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. 30.
4 Ibid. 100.
5 Ibid. 92.
6 Ibid. 111 n. 5.
7 Ibid. 111.
8 Testimony of Israel Institute of Jewish Studies
9 “Soreg Inscripton” <bible-history.com/gentile_court/ TEMPLECOURTSoreg_Incription.htm>
11 Ibid., 806.
12 Ibid., 806.
13 Galatians 6:16 refers to “the Israel of God” as a separate group of Jewish believers in addition to those who “walk according to this rule.”

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At the Beginning from page 17

must learn to appreciate their Jewish roots and welcome the influence of Jewish believers. “The church won’t improve its Jewish sensitivity if Jewish believers abandon it.”5 When both groups exist in distinction and harmony within a church, the oneness of the body of Christ shines. In the church, “there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

Attraction

God designed the church of Jesus Christ to display His glory and beauty. Paul’s goal was to “make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:9–10).

If the spirit world watches and wonders about the church, so do people in the material world here on Earth. The church, even when struggling and feeble, represents a new creation in submission to its heavenly Lord.

Every bride is beautiful at her wedding. Likewise, the church, as Jesus’ bride, is being transformed into beauty to one day meet her heavenly Bridegroom. Jesus is already in the process of sanctifying His bride, so “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). As believers pursue holiness and deepen their love for their Bridegroom, the bride of Christ fulfills her ultimate destiny of holiness and beauty and the unification of Jews and Gentiles in the bonds of Calvary.
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We have seen that El Shaddai is the person of the Godhead whom people can see and still live. In Genesis 18 He came to Abraham, looking like an ordinary man. El Shaddai also appeared in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. These appearances should strengthen our faith in God’s love for us and in the deity of Jesus.

Hagar

Hagar, Sarai’s maid, became pregnant by Abram (later called Abraham) and started to slight her mistress. So Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that Hagar could bear the situation no longer and fled. When she arrived at a water spring in the desert, the Angel of the Lord met her (Gen. 16:7).

Hagar was not surprised at the sight of the man who spoke to her, probably because His appearance was human in every way. The man instructed Hagar to return to Sarai (later called Sarah). Then He blessed her and told her she was carrying a son whose name would be Ishmael, and He prophesied Ishmael’s future.

Only then did Hagar understand that she stood before the Lord Himself: “Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, ‘Have I also here seen Him who sees me?’” (v. 13).

Hagar called El Shaddai by the name El Roi, “The God Who Sees,” a name that presents a vital characteristic of El Shaddai: His omniscience. He knows and sees everything. Nothing is hidden from His eyes. Our lives are an open book before Him.

Abraham

Abraham encountered El Shaddai when the Lord tested the patriarch by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of Moriah. Confident that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17–19), Abraham bound his son on an altar and took the knife to slay him:

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

The phrase you have not withheld your son . . . from Me indicates the Angel of the Lord was the One—the Lord Himself—who had commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.


Gideon

Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (Jud. 6:11–12).

The security situation in those days was poor, and Gideon answered bitterly, “My lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (v. 13).

In answer to this question, the Angel of the Lord revealed Himself as the Lord: “Have I not sent you? Surely I will be with you” (vv. 14, 16).

The word angel does not necessarily refer to a winged image. In most cases in the Old Testament, it describes a messenger. Had the guest appeared as an angel with wings, Gideon would have responded differently. However, Gideon saw a man, as any other man. To the best of his knowledge, he was speaking with an ordinary person. Only in verse 22, after he witnessed a miracle, did Gideon understand that he had seen the Lord face-to-face.

Manoah and Wife

The Angel of the Lord also appeared to the wife of Manoah and told her she would give birth to a son, a Nazirite to God from the womb, who would save Israel from the Philistines (Jud. 13:2–5).

Manoah’s wife then told her husband, saying she saw a “Man of God” whose countenance was like “the Angel of God, very awesome.”
Manoah prayed that the Man of God would return. He did. And this time Manoah met Him, too, as the Angel of the Lord guided the couple regarding the child to be born (Samson).

Then Manoah prepared a young goat for the visitor. When the animal was on the altar, the Angel of the Lord ascended to heaven. Manoah and his wife then understood they had spoken to no ordinary person; they had spoken to the Lord face-to-face and lived (v. 23).

They saw El Shaddai, the person of the Godhead whom humans are allowed to see. Clearly, the Angel of the Lord is the Lord Himself.

Moses

The Jewish prophet Isaiah made it clear to the children of Israel that their troubles hurt the Lord. Isaiah said the “Angel of His Presence” (Hebrew, “the Angel of His face”) had saved them, redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old:

For He said, “Surely they are My people, children who will not lie.” So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old (Isa. 63:8–9).

The question is, “Who is the Angel of His Presence?”

The answer is found in Exodus 33:14–15. Moses implored the Lord to accompany him in the desert and help him guide the people of Israel. The Lord declared, “My Presence [Hebrew, “face”] will go with you, and I will give you rest” (v. 14).

Moses answered, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here” (v. 15). Exodus 13:21 says that it was the Lord who walked before the people of Israel in the desert. Hence, the Angel of the Lord’s Presence is El Shaddai, the godly entity whom men are allowed to see. When we see Him, we see the Lord. (See John 14:6–14.)

Why would God allow mere mortals to see El Shaddai?

Because of His love for us! God created humanity because He is a loving God. And love expresses itself in a desire to give and bestow. El Shaddai’s closeness to us is an expression of His love, as was His self-sacrifice at Calvary so that we might have everlasting life.

by Meno Kalisher, pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly in Jerusalem, Israel.
Israel leaves, terror arrives

**ARUTZ-7**—Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel must learn from Hamas’s takeover of Gaza. “Every piece of land that we unilaterally evacuate becomes a place where rockets are deployed against us. We must ensure that what is happening in Gaza doesn’t reach Judea and Samaria as well. Unilateral withdrawals are not the answer. We said in the past that the retreat from Gush Katif would lead to increased terrorism and arms-smuggling, and we were right.”

He said the same mistake occurred in Lebanon: “Our hasty withdrawal from southern Lebanon [in May 2000] turned it into Hezbollahland, and our hasty exit from Gaza caused it to become Hamastan. If we leave Judea and Samaria, terrorism will increase; the IDF’s [Israel Defense Forces] presence there is preventing it from becoming Hamastan as well.”

‘No’ to release

**ARUTZ-7**—One of the 256 terrorists slated for release in July as part of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s “good will” gesture to the Palestinian Authority said, “Thanks, but no thanks.” The man chose to remain in the Israeli prison so he could continue receiving free medication for his arthritis.

During the Hamsa/Fatah war in Gaza, dozens of wounded Arabs, including several Fatah terrorists, were brought to Israeli hospitals for free treatment. Terrorists are often taken to Israeli hospitals when wounded during their attacks and receive the same care as their victims, albeit under heavy guard.

Assad insists on Golan

**ARUTZ-7**—Syrian President Bashar Assad has told the Syrian parliament he is ready for peace talks with Israel providing he receives a formal commitment by Israel to evacuate and concede all of the Golan Heights.

“They must provide us with guarantees that all of the Golan will be returned,” Assad declared in a speech after being sworn in as Syria’s president for a second seven-year term. “For Syrians,” Assad said, “peace is tied to the word land.” Talks with Israel would only be conducted, therefore, “to achieve the main principle of land for peace and the return of the whole Golan.”

**Nahool teaches PA kids to die**

**ARUTZ-7**—Hamas has found a way to continue feeding its children a steady diet of hatred against Israel and the United States. Meet Nahool, a cute little bumblebee whose goal in life is to be a martyr.

Nahool replaces the Mickey Mouse look-alike character, Farfur, on Palestinian Authority (PA) TV. Farfur was killed off by being beaten to death by an “Israeli agent.”

Here is how Nahool was introduced to PA children:

Hostess Saraa: “Who are you? And where did you come from?”

Nahool: “I am Nahool, Farfur’s cousin.”

Saraa: “And what do you want?”

Nahool: “I want to continue the path of Farfur, the path of Islam is the solution. The path of heroism, the path of martyrdom, the path of the jihad warriors. Me and my friends shall continue the path of Farfur. And in his name we shall take revenge upon the enemies of Allah, the murderers of the prophets [i.e. the Jews], the murderers of innocent children, until al-Aqsa will be liberated from their filth.”

Saraa: “Welcome! Welcome Nahool.”

Farfur was the star of a television program that taught PA children how to carry out terrorist attacks, encouraging them to become martyrs in suicide bombings against Israelis.

Walt Disney’s daughter Diane, 73, was outraged when she learned of the use of her father’s friendly little mouse character. In an article in the *New York Daily News*, Diane Disney Miller called Hamas “pure evil.”

World Bank blames Israel

The World Bank is accusing Jerusalem of creating the conditions for an “irreversible” economic collapse in Hamas-controlled Gaza, while Israel is transferring tons of food, medicine, and other supplies into the Gaza Strip.

The acting director for the World Bank in the Palestinian Authority (PA) territories said unemployment levels, marked at 30 percent in January 2007, could reach 37 percent or higher if businesses remain closed in Gaza and placed the responsibility for the dismal situation directly on Israel’s doorstep, claiming the closure of border crossings was responsible.

He did not mention the bloody civil war between the Fatah and Hamas factions, which lasted well over a year and resulted in hundreds of deaths and even more wounded from constant gunfights in the street. Gaza was taken over by Hamas in mid-June, effectively ending the brutal militia war but leaving the area in ruins.

Hamas has refused to guarantee security at the border crossings.

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces are continuing their efforts to provide a response to the humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. The following humanitarian aid was transferred from Israel into the Gaza Strip through all the crossings except Rafiah.

Sufa Crossing—Approximately 8,880 tons of food, medical supplies, dairy products, flour, sugar, reproductive eggs, rice, cooking oil, straw and animal feed, raw food materials and construction supplies.

Kerem Shalom Crossing—Approximately 1,050 tons of food, medical supplies, dairy products, meat products, fruit, cooking oil and reproductive eggs.

Karni Crossing—Approximately 4,180 tons of wheat seed.

Erez Crossing—Approximately 8,433 vaccines.
Beware the BBC

The headquarters of the British Broadcasting Corporation’s national radio services, in Portland Place, London (Angelo Hornak/Corbis).

To mark the 40th anniversary of Israel’s victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, BBC News Radio aired a pro-Arab program titled “Six Days That Changed the Middle East,” which soft-pedaled Arab threats to annihilate Israel, misrepresented facts, and painted Israel as a vicious, heartless aggressor.

The BBC’s obvious Arab leaning comes as no surprise, since a 2004 BBC document explained the company’s intent to cultivate the Arab and Islamic markets. Titled The BBC’s International Role: Submission to the Independent Panel on Charter Review, the 88-page report, available online, states, “For the foreseeable future, the Islamic world and its relationships with the ‘West’ will be a central global issue, and the BBC will continue to seek to build impact in the Arab region and the wider Islamic community. . . . We are exploring the launch of a BBC Arabic television channel.”

In May, Asharq Al-Awsat, a leading international Arab daily, proclaimed, “Only a few months remain before Arab viewers worldwide can tune into the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) Arabic Service satellite channel.”

The BBC, in fact, has been so pro-Arab that Israel boycotted the network in 2003 and nearly revoked its press credentials in 2006 due to its extremely one-sided coverage of the Second Lebanon War. An Israeli official said its reports were so slanted that the BBC looked like it was working for Hezbollah. The news outlet “is downright hostile to Israel on every level,” said an Israeli government official.

Recently Steven Stotsky, with CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America), listed scores of errors in the BBC program on the Six-Day War, not the least of which was the insistence that the war was all about Israeli aggression and occupation rather than Israel’s survival.

Now, with the BBC owing Hamas for the release of its captured journalist Alan Johnston in July, the outlet will no doubt be feeding its audience more of the same.

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☐ Quarterly  ☐ Semiannually
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☐ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.
I have lived in Israel almost 60 years, and I have never heard a good word spoken about those of us who believe in Christ. Usually, people here oppose us all the time. And to my great surprise, what did I see recently but a program on television about Jewish people who believe in Jesus the Messiah! This was the first time I ever heard good things said about us. So you see, it is true what we say here in Israel: When God wills it, even a broom can shoot.

As it is written in Psalm 126:5, "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." We have sown seeds of faith amid much hardship and tears, and the fruit of our labor is what we see now on television. Many Israelis are no longer against us, as they were years ago.

However, the ultra-Orthodox are still much against us and continue to fight those of us who believe in Christ. Several ultra-Orthodox families live in my neighborhood in Jerusalem, and I have had many long discussions with them about faith—and not because I start the conversations. But every time the men see me, they bring up the subject and begin to test me with their many questions.

This happened again recently. I told them the Word of the Lord is eternal and that we who believe in Jesus rely only on the Word and not on a big stack of books written by men, as they do. "You worship your many rabbinical traditions. We worship God only," I said.

"Well, if that is the case, we want to know where in the Hebrew Bible it is written about This Man!" one demanded. The ultra-Orthodox will never mention Jesus by name. They will only call him This Man. This is not the first time I have spoken with these people about faith. But usually when I begin to speak, they refuse to listen. So it was good that, this time, they asked these questions themselves.

Quickly I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53. "You must read here," I said, "and think about whom it is written." So they read. But when I asked, "What do you think about it?" one replied, "We cannot give you an answer right now. We will meet with our great rabbi and he will talk to us about it. Then we can give you the right answer."

As if that reply were not bad enough, one man continued: "Of course, now you will try to show us more writing like this one and tell us that it, too, is written in the Bible. You will try to show us that the Lord was born in Bethlehem, as those many Christians believe."

But I remembered that it is written, "Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Mt. 10:19–20).

So I told them, "Before you read, take a good look at the Book. Are you reading from the Holy Bible or from those many books with which you occupy your lives?"

So they began to examine the Book in their hands. And they admitted, "Yes, this is the Holy Bible. Where is it written—what you spoke about—that the Lord would be born in Bethlehem?"
I turned to Micah 5:2, which prophesies that the Lord Himself would be born in Bethlehem:

*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*

After they read, they began to ask many questions, such as, “How did you know about this verse? How did you come to believe in Jesus?” I told them no one tried to convince me that Jesus is God. I learned by reading the Holy Bible. I did not blindly follow rabbinical traditions, as they do, putting their faith in what their rabbis say, rather than what is said in the Word of God.

“You do not even know in whom you have believed,” I said. “So now you walk in this great darkness, after the traditions of men. This is why you are so confused when you read the Scriptures.”

“Are you saying that our great teachers do not walk according to the right way?” one asked.

Again I showed them my Bible. “If you will worship the Lord according to what is written here, you will be free from all this confusion. You will see the full truth and understand about Almighty God.”

They were extremely interested, and we had a long conversation. Then one said, “You know, only a rabbi has the right to speak about faith as you do.”

I replied, “You do not believe the right way if you believe such a thing. Do not fear anyone, for it is written, "The LORD your God is with you’” (Dt. 20:1).

From then on, they wanted to know all about the New Testament. It was a wonderful opportunity to show them the New Testament and talk about how to worship the Lord only and to “fear the LORD our God, for our good always” (6:24).

“You have given us much to think about,” one said. I also gave them my Bible, and they received it with great joy.

I turned to Micah 5:2, which prophesies that the Lord Himself would be born in Bethlehem:

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