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ABOUT THE COVER
Forces hostile to evangelical Christians and their message are proliferating in America. It appears that our permissive culture is safeguarding the rights of free expression for every group imaginable except those who hold traditional Judeo-Christian values and evangelicals who dare share their faith in Jesus Christ. What we are witnessing today would have horrified Americans a few decades ago. Our cover graphically depicts the dimming of the light of Christian liberty in the United States and sends an urgent message to all of us.

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CReditS
Cover & Pages: 13, 16: Thomas E. Williams
Page 6: Background, Pressens Bild, top, Malcolm Linton/Liason Agency; bottom, Russian Orthodox Church/Archive Photos
Page 10, 23: Stan Stein
Page 26: Top right, Nati Harnik/AP Photo; center, bottom, courtesy of Israeli State Archives; all others, Culver Pictures.

PRODUCTION
Editor-in-Chief: Elwood McQuaid • Senior Editor: Lorna Simcox • Associate Editor: David Levy • Contributing Editors: Steve Herzig, Ronald Shoovers
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NOTE: For a complete list of the footnotes referenced in this magazine, please write to Mrs. Vera Bowker, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.

Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $12.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-9900.

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A typical question always asked of people standing in line at the pharmacy counter is whether they want a brand name drug or a generic. Are they the same quality? An honest answer would be, “Sometimes yes; sometimes no.”

But that seems to matter little to a culture being rapidly conditioned to accept generics. This may be a rather minor matter when it comes to stuff that will stop your snuffles; but when it comes to the weightier matters of historical accuracy and distinctive tragedy, not having a trademark or brand name doesn’t cut it.

According to an article by Marilyn Henry in the January 24 issue of The Jerusalem Post (Internet Edition), there is a move afoot in Washington to refashion the Holocaust Memorial Museum into a generic institution to serve as just one among many tragic episodes of history. Its message is as just one among many tragic episodes of history. Its message is

The purpose of the museum,” she told Israel My Glory, “is to be our national institution to document, study, and to serve as this country’s memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. The notion that we would stray from that mission is inconceivable.”

However, if the recommendations of the federal study are implemented, they would violate the integrity of the trust given to young Americans and their Allied compatriots who liberated the death camps at the end of World War II and bore the horrors of what they saw there for the remainder of their lives. The fact that these people are now elderly and passing off the scene does not vindicate a move to relegate unsettling visual images of the carnage of the Holocaust to musty storerooms. On the contrary, they should be preserved with a greater zeal and commitment than ever before.

Yes, there may well be the need to memorialize those who have suffered and endured in a different furnace of affliction. An affluent, generous nation is well able to bear the responsibility of constructing as many memorials as need be raised to dignify their memory and ask us not to forget.

But this must not be done at the expense of depicting the Holocaust as just one among many tragic episodes of history. Its message is unique and must remain so.
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Half Page AD
by BSC
"T__hat there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:25-26a).

As we enter a new millennium, there are deep wounds being inflicted on the Body of Christ; and
sooner or later, every member is likely to experience the affliction personally. There has been, perhaps, no parallel experience in the history of the church since the days when first-century Christians huddled together on the floors of pagan arenas, awaiting their certain death. If this assessment seems extreme, think again; and listen to the voices of our brothers and sisters, whose blood cries out to us. We cannot say we have not been warned. The only question is, Who is listening?

In his book *The New Tolerance* (Tyndale), Josh McDowell writes: “We may very well wake up in the not-too-distant future in a culture that is not only unreceptive but openly hostile to the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ, a culture in which those who proclaim the gospel will be labeled as bigots and fanatics, a culture in which persecution of Christians will not only be allowed but applauded.”

McDowell’s perceptive words are already a reality for Christian believers in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, they are rapidly becoming a reality for people in the West, including the United States of America.

**The Long Lines of Martyrs**

In January of 1999, a band of radical Hindus in India surrounded a car in which Dr. Graham Staines and his sons Phillip, 11, and Timothy, 6, were sleeping. Dr. Staines was a medical doctor and Baptist missionary who had served among lepers in remote parts of India for more than thirty years. The mob surrounded the vehicle, set it afire, and watched while the doctor and his sons burned to death.

In Indonesia, two hundred Christians were killed and two schools and thirteen churches burned by radical Muslim leaders inciting followers by calls for *Jihad*, or holy war, against Christians. Another one hundred eighty Christians were later killed and three hundred injured,

This is an excerpt from Marshall’s book: “The word genocide is a harsh one thrown around too frequently and too cheaply. In the case of Sudan, however, it is simply a factual description.”

In Colombia, South America, the search continues for three New Tribes missionaries abducted in 1993 by Colombian rebels. According to a report by a former guerrilla, they were murdered in 1995.

In Chechnya, where Russian and radical Islamic rebels are engaged in a fight to the finish, two pastors were beheaded and two elderly women killed in the Grozney Baptist Church.

 Syndicated columnist Carl Alpert, in an article entitled “Christians in the Mideast: An Endangered Species,” writes: “The steady Christian emigration out of the Palestinian [Authority] areas is revealing. [Christian Arabs have become] an endangered species in PA territory, where harassment [is] compelling more and more Christians to heed the Moslem warning, ‘We do not want you Christians here.’ Emigration is always to the West, never into Moslem countries.”

This short list of examples highlights what is taking place under the collective noses of governments proclaiming their commitment to basic human rights. One obvious reason these governments ignore this cruel treatment of Christians and refuse to crack down on the countries involved is because they fear the possible economic repercussions.

A report issued by *World* magazine in November of 1999 states that “the Chinese government regularly harasses churches that will not register with and submit to official religious agencies. The commission [U.S. Commission on
International Religious Freedom asked U.S. diplomats to emphasize religious freedom in discussions with Chinese officials and the U.S. business community. The commission stopped well short of calls for sanctions or trade-status restrictions.5

Stopping short of punitive economic action only tells these repressive regimes that money is the bottom line, and it’s okay to conduct business as usual—even when it comes to persecution.

To make matters worse, the secular media have spread a virtual blanket of silence over these atrocities. Sadly, much of the Christian world, awash in affluence, chooses to be blind and deaf as well. Columnist Carl Alpert summarizes this unresponsiveness:

“The tragic story of the Christian plight is yet to be told in full....With rare exceptions, this kind of news seldom makes headlines, and most of the Christian world prefers to see and hear nothing.”6

Bigotry Moves West


“Tonight I regret to say that one area where we’re losing ground is our treatment of religious believers. We are witnessing a rising level of bigotry against people of faith, especially Christians.”7

Representative Armey then cited an extensive list of cases related to out-and-out persecution of Christians and denial of their basic rights. One of the most telling examples involves the federal Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, which funds a middle school curriculum that is unequivocally hostile to people of faith. It provides school counselors with “warning signs” to help them identify a child who might pose a danger to society. One of the signs, said Armey, “is if he or she grows up in a ‘very religious’ home. This without one shred of evidence showing linkage between Christians and any of these terrible acts of violence that our nation has faced.”

Armey concluded by saying, “In case after case, people of faith are told to mind their own business, keep to themselves and stay out of the affairs of the rest of society.”8

Congressman Armey’s remarks emphasize the fact that we have clearly entered a period when we are beginning to reap what the nation has sown for decades. Producers and scriptwriters in the motion picture and television industries have passionately hammered away at discrediting traditional Judeo-Christian values. Pastors are almost consistently depicted as bigoted buffoons, while disreputable characters elicit sympathy and, in the end, walk off as the winners. Dysfunctional families have become the norm; fathers are scorned, responsible mothers put down. Only “partners” who descend to the level of their immature teenaged offspring are portrayed as desirable influences.

In his book A Jewish Conservative Looks at Pagan America (Huntington House), columnist Don Feder comments on Hollywood’s brand of prejudice:

“Christians are the only group Hollywood can offend with impunity, the only creed it actually goes out of its way to insult. Clerics, from fundamentalist preachers to Catholic monks, are routinely represented as hypocrites, hucksters, sadists and lechers. The tenets of Christianity are regularly held up to ridicule.”9

Missionaries have long been denounced as public enemy number one for their attempts to reach tribal people with the gospel and to help them physically and spiritually. On the other hand, the native tribes, living in squalor and medical deprivation, are portrayed as superior beings who should be left undisturbed in the jungles, despite the fact this means they probably will die in their thirties or earlier, plagued by sickness, superstition, and malnutrition.

In this twisted world we live...
dent’s press secretary, Joe Lockhart, whose reply was reported in The Washington Times. Speaking on behalf of President Clinton, Lockhart said:

“I think the president’s made very clear his view…on religious tolerance and how one of the greatest challenges going into the next century is dealing with intolerance, dealing with ethnic and religious hatred and coming to grips with long-held resentments between religions. So I think he’s been very clear in his opposition to whatever organization, including Southern Baptists, that perpetuate ancient religious hatred.”11

So much for the traditional freedom to evangelize.

Sadly, educators, public officials, and biblically devout people who attempt to make a constructive difference in society and raise citizens to a higher level of decency and civility are shouted down or ruled out of order by judges and officials pandering to self-indulgent radicals and hedonists.

A defining statement reflecting the spirit of the times was made by CNN media mogul Ted Turner in an interview published in the National Review, June 8, 1992. Mr. Turner was quoted as having said, “Over-population is the cause of drive-by shootings and other social ills, but the root of the problem is Christianity, which posits that people are more important than sea otters and elephants.”12 Turner has also been quoted as saying, “Christianity is a religion for losers.”

A U.S. District Court judge in Texas has gone so far as to rule that any student mentioning the name of Jesus in a graduation prayer will be sentenced to six months in jail.

In an address to the Christian Coalition, Alan Keyes, a conservative Republican and recent presidential candidate, said, “Where do we find the most persecuted Christians in the world?…in the classrooms of our government schools, where the assault is not on the body, but the soul.”10

In public life, we are often subjected to the same spiritual and moral slander. Placing the Ten Commandments in a public building or erecting a manger scene in a town square brings down the wrath of anti-Christian lobbyists who have virtually become the most catered-to minority in American society.

Last December the Southern Baptists announced they were launching a missionary effort to expose Hindus, Jewish people, and Muslims to the message of the gospel. Protests from some members of these groups brought a scathing rebuke from the president’s press secretary, Joe Lockhart, whose reply was reported in The Washington Times. Speaking on behalf of President Clinton, Lockhart said:

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Turner, who has said he made a profession of faith during a Billy Graham meeting but later renounced Christianity, has since apologized for such remarks. His statements, however, reflect the fundamental humanist idea that, in reality, human beings are but refined primates operating on their own, without the need of assistance from a divine being.

In such a rejectionist cultural environment, the question, sooner or later, must become what to do with those who are believers and are, therefore, hindering the progress of an enlightened, secular global world order.

Crafting the Global Village

What does all this have to do with the prevailing winds of the new millennium? Everything. America is no longer viewed as an independent republic. We are being merged into a pseudo-global community that will inevitably regard as intolerable bigots those who dare to obey Christ’s command to witness of His love and grace to others. There will be room for all the “you’re okay, I’m okay” religionists. But truly evangelical Christians will find a “KEEP OUT” sign at the gate of the new Utopia.

Some words from the Old Testament seem appropriate.

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, his blood will I require at thine...

in, we need only look to our classrooms in America to see jungle life of another kind. We have denounced God and banished Him from our schools. An “anything goes” attitude, which is too often the norm among secular educators, has yielded a crop of out-of-control bullies who beat and sometimes kill innocent children and who arrogantly roam the schools, pushing drugs in the hallways and on the playgrounds. In many instances, the only thing students are not allowed to do is mention their faith, particularly if Jesus Christ is central to it.

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In early sixteenth-century Europe, a Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther (1483-1546) struggled night and day with a soul-wrenching dilemma: How might he, a sinner, stand forgiven before a God who is perfectly holy? Or, as the apostle Paul might say, How can God be at once just and the justifier of wicked men? (Rom. 3:26). Clearly, no man can attain God’s perfect standard of righteousness. Therefore, is it not necessary for God to choose between His justice and His mercy—to compromise one or the other—in His dealings with men?

Luther found the answer to that most awful dilemma in the blessed gospel that Paul explicated so carefully in his letter to the Romans. In Luther’s Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, he later identified Romans as “the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel.”¹ From Luther’s struggle came the Reformation that changed the face of Europe. But that was neither the first nor the last time that the world was transformed by the message of that epistle. Indeed, Fredric Godet, in his Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, observed that “when the Epistle...appeared for the first time, it was to the Church a word in season. Every time that in the course of the ages it has recovered the place of honor which belongs to it, it has inaugurated a new era.”²

This epistle deserves such a place of honor because it addresses the dilemma of Luther’s struggle: How can a sinner become right with a holy God? There can be no more important question; and there is no place where that issue is addressed as directly, as thoroughly, or as authoritatively as in the book of Romans.

INTRODUCTION TO
The Epistle
(1:1-17)

This is the longest introduction in all of Paul’s epistles and is vital to
the argument of the book. In many ways, it is a standard Pauline introduction. But it is distinct in that it concludes with the marvelous battle cry of 1:16-17, which concisely summarize the content of the epistle.

In 1:16, Paul declaimed that he had no fear that the good news concerning Christ would ever fail, because it is the mighty power (strength, ability, inherent capacity) of God (who is omnipotent) unto salvation for everyone—Jew or Gentile—who believes in (entrusts the eternal safekeeping of his or her soul/spirit to) the finished work of Christ.

The apostle then declared in 1:17 that in the gospel, “the righteousness of God [is] revealed from faith to faith.” This righteousness encompasses that which characterizes God, as well as that which God bestows upon the believer. The gospel reveals how God can bestow genuine righteousness upon a sinner and thus accept that sinner without compromising His own perfectly righteous character.

But the gospel accomplishes its work only as men believe God’s promises “from faith to faith.” Every stage of spiritual progress, historically (from the Old Testament era to the New) and personally (from spiritual rebirth to maturity), is accomplished by trusting the revealed promises of God.

Paul vindicated this pronouncement by appealing to one of his favorite texts: Habakkuk 2:4. It has been said that Moses gave the Law in 613 precepts; David reduced those to eleven salient principles (Ps. 15:2-5), Isaiah to six (Isa. 11:2), Micah to three (Mic. 6:8), and the Lord Jesus to two (Mk. 12:29-31). But Paul appealed to the passage in which Habakkuk subsumed the entire Mosaic code under one all-consuming moral principle: “the just shall live by his faith.” This is Old Testament truth, and the apostle was anxious to affirm that the gospel he preached was entirely consistent with—indeed, born of—that principle.

**THE DIAGNOSIS:**

**All Are Condemned**

**(1:18–3:20)**

There is, perhaps, no Scripture more entirely counter-intuitive to modern Western culture than this section of Romans. With irrefutable logic, Paul demonstrated that all men are under the condemnation of sin (3:9). They are guilty (3:19) and without excuse (1:20). This is not a happy message; but it is a necessary one to bring men to repentance. As Jesus said, “They that are well have no need of the physician” (Mk. 2:17). Paul understood that if men are to be brought to faith, they must first be persuaded that they are hopelessly lost.

**Those Without the Scriptures.** There are two distinct focuses in Paul’s argument in this section. First he addressed those without access to special revelation (i.e., the Scriptures). These people often suppose that because they have no access to Scripture, they cannot be justly condemned. But Paul’s assessment was very different. He contended that on two distinct counts, even these people stand condemned before a holy God. Their crime is not ignorance but rebellion.

In the very order of things, all rational human beings are confronted with two channels of truth concerning God. Though these are limited, they are sufficient to render a man guilty before the Lord. The first channel is creation, the *physical universe* (1:18-20). “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (1:20).

The majesty of the physical world powerfully, perpetually, and irrefutably demonstrates two truths to all rational beings: (1) There is a God sufficiently powerful to have crafted the cosmos ("his eternal power"), and (2) this God deserves man’s worship (His “Godhead”). The Greek here means “God-likeness”—that He is “God-like” and not simply man blown big. In the words of Isaac Watts, an eighteenth-century minister and hymn writer,

Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker’s praise abroad,
And every labor of His hands
Shows something worthy of a God.3

The second channel of revelation available to all men is the testimony of God in the *moral universe* (2:1-16)—the witness of a conscience that assaults us when we act wickedly and commends us when we do good. This is an internal witness, and it demonstrates that the God who placed His law in our hearts (2:15) will hold us accountable for our wickedness.

On the basis of this twofold witness (creation and conscience), all men are declared to be “without excuse” (1:20; 2:1). It is a mistake to conceive of this twofold witness as a faint whisper, discernible only to the most perceptive. According to these chapters, God is, as it were, constantly yelling at the top of His voice at the lost individual. Thus individuals are assaulted from without by the testimony of
the created order and from within by the voice of conscience. To be lost is to defy this twofold witness concerning God. Those who reject this witness by rejecting the truth “hold [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness” (1:18). As men persist in rebelling against the revelation God has given them in the natural order of things, He gives them up (1:24, 26, 28), and their situation becomes ever more hopeless. This is not a happy diagnosis; but it is God’s diagnosis.

**Those With the Scriptures.** Paul’s second focus (2:17—3:8) was on those who have been given the Scriptures. He referred explicitly to the Jewish people and rebuked them for giving only lip service to obedience to the law (2:21-23), for making their boast in the law (2:23), and for trusting in the ritual of circumcision (2:25-29). The apostle demonstrated that even those who belong to a nation privileged to possess the Scriptures need a heart cleansed by the Spirit of God (2:29). In a sweeping appeal to several Old Testament texts, Paul concluded where he began, insisting that “both Jews and Greeks [Gentiles]...are all under sin” (3:9), that the whole world is guilty before God (3:19), and that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (3:20).

## THE CURE:

### Justification by Faith

**(3:21–5:21)**

It is in this section where Luther’s dilemma was most directly addressed. Paul had already affirmed that justification is not accomplished by “the deeds of the law” (3:20). In the magisterial passages of 3:21 through 5:21, he defined precisely how justification is accomplished and vindicated his proposition by appealing to the clear teaching of the Old Testament. **Justification** is a forensic, or judicial, term that takes us into a court of law. The verb means “to declare or pronounce as righteous.” On the one hand, it declares a person not liable for punishment; on the other, it entitles him to all the rights and privileges due those who have kept the law. Thus it is a verdict of complete acquittal and removes all possibility of condemnation.

This term has been the focus of great controversy, and much mischief has come from misconstruing it to mean “to make righteous” rather than “to declare righteous.” To *make* righteous suggests that a person is saved only as he actually attains a certain measure of righteousness by performing prescribed rituals or doing good works. J. I. Packer, in his *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* insisted that there is no lexical ground for the view that *justify* means, or connotes as part of its meaning, “make righteous” (by subjective spiritual renewal).³

Good works are the result of justification (Jas. 2:14-26). And it is dangerous and heretical to regard those good works as the ground of justification.

How, then, can a holy God simply declare a sinner to be righteous? Paul most succinctly articulated the answer in 3:24: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” That is the “good news”—the blessed gospel. Jesus’ death was sufficient to satisfy the Father’s wrath and wash away the sins of any person. There is nothing you can do to get right with God. But if you will simply trust the finished cross-work of Jesus Christ, you will be bought back from the marketplace of sin (redeemed) and united with Christ. The Bible says that when we believe, we are placed “in Christ.” (See also Ephesians 1:6-7.) On that basis, you will stand justified, pronounced righteous by God—simply because in Christ, you are righteous.

God is not a book-juggler; He is a bookkeeper. That is, He does not cover His eyes and assign righteousness to a person who has no claim on it. Rather, He places righteousness in the account of the person to whom it belongs. If you have been born again, He sees you in His Son; and the righteousness that belongs to Jesus has become your birthright.

In Romans 4, Paul demonstrated that the doctrine of justification by faith is an Old Testament concept; both Abraham (4:1-5) and David (4:6-8) were justified by faith. Further, Abraham’s faith was accounted to him for righteousness before he was circumcised (4:9-12) and after he had demonstrated the reality of that faith (4:13-25). Then, in chapter 5, Paul celebrated the marvelous blessings that God bestows on the individual who has been justified by Christ’s blood and who can thus anticipate being “saved by his life” (5:10).

The argument is complete and compelling. In giving His Son and providing a way for sinners to be accepted in Him, God has devised a marvelous plan in which He is both just and the justifier of the one who believes. Jesus is full of grace and truth. The dilemma is solved: Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

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The first eight chapters of the book of Romans are a theological treasure trove. Paul’s description of our fall into sin, our desperate need for deliverance, God’s gracious provision in the gospel, and His offer for us to receive that deliverance through faith alone are marvelously presented in chapters 1 through 5. Chapters 6 through 8 continue to expound on these theological gems as the truths of the gospel are applied to the life of the Christian who has experienced the new birth.

In fact, one could sum up the message of Romans 1 through 8 with the following theological terms: condemnation (1:18—3:20), justification (3:21—5:21), sanctification (6:1—8:11), and glorification (8:12-30). While all of this is true and good, the apostle Paul would probably be surprised that we read him in such exclusively theological terms. No doubt he would want us to see that the doctrinal truths of God’s great redemptive plan are not just abstract, theological insights; they are very much related to life. In none of his letters did Paul ever begin a section by writing, “Now I am going to teach you the doctrines of condemnation and justification. After that I will teach you the doctrines of sanctification and glorification.” Paul viewed the entire plan of God as a whole—and he never separated doctrine from life. That is why he began chapter 6, the section of the book of Romans that deals with sanctification, with an intensely practical question: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (6:1).

Paul always developed great doctrinal truths in a practical context related to the lives of his readers. Romans 6 through 8 are no exception. It is here he related the implications of justification by faith from the condemnation of sin to the practical issues of Christian living.
Sanctification (6:1–8:11)

The word sanctification appears five times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Th. 4:3-4; 2 Th. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). It can be defined as the work God does in believers to bring us into increasingly greater conformity to Jesus Christ. In unfolding the truth of this progressive sanctification, Paul affirmed four aspects of the process: the principle of sanctification (6:1-14), the practice of sanctification (6:15—7:6), the preventive of sanctification (7:7-25), and the power of sanctification (8:1-11).

This truth can also be expressed in another way. Our justification (see Douglas Bookman’s article, p. 10) is in the crucified Savior, and our sanctification is in the risen Savior. Justification by faith in Christ is only the beginning of God’s purpose for us. The continuance of that purpose is a life lived according to the power of Christ, who indwells us by His Spirit.

The principle of sanctification (or holiness) consists in the Christian’s identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (6:1-11). Christians practice holiness by submitting to their new relationship with Christ (6:12—7:6). Such submission, however, will not go unchallenged. So Paul warned us concerning the preventive of holiness in 7:7-25: The activity of sin and self within believers produces a struggle; “for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I....For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do” (7:15, 19).

How do we emerge victorious? Through the power of holiness—the unhindered dominion over us by the Holy Spirit (8:1-17). Believers are to “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:4).

In Romans 6, Paul based our identification with Christ’s death and resurrection on the relationship between the first and second “Adams” (5:12-21). Our state of nature is one of sin under the headship of Adam. Our state of grace is one of death to sin under the headship of Christ—the second “Adam.”

To illustrate this truth, Paul used the Greek aorist tense eleven times in the verses of chapter 6. The aorist views the action described as a past, accomplished fact. In other words, Paul said that we died to sin (6:2), were baptized into his death” (6:3), were buried with him by baptism into death” (6:4), and were raised up from the dead” (6:4). Our old self was crucified with him” (6:6); we died with Christ (6:8); Christ was raised from the dead” (6:9); and “he died unto sin once” (6:10). (All boldface was added for clarification.)

Therefore, just as Christ by an act, died and, by an act, was raised from the dead, so in His death and resurrection, every believer died to sin and rose to “newness of life.” Our old self was crucified when Christ was crucified. The crucifixion of self is not something that we can accomplish; it was accomplished for us at Calvary. W. Graham Scroggie’s book The Unfolding Drama of Redemption provides excellent insights into these chapters and explains that in Romans 1 through 5, we are told that Christ died for us; in chapter 6, we are told that we died with Him.1

Unfortunately, this fact does not mean that there will be no struggle after salvation. The believer’s battle with the old self is described in detail in 7:11-25. This is not, as some teachers allege, the description of a defeated Christian. It is the biography of a man who knew only too well that the Christian life is not “letting go and letting God,” but rather, “fighting the good fight of faith.” And however fierce was his struggle, Paul still concluded on a positive note in describing the outcome of the battle. “I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25).

Glorification (8:12-39)

God’s plan for our salvation does not end in this world. It reaches its consummation in the next world. This is the message of the latter part of Romans chapter 8. The focus of Romans 6 is on our past—we were
crucified with Christ. The focus of Romans 7 is on our present—we are struggling with sin while we are trusting Christ. The focus of Romans 8 is on our prospect—we will be glorified with Christ. What grace commences here, glory will consummate there.

Another way of stating the nature of our great salvation is to express it in three tenses. Through justification, we were saved from the penalty for sin. Through sanctification, we are being saved from the power of sin. In glorification, we will be saved from the very presence of sin. Simply defined, glorification is when we will be completely like Jesus, because sin will be forever removed from us in our glorified bodies, which we will receive at the resurrection.

Paul expounded the promise of glorification in 8:12-17; the explanation of glorification in 8:18-27; and the certainty of glorification in 8:28-30. He then concluded this marvelous chapter with a paean of triumphal praise that is without parallel elsewhere in God’s word (8:31-39). His entire argument can be summed up with a simple question and answer: What can separate us from the love of Christ? Absolutely nothing!

If the Bible were a ring and Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel. One of the most precious promises in Romans 8 is the familiar words of 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to whom the called according to his purpose.” This wonderful verse has supplied inestimable comfort to God’s people during trials and difficulties. We sometimes neglect to understand why we know that all things are for our good. Paul, however, did not want us to miss this valuable point. He told us clearly:

For whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified (8:29-30).

These two verses describe an unbreakable chain that guarantees God will finish the work He began in us (cf. Phil. 1:6). Notice the chain of salvation events: Those (1) whom God lovingly knew in ages past, He (2) marked out ahead of time and (3) called by His word and Spirit. Those He also (4) justified by faith and (5) glorified, making them like Him. So unbreakable is the chain that the last link is viewed as an accomplished fact (aorist past tense) because the first links are just that. He will bring to the final stage of salvation all those on whom He had set His heart before the world began. Thus we can be confident that even the hard experiences of life are part of a process designed by a loving Father; and, ultimately, they will always be for our good.

The chapter that begins with “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” ends with no separation “from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Rom. 8:1, 39). Our eternal home is secure because of these seven facts concerning our standing in Christ:

1. There is no condemnation for those in Christ (8:1-4).
2. The Spirit has regenerated, is sanctifying, and will resurrect those in Christ (8:5-11).
3. Those in Christ are now the children of God and fellow heirs with Him (8:12-17).
4. They are sustained through their afflictions by hope and the help of the Holy Spirit (8:18-28).
5. They have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son (8:29-30).
6. God is for them. He gave His Son to die for them. Therefore, who is to condemn them? (8:31-34).
7. Nothing can separate them from the infinite and unchangeable love of God in Christ Jesus (8:35-39).

How could anyone doubt the truth of the absolute eternal security of the believer in light of Romans chapter 8! “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (8:31).
When Bad Things Happen to Good People is the title of a best-selling book written a number of years ago by a well-known rabbi who had to endure the pain of watching his son suffer and die from a terrible disease. That experience would understandably cause any loving parent to pause and reflect on his or her spiritual resources.

The rabbi’s reflection led him to this conclusion: God’s power is limited. An all-powerful, loving God would not allow bad things to happen. But a loving God who had limited power could not prevent bad things from happening.

It’s too bad the rabbi could not have consulted with Joseph, great-grandson of Abraham, who lived a lifetime of sorrows, tribulations, and seemingly endless setbacks. Despite all this, Joseph had seen the hand of God working throughout his life. And as he faced his brothers, who had sold him into slavery, he was able to say, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 50:20).

Joseph understood the concept foundational to Romans 9, 10, and 11—the sovereignty of God. These chapters form the fulcrum upon which the rest of the treatise of the book of Romans turns, for it is these chapters that demonstrate the sovereign rule of a holy God and the certainty of His promises. And they do so by examining Israel—past, present, and future.

To begin with, God is a sovereign Being who is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and who does all things according to His good pleasure. One of the ways in which God demonstrated His sovereignty was by choosing Israel. The Torah (Pentateuch) states, “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God; the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people
who are upon the face of the earth” (Dt. 7:6).

Unfortunately, not everyone is happy with God’s choice. Many Gentiles, and even some Christians, seem less than comfortable with God’s arrangement. Curiously, many Jewish people also feel uncomfortable with it and have been known to wish that God had chosen someone else. Some Jewish people even reject this teaching as utterly false, because they cannot reconcile an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God with the suffering of the people He has chosen.

Yet the truth is that God chooses for His own purposes, and we often do not understand His choices. He chose Noah, the architect and builder of the ark, who later got drunk. He chose Moses and David, who both served Him well, but were also murderers. And He chose Israel. Paul used Israel as his example of God’s sovereign rule to help believers in Christ come to grips with His sovereign selection of them.

Indeed, Paul made a strong case for Israel’s election. He outlined the nation’s tremendous past privileges (chapter 9), its present-day problems (chapter 10), and its wonderful future prospects in God’s program (chapter 11). First, Paul listed the things that make “my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (9:3) unique as a people. To begin with, he said, they were Israelites (9:4). The name Israel (meaning “one who strives with God”) was actually given to Jacob (which means “deceiver”) after he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 32:24-28). Another word, Hebrew, or Eber, having to do with crossing over to an opposite side, is ascribed to them in reference to Abraham because he crossed over the Euphrates. Still another term, Jew, comes from Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Judah means “praise.” Indeed, that was one of God’s great purposes for the children of Israel. They were to praise the living God and cause the Gentiles to love and worship Him: “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise” (Isa. 43:21).

Beginning in 9:4, Paul reviewed their privileges. (1) God’s glory had directed them in the wilderness. The rabbis called this shakan in Hebrew, meaning “to dwell.” From here comes the word shekinah, referring to the visible Divine Presence. (2) The unconditional covenants came to the Jews through Abraham and were passed on to Isaac, Jacob, and his sons. They also had (3) the commandments, or laws, which Moses had received directly from God on Sinai; (4) the service of God in and around the Tabernacle and Temple; and (5) the promises of God, demonstrated to be sure when a sovereign God enabled Sarah to give birth to Isaac in her old age (v. 9).

Although Abraham had another son, Ishmael, Isaac was the chosen one. Isaac’s sons, Jacob and Esau, were twins; yet God chose Jacob and his descendants, not Esau, to become the channel to bring the Messiah, the Christ “who is over all” (9:5). “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (9:11).

Paul explained that as Sovereign, God can do what He wants. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” (9:15; Ex. 33:19). God raised up Pharaoh, a prime enemy of the Jewish people, for the sole purpose of declaring His name throughout the earth (9:16). That being the case, Paul anticipated a question: “who hath resisted his will?” (9:19). It seems like a fair question. In reality, though, the question is not fair at all, and Paul chose not to answer it. Instead, he cast suspicion on the attitude of the questioner. Romans 9:20-21a simply states, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay...?” As potter, God can do anything He wants.

Indeed, Israel had certain unique privileges. Yet it also had a not-so-unique problem. “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (10:3).

This same problem—ignorance of God’s righteousness—characterizes much of the world today and is indicative of present-day Israel. The word ignorant is not derogatory; it simply means “lack of knowledge.” In Paul’s time, ignorance did not prevent the Israelites from being zealous for
God. But their zeal was misdirected and not according to knowledge. Even now, zeal, sincerity, piety, and religiosity accomplish absolutely nothing toward gaining anyone acceptance before a holy God. In Israel’s case, even the nation’s unique privileges do nothing for the Jewish people as individuals before God: “For the scripture saith, whosoever [emphasis added] believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For whosoever [emphasis added] shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

With Messiah’s death and resurrection came an opportunity for Jew and Greek (Gentile) to enter into a unique relationship with Him through personal faith in Jesus as Savior. “For whosoever [emphasis added] shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Paul then asked another question: What will happen to unbelieving Israel? “Hath God cast away his people?” (11:1). Is He finished with them? Has He stripped them of the blessings He promised and rejected them forever because they have rejected their Messiah?

Paul answered emphatically: “No!” or, “May it never be!” God has a future for Israel, and He will keep His promises to them. To make his point, he used his own life as an illustration. Paul was a murderer—a self-proclaimed “chief of all sinners.” Yet God did not reject him (11:1). The chief persecutor of the church became instead its finest example of the grace and sovereignty of God. Today God still calls out individual Jewish people who embrace their Messiah.

Then Paul pointed to Elijah the prophet, who had cried out to God just after his great spiritual victory over the false prophets of Baal (1 Ki. 18). Fleeing from wicked Queen Jezebel, Elijah had felt alone and forsaken. He protested his circumstances to God. “Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and dug down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life” (Rom. 11:3). God answered His faithful prophet by assuring him that He still had a remnant of seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (11:4, 1 Ki. 19:18). Seven thousand may not be many, but it is a whole lot more than one.

As in the time of the prophet, there has always been a believing remnant among God’s chosen, though a much greater number have not believed. Spiritual blindness is nothing new. There were spiritually blind Jewish people who wandered in the wilderness of Sinai, even though they had witnessed God’s power over Pharaoh. Yet God did not forsake them. There were the spiritually blind Jewish people who cried bitterly to Moses that slavery in Egypt was better than freedom in the desert. Yet God stuck with them. There were an abundance of blind when only one of the twelve tribes, Levi, joined Moses after being asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Ex. 32:26).

The majority within Israel, God’s elect, seem continually to go their own way. But “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” Paul asked (11:11). “God forbid,” he replied. (Or “May it never be!”) Rather, he said, “through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles” (v. 11). Paul continued in 11:20, “because of unbelief they [the Jews] were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.” Gentile believers, he said, should not boast in their new position of privilege, but be humble and thankful. Did God know the Jewish people would reject their Messiah? Yes. Why did He allow such a thing? Because through the blindness of the Jewish people, the gospel went to the Gentiles.

Then Paul revealed a mystery: “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until [emphasis added] the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (v. 25). Today God is calling out individual Jews and Gentiles to become part of the same body of believers. One day Jesus will return to carry all believers home to heaven (1 Th. 4). Then God will again deal with His chosen nation. After a time of unprecedented suffering (Jer. 30:7), the Deliverer will come out of Zion; and “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26). Then God will restore to them the Kingdom of David and give them all the blessings He has promised.

Paul, no doubt, was looking forward to that day and grieved over his nation’s unbelief. Earlier, in fact, he had said, “I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3). Yet the apostle rested in the assurance that God had not abandoned His Chosen People. In His sovereignty, God chose the nation of Israel to display His faithfulness, glory, and grace. He will never abandon or reject them, because He has made promises to them (Jer. 31). And just as He is faithful to them, so is He faithful to you. His promises are always sure, and He will never leave you or forsake you if you have trusted His Son as your Savior.

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Under the Law of Moses, an individual who wanted to demonstrate an act of complete dedication to God brought an unblemished animal to the Temple. There the worshiper identified himself with the offering by placing his hands on the animal’s head. The animal was then slaughtered. Afterward, the priest completed his duties by burning the carcass upon the altar. This was known as a burnt sacrifice, “a sweet savor unto the Lord” (Lev. 1:9).

Perhaps the apostle Paul had this image in mind when he wrote his closing thoughts to the saints in Rome. He had spent the majority of his epistle communicating the righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel. One can almost picture him pausing in his dictation to Tertius (16:22), rising from his chair, gazing into heaven, and exclaiming with awe and wonder, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (11:33).

But having instructed his readers concerning the glory of their salvation, Paul then wanted them to respond. It is here he wrote one of the most stirring challenges of all Scripture.

**Challenge of a Living Sacrifice**

Paul’s primary challenge to the Roman Christians was that they become living sacrifices to be used of the living God. He began with a plea: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1). His exhortation was neither fleeting nor sporadic. It was continuous, exhibiting the prominence it held in Paul’s heart. Nor was it based on flimsy reasons. Paul exhorted believers based on “the mercies of God.” The word mercies here is
different than the word Paul used in the rest of his letter. This word implies compassion. Paul’s plea, though, was not based on some ethereal, sentimental concept, but rather on the specific, down-to-earth compassions of God, which he had enumerated in previous sections of the epistle.

“That ye present” was the purpose of Paul’s entreaty. He wanted the believers at Rome to make an active decision of surrender. In Romans 6:13, Paul called the saints to yield themselves. In 6:19 he summoned them to yield their “members.” Here he pleaded with them to “present your bodies.” This does not refer merely to the external, material part of the believer, but to the whole person—the totality of the individual. The term speaks of cost, forfeiture, and loss—the relinquishing of one’s total self—and encourages a complete surrender, with nothing held back. Clearly, Paul had but one objective in mind—to convey the concept of becoming a “sacrifice.”

This particular sacrifice has four distinctive qualities:

**It Is Living.** It is not a one-time offering, never to be repeated. Rather, it is to be on-going, inasmuch as it continually lives. As Paul wrote earlier, “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (6:13). Unlike unbelievers, who are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), believers are spiritually alive in Christ. Thus they can be living sacrifices.

**It Is Holy.** It is set apart, designated for godly purposes.

**It Is Acceptable Unto God.** The meaning of acceptable is “well-pleasing.” It is used in this same sense in Philippians 4:18, where Paul thanked the Philippian church for its gift, which he described as “a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”

**It Is Your Reasonable Service.** In the days of the Temple, the priestly duties were known as the service. Paul also used the word this way in Romans 9:4, as did the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 9:1 and 9:6. The word suggests that this sacrifice of the believer is merely a part of his reasonable, logical duty as a believer-priest who has direct access to God through the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). Moreover, where there is the Temple of God, there should also be sacrifice; and each believer is a Temple indwelled by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16).

It is interesting to note, however, that Paul did not command his readers to make this dedicatory sacrifice, though he had the authority to do so. Instead, he appealed to them as a father would his children, understanding that such an important decision must be made willingly.

### Characteristics of a Living Sacrifice

From 12:2 through 15:13, Paul delineated the characteristics of a living sacrifice:

**Living Sacrifices Are Not Conformed to This World** (12:1-2). “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (12:2). The word world here is not kosmos, the word normally associated with the devil’s evil system that is in enmity with God (1 Jn. 2:16). Instead, it denotes a period of time, or age—in this case, one marked by wickedness. The same word is used in Galatians 1:4.

The Lord Jesus Christ died so “that he might deliver us from this present evil age.” Instead of being pressed into the mold of this evil age, living sacrifices allow themselves to be “transformed.” Just as caterpillars undergo a metamorphosis to become butterflies, living sacrifices experience on-going inner changes to become like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). This is accomplished by the renewal of the mind. Emotions do not bring about the transformation; nor do experiences. The change hinges upon the renewal of the seat of rationality and thinking. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). God’s Word is truth; and it is the entrance of that truth into the mind, coupled with faith, that removes the lies of this age and produces a daily renewal (2 Cor. 4:16). As this transformation occurs, the living sacrifice is then enabled to continually prove (“discover through testing,” as in 1 Tim. 3:10) God’s good, acceptable, well-pleasing, and perfect will.

**Living Sacrifices View Themselves as Servants** (12:3-21). They exercise their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ so that others may be edified. They are genuine and authentic in their sacrificial love. They are pure, devoted to people, diligent in meeting the needs of others, and empathize with the joys and pain of others. They make no class distinctions and hold no grudges. Instead, they behave with goodness toward those who treat them badly.

**Living Sacrifices Strive to Be Good Citizens** (13:1-7). This fact holds true regardless of the nature of their country’s government, and it includes paying taxes. Living sacrifices understand that submission to authority is submission to
Living Sacrifices Avoid Indebtedness (13:8-14). In other words, they don’t make obligations they are not prepared to meet. The preeminent debt should be to love those around them. They realize life is short; are aware of the times; have a sense of urgency; and anticipate the soon return of the Lord, which inspires them to live in the fullness of Christ.

Living Sacrifices Do Not Judge (14:1-23). They do not condemn their brothers and sisters in the faith, but seek to build them up. A proud, judgmental spirit may have been a problem among the Roman believers. Being inhabitants of the city to which all roads led may have given them a certain prestige and panache that generated an ungodly pride. Paul warned them not to “be wise in your own conceits” (11:25). Every man is “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (12:3). Furthermore, he told them, “Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” (12:16). Instead, “receive ye one another” (15:7). Living sacrifices, therefore, are not puffed up with their own importance, putting themselves in the place of God by judging their brothers and sisters in Christ and tearing them down over minor issues. Instead, they allow others to be answerable only to Christ at His judgment seat, where they also will give an account one day. They determine not to make their brethren stumble but, out of love, to help them grow strong in the faith.

Living Sacrifices Seek to Please Others (15:1-13). They seek harmony and singleness of purpose with both Jewish and Gentile believers in hopes of building them up, with this intended goal: “That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:6).

Copy of a Living Sacrifice

From Romans 15:14 through the end of the book, Paul became more personal with his readers. He spoke humbly of himself and his own ministry as a practical example of a living sacrifice (15:14-21). Nevertheless, he was careful not to bring glory to himself and avowed, “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me” (15:18).

Paul also expressed, as he did at the beginning of the book, his deep desire to visit his spiritual family at Rome. He besought them a second time to pray that he might come to them without a hitch when he passed through Jerusalem (15:22-33).

But there was a hitch. Though Paul did get to visit his cherished friends at Rome, the visit took place only after a three-year wait following the writing of the epistle—and then, in chains. Luke recorded the tender scene: “And from there [Rome], when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as the Forum of Appius, and The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:15).

The Roman brethren did not even wait until their beloved Paul reached the capital city before they greeted him. They journeyed forty miles in order to see his face sooner. Perhaps there to meet him with open arms were Epaenetus, Andronicus, Junias, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and the rest of the twenty-seven people he greeted in Romans 16:1-16. In no other letter did Paul list so many individuals by name. Because of a willingness to “spend and be spent” for others (2 Cor. 12:15), Paul’s living sacrifice of himself left in its wake a register of real human beings whose lives were forever changed by Jesus Christ.

After making one final appeal—to watch out for troublemakers in the church—Paul relayed the greetings of his companions and closed with a final doxology (16:17-27).

Call to a Living Sacrifice

Through the apostle Paul, God still pleads with us today in the same way he did with the early Roman church. He admonishes us to remember the wonders of His grace; to unashamedly proclaim the gospel in all its glory; and instructs us to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:2). Since the Messiah did this for us, we should do the same, holding nothing back, responding in the only logical way possible—by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice. If we do this, we can be sure our offering will be well-pleasing, a service to God, and “a sweet savor unto the Lord.”

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Benjamin Netanyahu and Yitzhak Shamir in opposing the plan. Peres said the Syrians must not be allowed to share the Sea of Galilee with Israel.

A storm of protest over the proposal arose immediately in Israel's parliament, the Knesset. A member of the opposition introduced a bill that would have made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get the deal approved. Barak's ruling coalition received a heavy blow when three of his coalition partners defected to vote with the opposition. The prime minister attempted to remain optimistic and said that by the time details were finalized, the Knesset would see things his way.

In spite of Barak's put-on-a-good-face optimism, he faces serious problems in his quest to forge a peace agreement with Syria. Meanwhile, Hafez al-Assad, the reclusive Syrian president, is sitting tight in the dugout, demanding virtually everything and agreeing to concede little more than a frigid acknowledgment that Israel is a fact of life in the Middle East.

Then there is the matter of Barak's campaign promise to put the situation to the Israeli electorate in a referendum before any agreement is finalized. With each passing day, chances of success on this front seem less likely. Israelis vividly remember what life was like before 1987, when Syria possessed the Golan, and Syrian gunners routinely shot and harassed every Israeli farmer and fisherman they sighted from their positions high above Israeli territory. For these Israelis, taking the Syrians at their word is a giant leap in the dark. Compounding their worries is the fact that Assad plans to stay in Lebanon, which he regards as a part of "Greater Syria." So far, the Syrian leader still has not bridled the Hizballah terrorists who continue to operate with his blessing from South Lebanon.

All these facts are causing some to wonder aloud if the Barak coalition can continue as a viable government. In any event, the haggling is sure to continue over what peace, if any, can be made between Israel and Syria.

So who's on first? No one knows. As it turns out, the last deal was a passed ball. It seems there's a lot of pitching—but No one is doing the catching.
Sowing and reaping is an immutable law of nature. This law holds true in both the spiritual and moral realms of life. During the reign of King Jeroboam II, seeds of spiritual adultery and moral deviance were sown in Israel and produced a crop of religious and social corruption that propelled the nation on a steady downward course. It became only a matter of time before Israel would reap God’s judgment, resulting in her total destruction. The sins of the nation, described in the analogy of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer (chapters 1—3), are depicted in graphic language in the remaining chapters of the book of Hosea.

**Israel Indicted**

Hosea delivered a subpoena from God that indicted Israel for her reprehensible wickedness. In a loud voice, Hosea cried, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel; for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (4:1). The subpoena figuratively summoned Israel to appear in court to address the charge of breaking God’s covenant and commandments. God was not only the prosecuting attorney in this proceeding, but also the judge who would pass sentence on Israel. The indictment charged the nation with a threefold failure to exhibit the spiritual qualities that should have characterized the people of God; and they broke five of the Ten Commandments.

First, Israel was charged with a lack of truth (v. 1) in speech and actions. The word *truth* (Heb. *emeth*) means “faithfulness, reliability,” and “stability.” Without integrity in character and conduct, there would be no stability in the land. Second, Israel was charged with a lack of mercy (v. 1). The Hebrew word for “mercy” (hesed) can also be translated “lovingkindness, goodness,” or “pity.” From the ruling king to the man on the street, no one evidenced either natural affection or compassion for one another. Third, Israel was charged with having no knowledge of God (v. 1). Israel had access to the knowledge of God through the Mosaic
Law; but it did not practice the principles set forth in the Law nor pass them down to the next generation. Over time, moral and religious corruption replaced godly behavior, leaving the nation devoid of inward spiritual conviction and bereft of understanding concerning God’s ways and purposes. Truth and mercy are two basic attributes of God’s divine nature and must be reflected in the social ethics of any people, or they will not survive.

The natural consequence of Israel’s blatant rebellion against God was that she broke five of the Ten Commandments: “swearing [calling down curses on people], and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery” (v. 2). These are the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments (Ex. 20:7, 16, 13, 15, and 14 respectively). Iniquity and murder swept the land as “blood toucheth blood” (v. 2). All these sins spontaneously flooded across Israel, contaminating everything in sight.

Israel’s moral depravity even affected nature: “Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth in it shall languish...beasts...fowls...[and] fish...shall be taken away” (v. 3). The land would cry out as crops withered and animal life perished for lack of water and food. Moses prophesied that Israel’s moral depravity would lead to a natural curse. “As they were increased, so they sinned against me,” said God (v. 7). Their sin increased in two ways. First, the Hebrew word for “sin” (chattath) can be translated “sin offering,” meaning the more sin offerings they presented in idolatrous worship, the more their condemnation multiplied before God. Second, the priests “eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity” (v. 8). The priests turned the offerings that were intended for God into a thriving little business for themselves.

Israel’s Ignorance

The primary responsibility of the priests was to teach Israel the knowledge of God’s Word and His Law, so the nation would know how to worship and serve the Lord. But the priests had willfully rejected God’s knowledge and failed to teach it to the people.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (v. 6). Since the priests had rejected knowledge, God would reject the priests. And because they had forgotten the law of God, He would forget their children. Thus the sons of the priests would not inherit the office of their fathers, bringing to an end the priesthood in Israel. This did not mean, however, that the priesthood in Judah would cease; it would remain intact until 70 A.D.

As the priests of Israel increased, growing in number and wealth, the greater their sin grew. “As they were increased, so they sinned against me,” said God (v. 7). Their sin increased in two ways. First, the Hebrew word for “sin” (chattath) can be translated “sin offering,” meaning the more sin offerings they presented in idolatrous worship, the more their condemnation multiplied before God. Second, the priests “eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity” (v. 8). The priests turned the offerings that were intended for God into a thriving little business for themselves. They received a portion of every animal sacrificed, along with a fee for their services. Thus they literally and metaphorically fed off the sacrifice. The more the Israelites sinned, the more sacrifices they offered, and the more the priests profited. Though they were religious leaders, they made no attempt to teach people about the holiness of God or to deter them from a life of sin. Rather, they encouraged iniquity for their own personal gain. Therefore, God changed “their glory into shame [disgrace]” (v. 7).

Hosea continued: “And there shall be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings” (v. 9). The priests and the people were addressed as one man. And both would receive the same punishment.
God’s judgment against the priests would unfold in three ways: First, “they shall eat, and not have enough” (v. 10). The priests who greedily fed off the sin offerings would be left unsatisfied with what they received. Second, “they shall commit harlotry, and shall not increase” (v. 10). Those who practiced so-called sacred prostitution in connection with the worship of Baal, a Canaanite fertility deity, and encouraged Israel to obtain fertility of the soil and womb by doing likewise, would be “rewarded” with childlessness. Third, “Harlotry and wine and new wine [would] take away [their] heart” (v. 11). The word heart signifies affections, understanding, and rational thinking. Most priests were addicted to wine and sexual perversion, both of which affected their minds and bodies. They became mentally dull, spiritually ignorant and indifferent, and devoid of natural affection for one another. The priests sowed perversion, and the people of Israel reaped the dreadful results.

**Israel’s Idolatry**

The priests and the populace were so possessed by a spirit of harlotry that they asked “counsel of their idols, and their staff” (v. 12). Rather than seeking God, Israel sought direction through divination before inanimate wood idols with a diviner’s staff. The “spirit of harlotry” caused them to offer “sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms” (v. 13). Even worse, the daughters and wives followed the example of their fathers and husbands by practicing “sacred” prostitution; “your daughters shall commit harlotry, and your spouses shall commit adultery” (v. 13). God would not single out the daughters and spouses for judgment, because the men of Israel committed the same sin: “for they themselves are separated with harlots, and they sacrifice with harlots” (v. 14). Ultimately, the tragic end of these people who “doth not understand [would be] their fall” (v. 14). Israel’s perversions and lack of spiritual understanding led to her destruction.

After speaking about the northern tribes of Israel, Hosea abruptly turned to Judah and warned her not to follow in Israel’s footsteps. He also warned Judah not to make oaths to the Lord in a place of idolatry: “let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth” (v. 15). Gilgal was located in Samaria and was a holy place until Israel desecrated it with idols. The name Beth-aven (“house of wickedness”) is a substitute for the name Bethel (“house of God”)—another holy place, where the Lord had appeared to Jacob. God was condemning the practice of idolatry in these cities, and warned Judah not to visit such places in Israel.

Israel also worshiped cows, which were a portraiture of Israel herself—a young “backsiding [rebellious] heifer” (v. 16) who refused to be led by the Lord. God vowed to give His people their way and to “feed them as a lamb in a large place” (v. 16). Like a lamb in a large field, without protective boundaries or guiding shepherd, they would be consigned to wander the world, unprotected from predators who would try to destroy them.

Hosea cried out to a rebellious Israel, “Ephraim is joined [yoked] to idols; let him alone” (v. 17). Ephraim was the largest and most prominent of the ten tribes, and the name is used throughout the book of Hosea to refer to the northern kingdom. Since Israel was so inextricably yoked to idolatry, God instructed other nations to have nothing to do with her, nor to intervene when her judgment came.

Thus Israel’s leaders brought the nation to shame by their excessive drinking and immoral practices. Hosea wrote, “Their drink is sour; they have committed harlotry continually; her rulers love shame more than glory” (v. 18). The word rulers means “shields” and describes the leaders’ protective role as guardians of Israel. But instead of guarding Israel from evil, they promoted the very wickedness that brought the nation to shame, not glory.

Hosea closed this indictment with a prediction of Israel’s sudden destruction: “The wind hath bound her up in its wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices” (v. 19). As prophesied, the Assyrians came like a whirlwind in 722 B.C. and carried helpless Israel into captivity. In exile, Israel had years to reflect on her idolatrous sacrifices, sinful lifestyle, and shameful deeds.

Although all this transpired long ago, no nation is exempt from what happened to Israel. God is forever consistent in applying His eternal, immutable, divine law of sowing and reaping. No nation can escape. Whatsoever is sown, in due time, shall also be reaped. America, are you listening?
For its first issue of the year 2000, The Jerusalem Report, a prominent international Jewish magazine, published the results of a poll in which it asked its readers to choose the one hundred greatest Jews of the past millennium. Four of the top ten were David Ben-Gurion, Theodor Herzl, Yitzhak Rabin, and Golda Meir.

No doubt these well-known individuals placed high because of the indisputably monumental contributions they made to the establishment and growth of the modern State of Israel.

At the same time, however, it was rather disappointing that the man who brought Hebrew back to the land only came in thirty-eighth. His name was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a man with every bit as much Zionist fervor as those in the top four. And his accomplishment may well have eclipsed all others save that of Herzl himself, the father of Zionism (the movement to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel.)
Ben-Yehuda’s zeal as a Zionist came many years before Herzl’s. I remember a story I once heard when I was a young boy attending Hebrew school. It beautifully sums up the magnitude of Ben-Yehuda’s achievement. Around 1897, when the First Zionist Congress met in Basel, Switzerland, a legion of skeptics found it incredulous that the Jewish people could ever be reestablished in their land as a viable country in the world. Many poked fun at Herzl and his supporters. One such critic asserted that there was as much chance of creating a modern Jewish state as there was that the people in that state would all speak Hebrew—the ancient tongue of Israel.

His cynicism was understandable. At that time, Hebrew was virtually a dead language. Generally, only biblical scholars used it, and even they rarely conversed in it because thousands of words used every day in other languages simply did not exist in Hebrew. There was, for example, no way to say bicycle or doll or ice cream or bulldozer.

But Ben-Yehuda was not to be deterred. His goal was Yisrael b’artzo uvilshono—Israel in its own land, speaking its own language.

Eliezer Yitzhak Perelman, as he was named at his birth in 1858, was born in Luzhky, Lithuania. Reared in a Hasidic household, he was able to attend yeshivah (Jewish day school) despite the fact his father had died when he was only five years old. Living at a time when haskala—enlightenment—was sweeping Europe, Eliezer became very interested in secular literature, a heresy for Hasidic Jews. As a result, he was expelled from his uncle’s home, where he had been living, and had to find lodging elsewhere.

He moved to Vilna and lived in the home of a Hasidic scholar who also had been influenced by the enlightenment.

While there, he learned to read and write several languages and became more and more influenced by the European awakening. In an unfinished autobiography, Ben-Yehuda told of that time and its profound effect on him. The following excerpt came from an article written by Ben-Yehuda’s grandson and cited on the Internet by Lev Software of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. In it, Ben-Yehuda detailed an experience that changed the direction of his life forever.

“In those days it was as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a clear, incandescent light flashed before my eyes and a mighty inner voice sounded in my ears ‘the resurrection of Israel on its ancestral soil.’ Because of that voice, which has not ceased from that moment on to ring in my ears day and night, all my thoughts and plans which I had for my future life were shaken up. As night visions pale in the face of the light of day, so were my dreams of dedicating my life to the cause of freedom in the Russian nation replaced with a single ideal, manifest in the Hebrew words ‘Yisrael b’artzo’—Israel in its own land! I was challenged by many, and one argument said that the Jews are not now and could not be in the future a nation—because they did not possess a common tongue...the more I thought of the national revival the more I realized what a tongue can do to unite a people. I realized that just as the Jews could not become a living nation except by returning to their ancient homeland—so also they could not become a living nation except by returning to the language of their ancestors, speaking it not only in prayer and study but also in all matters of life, young and old alike, at all hours of the day and night—just like every other nation, each with its tongue. That was the decisive moment in my life, when I saw that the two things without which the Jews could not become a nation are the land and the language!”

In 1878 Ben-Yehuda made the decision to move from Paris, where he was living, and settle in Eretz Yisrael—the land of Israel. At the time, the land was a virtual Babel of languages. Under Turkish rule, the various tongues included Arabic, Russian, Yiddish, English, and some Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda desired to start a community of Hebrew speakers who actually lived in the land. In religious circles, however, Hebrew was considered too sacred to speak on a daily basis so there was objection to the idea of vulgarizing its sanctity.

Ben-Yehuda’s seemingly farfetched plans seemed even more unlikely when he contracted tuberculosis in the winter of 1878. While in the hospital in Paris, he
met A. M. Lunz, a man who spoke impeccable Sephardi Hebrew. Sephardi Hebrew was used in the transliteration of biblical names in ancient and modern translations of the Bible.

By 1881, not fully recovered from the effects of his illness but with his vision for a “people wedded to a land, speaking its own language,” he began his journey to Jerusalem.2 Having broken off a relationship with his childhood sweetheart because of his illness, Eliezer was shocked to see her waiting for him in Vienna. She was prepared to make the rest of the journey to the Holy Land with him as his wife. When he reminded her of the difficulties that lay ahead, Deborah responded as Ruth had responded to her mother-in-law, Naomi, hundreds of years before: “wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge I will lodge.”3 They were married in Cairo.

When they landed in Jaffa in October 1881, Eliezar informed his wife that they would no longer speak Russian. From that moment forward, Hebrew would be their only language. His new bride replied in Russian, “I do not speak Hebrew.” His answer? “Then you will be silent in Hebrew.”4 They became the first Hebrew-speaking home established in Jerusalem and their son, born in 1882, the first modern-Hebrew-speaking child.

Ben-Yehuda established a society whose goal was to revive the language in the land. He wrote for a political magazine and taught in a Jerusalem school where he was permitted to instruct in Hebrew—the first school in the land with such instruction. He published a geography book called Eretz Israel and translated many texts for use in the classroom on subjects such as math and literature. He wrote for Hakhavatzelet, a Hebrew literary periodical, and launched Hatzvi, a weekly newspaper published in Hebrew that reported the news of the land. Soon the need grew to create words that did not already exist in Hebrew. So Ben-Yehuda published lists of words he fabricated. In fact, when he began to publish a dictionary, the word dictionary did not exist.

In religious circles, however, Hebrew was considered too sacred to speak on a daily basis.

In 1891 his faithful wife, Deborah, died of tuberculosis, leaving him with two small children. According to the account written by Eliezer’s grandson, Deborah wrote a letter to her younger sister shortly before her death. “If you want to be a queen,” she said, “then hurry to Jerusalem and marry my prince, my darling Eliezer.”5 And her sister did. She changed her name to Hemda (“darling” in Hebrew) and made the journey to Jerusalem. Six months later they were married. She helped him immensely in his work and supported him in all he did.

Ben-Yehuda founded and presided over Va’ad HaLashon, the forerunner of the Hebrew Language Academy, while working tirelessly on his dictionary.6 In 1910 he published the first six volumes. He died in 1922 without completing his work. His wife and son Ehud (whose son, in turn, wrote the material used by Lev Software) continued publishing his manuscript—a task that was not finished until 1959, long after their deaths. In all, seventeen volumes were completed, listing all the words used in Hebrew literature from the time of Abraham to modern times.

To understand this immense accomplishment, one only has to think of biblical prophecy. One day the Messiah of Israel will return to His people, the Jewish people. When He touches down on the Mount of Olives, walks down and up the slopes of the Valley of Kidron and through the gates of the old city walls, He will seat Himself on the throne of His father David. When that happens, the language He will hear, and possibly even speak, will once again be Hebrew—the language of His kinsmen according to the flesh.

The story of Israel is a story of resurrection. There is but one nation in the world whose people were forced to leave their homeland, to survive more than nineteen hundred years in other countries, and to finally come home. As incredible as that miracle is—and it is a miracle—it is no less a miracle that the national language today is, once again, Hebrew.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda may have been thirty-eighth on one list; but he is number one on mine.

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Jesus Christ and the Future Kingdom of God

(Part 7)

Introduction

When Jesus Christ was on earth during His First Coming, He said “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15); and He taught His disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come” (Mt. 6:10). In what sense was He referring to the Kingdom of God in these expressions? To answer these questions, we must examine the Kingdom of God concept in the Bible.

The Basis of the Concept

The concept of the Kingdom of God in the Bible is predicated upon the sovereignty of God. King David’s expression in 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 indicates this.

Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Here David declared three things concerning God: First, God has sovereign power, or authority, to rule. Second, He has a realm (all that is in the heaven and in the earth) over which to exercise His sovereign rule. Third, He actually exercises His sovereign rule over that realm. These three are essentials to have a kingdom. Since God, in His sovereignty, possesses or does all these things, David declared that God has a kingdom.

Distinctions in the Concept

The Bible presents three distinctions in the Kingdom of God concept: time, scope, and administration. At first, they appear to contain contradictions.

The Distinction of Time. Some Scriptures present the Kingdom of God as an entity that has existed continually since God created the universe: “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Ps. 103:19); “The LORD reigneth...Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting” (Ps. 93:1-2); “Thou, O LORD, remainest forever, thy throne from generation to generation” (Lam. 5:19). The apostle Paul declared that the God who created all things “is Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:24).

By contrast, however, other Scriptures indicate that the Kingdom of God is to come in the future; it is not here yet. Some six hundred years before Christ, the prophet Daniel foretold, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom” (Dan. 2:44). Christ, in fact, taught His disciples to pray that the Kingdom of God would come (Mt. 6:10).

The Distinction of Scope. Some Scriptures present the Kingdom of God as being universal in scope: It has the entire uni-
verse as its realm. As noted earlier, David indicated that it includes “all that is in the heaven and in the earth.” David also declared that God’s “kingdom ruleth over all” (Ps. 103:19; cf. 135:6). The apostle Paul stated that God is “Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:24).

Nevertheless, other Scriptures present the Kingdom of God as being earthly in scope: The earth alone is its realm. In Daniel 2:35, 44-45, the stone—which represented the future Kingdom that God will establish—filled the whole earth. In Daniel 7:13-14, the future Kingdom (which God will give to the Son of man, who comes with the clouds of Heaven, and to the saints) is described as being “under the whole heaven” (Dan. 7:27). According to Zechariah 14:4 and 9, when the Messiah will come to earth at His Second Coming, “the LORD shall be king over all the earth.” The apostle John foresaw creatures of God, during the future Tribulation period, talking about the kingdom (singular in the Greek text) of the world becoming the Kingdom of God and His Christ (Rev. 11:15).

The Distinction of Administration. Some Scriptures present the Kingdom of God as being God’s rule administered directly by Him over any or all parts of the universe. No human agent administers God’s rule on His behalf. For example, it was God, not a human agent, who inflicted King Nebuchadnezzar with insanity (Dan. 4). The purpose of this sovereign act was to demonstrate “that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (v. 17). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that his insanity was an expression of God’s Kingdom-rule. And he described the directness of that rule as follows: “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (v.35).

Without the aid of human agents, God killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (2 Ki. 19). Concerning this direct administration of His Kingdom-rule, God declared, “Surely...as I have purposed, so shall it stand: That I will break the Assyrian in my land...For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isa. 14:24-25, 27).

But by contrast, other Scriptures present the Kingdom of God as being God’s rule administered indirectly, through a human agent, just over the earth. Psalm 2:6-9 portray God establishing the Messiah as King, to rule the nations and all parts of the earth. The fact that the Messiah will be God’s agent, who will administer God’s rule over this earthly province of God’s universal Kingdom, is indicated by two things. First, God calls the Messiah “my king” (v. 6). Second, any rebellion against the Messiah will also be rebellion against God (vv. 2-3) and will bring God’s wrath (vv. 4-5).

Daniel 7:13-14 depict God giving the Son of man a Kingdom over which to rule. This Kingdom will consist of “all people, nations, and languages” (v. 14) and will be “under the whole heaven” (v. 27), meaning limited to this earth. A parallel passage (Dan. 2:44) indicates that this Kingdom is God’s Kingdom, for it declares that it is set up by the God of Heaven. A comparison of Daniel 2:35 with verses 44 and 45 shows that this Kingdom of God will fill the whole earth. Thus Daniel 2 and 7 describe an earthly Kingdom of God in which God’s rule will be administered indirectly by a human agent, the Son of man, who will come with the clouds of Heaven.

Similar concepts are presented in Revelation 11:15, which talks about the kingdom of the world becoming the Kingdom of God and of His Christ and then indicates that one of these Persons (“he”—singular) will reign. Revelation 19 and 20 clearly signify that Christ is that one Person who will come to earth to reign over this Kingdom of God. Here again is the picture of an earthly Kingdom of God in...
which God’s rule is administered indirectly by a human agent, Christ.

There are, then, three significant distinctions in the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God: *time* (the Kingdom of God has existed continually since God created the universe, but it also has not yet started); *scope* (the Kingdom of God is universal, yet it is just earthly); and *administration* (the Kingdom of God is the rule of God administered directly by Him over any or all parts of the universe, but it also is the rule of God administered indirectly through a human agent over the earth alone).

**Explanation of These Distinctions**

In spite of how it may appear, these distinctions are not contradictions. Instead, they indicate that the Kingdom of God has at least two aspects, or expressions.

**Universal Kingdom of God**. This is the first aspect, or expression. It is the rule of God over the entire universe (including the earth) and everything in it. This rule has existed continually, ever since God created the universe.

The dispensations are the different ways in which God administers His universal Kingdom-rule over the earth during its history. It could be said that each dispensation is a particular expression, or phase, of God’s universal Kingdom-rule over the earthly province of His universal Kingdom. Sometimes God administers this rule directly (not through a human agent) and sometimes He administers it indirectly, through a human agent.

**Theocratic Kingdom of God**. This constitutes the second aspect, or expression, of the Kingdom of God. A theocracy is the form of government in which a human agent or representative administers the rule of God. In light of the nature of a theocracy and the biblical teaching concerning this aspect of the Kingdom of God, several conclusions can be drawn concerning the theocratic Kingdom of God.

First, it is a more narrow, or limited, aspect of the Kingdom of God than is the universal Kingdom. This is so because the theocratic Kingdom is but one aspect of the universal Kingdom.

Second, the theocratic Kingdom is restricted to God’s rule over the earth. It does not involve His rule over the entire universe. By contrast, the universal Kingdom of God concerns God’s rule over the entire universe (including the earth).

Third, the theocratic Kingdom of God is restricted to the indirect administration of God’s rule through a human agent or representative (an Adam). It does not involve God’s direct administration of His rule. By contrast, the universal Kingdom of God involves both the indirect and direct administration of God’s rule.

Fourth, the theocratic Kingdom is restricted just to those times when God has a human agent (an Adam) administering His rule over the entire earth. There are only two such time periods for this present earth: the time between man’s creation and fall and the time of the future Millennium. Thus the theocratic Kingdom constitutes the first and last phases of God’s universal Kingdom-rule over this present earth.

When God’s first human agent (Adam) fell, the first phase of the theocratic Kingdom was lost; Satan usurped the rule of the world system away from God and has dominated that system ever since. It is important to note that God’s ownership of the earth, and His universal Kingdom-rule over the earth, did not end at that time. Only the theocratic-Kingdom phase of His universal Kingdom-rule over the earth ended at the fall of man. Other phases of His universal Kingdom-rule have been present on the earth since that time. Thus, centuries after Adam’s rebellion, David could write, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1).

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Yehuda Levy, Former Post Publisher, Dies

(Taken From The Jerusalem Post)

Former Jerusalem Post president and publisher, Yehuda Levy, has died of cardiac arrest at the age of 64.

Born in Jaffa in 1935, Levy was a thirteenth-generation sabra (native Israeli) who devoted his life to his country. He served in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) for more than twenty-five years, leaving the army in 1981 with the rank of colonel.

Even after his discharge from the standing army, Levy never really left military life. He continued to serve in the reserves, acting as IDF spokesman in Beirut during the Lebanon War and filling a host of other posts over the years. Through the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, he brought hundreds of high-ranking U.S. military officers to Israel, helping forge deep ties between senior military figures in both countries.

Levy served as a Jewish National Fund emissary in Vancouver, Canada, where he befriended Hollinger International President David Radler. After representing Hollinger during its purchase of The Jerusalem Post from Koor and Bank Hapoalim in 1989, Levy was appointed the paper’s president and publisher, posts he held until 1997. In that time, he turned the Post into a profitable company and raised the circulation of its titles.

Following his retirement from the Post, Levy helped found Makor Rishon, a Hebrew weekly. He served as its editor and general manager during its first year of operation.

He never missed an opportunity to spread the Zionist message. He was a popular lecturer to Jewish and Christian audiences around the world, and he always sought to further Israel’s cause.

Levy is survived by his wife, three children, their spouses, and eight grandchildren.

New Israeli Invention: Greenhouse for Fish

(Taken from Israel Wire)

In Moshav Ein Hemed near Sodom, giant greenhouses have been erected for the raising of fish. The new invention is the idea of the OZ Rom Company. Company chairman, Moshe Cohen, explained that the greenhouse-covered ponds are connected to the regular ponds by water ducts. The baby fish stay in the covered pond until they reach a certain size, then are transferred via the ducts to the regular fishponds to continue their growth for marketing. The OZ Rom Company hopes for intensive development of its design, if the idea proves successful.

Neo-Nazis March to Protest Planned Holocaust Memorial

(Taken from Ha’aretz)

In Berlin hundreds of neo-Nazis demonstrated at the site of Germany’s planned memorial to Holocaust victims and, in a politically charged move, marched through Berlin’s landmark Brandenburg Gate. The extreme-right National Party of Germany had been banned by police from demonstrating for fear of violence, but a court overturned the decision and allowed the event to go forward.

Hundreds of police blocked streets in central Berlin to make way for five hundred demonstra tors who headed down the main Unter den Linden boulevard to the site of the memorial. They marched through the nearby Brandenburg Gate, an act that is particularly symbolic in Germany, given that the Nazi troops during Hitler’s reign once held torchlight processions through the gate. During past neo-Nazi demonstrations, police have not allowed partici-
pants to go through the Brandenburg Gate.

The demonstrators carried a banner at the head of their procession reading “Stop the Memorial,” and some carried the old German red, white, and black national flag—one of which had the word skinheads written on it. Police said that two arrests were made of people allegedly displaying banned symbols. Spreading Nazi propaganda is illegal in Germany. Authorities also stopped about twenty-five marchers from singing a Nazi song.

**Russian Emigration to Israel Doubles**

(Taken from Interfax News Agency, AP)

Russian emigration to Israel was more than twice as high in 1999 as in the previous year, the Interfax News Agency has reported. According to the Moscow Office of the Jewish Agency, which brings Jews to Israel, 29,534 Russian citizens emigrated to Israel in 1999, up from 13,019 a year earlier, Interfax reported. The news agency quoted the executive vice president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Alexander Osovtsov, as saying that the main factors behind the increase were Russia’s 1998 economic crisis and “general political instability, [including] the fact that last year’s anti-Semitic component was far more in the center of attention in society.”

Anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi groups, although small, have steadily grown bolder and more visible in Russia in recent years. They have been accused of beating members of racial minorities, desecrating Jewish cemeteries, and bombing synagogues. While Russian law bars “inciting inter-ethnic strife,” authorities have rarely tried to punish various political groups for their frequent anti-Semitic statements.

**Hamas Bombing Plans Thwarted**

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

Plans to blow up a residential building in Jerusalem or Netanya were foiled with the recent capture of a Hamas terror cell. The cell, responsible for bomb attacks in Netanya and Hadera that wounded 40 people, had already been searching for an appropriate target, according to security officials. General Security Service and Palestinian Preventive Security Service officials have arrested 60 activists since the cell was exposed.

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Here in Israel, many people believe that if they perform good deeds (mitzvot), heaven will be opened to them. They say that repentance and good deeds will shield them from retribution. So they are very busy trying to be righteous. How do they do this? They go to men and put phylacteries on their heads.

You can see these “righteous ones,” as they call themselves, doing these things in the marketplace. After they put phylacteries on the heads of men, they declare the men righteous and tell them that they have now repented.

One morning I was standing near a table in the marketplace, and they asked me, “Have you prayed this morning?” They were referring to the liturgical Shacharit morning prayer.

I said, “I pray every day. This is my first obligation before the Lord, to give Him thanks for this new day.”

They looked at me and answered, “You say you pray every day. How can this be? You do not look like one who prays even one time in a year.”

“Why do you say this?” I asked.

The man replied, “Where is your cap? How can you pray without a covering on your head?”

Now we were coming to the right conversation. I asked them if they read the book of Psalms. They said, “Yes.”

“This is very important for every Jew,” I said, “and for anyone who comes before the Lord. In Psalm 139:23, it is very clearly written, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart.’ It is not written ‘know my cap’! And in Psalm 40:8, it is written, ‘thy law is within my heart.’ Nowhere does it say to put a cap on your head; but in many places it is written, as in Jeremiah 4:14, ‘O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.’

“You are so sure you are following God’s commands, but you are so deep in darkness. It was the will of the Lord that I come here today to tell you the truth. As it is written in Ezekiel 33:7, ‘I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel...warn them from me.’

“It is my duty to come to people like you and, as the Bible says, to warn you. Even if you put on your head not only one phylactery, but ten, they will help you as much as glasses help a blind horse. You do not come to God with all your heart, as it is written in the most important prayer of Deuteronomy 6:5: ‘And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’

Then they began to show me many small books that they considered important. But I showed them only one, the Bible. And there it is written to hear the Lord, your God, and “fear the LORD thy God, and serve him” (Dt. 6:13).

Then they said to me, “Our rabbi said that when we will meet a person like you, we should not speak to him.”

I told them that their rabbis fear the truth, and they do not give people the right answers. Although they see themselves as heroes, they are heroes only to the weak. “You have even boycotted a
full chapter of the Bible,” I said, “where it clearly speaks about our Savior, Yeshua Hamashiah.”

They said it is forbidden to remove even one letter from what is written in the Bible. I told them I would show them what their rabbis have omitted. I asked them, “You do not mind that I read this to you?”

“If this is really from the Bible and not from paganism,” they said, “you may read it.”

So I opened my Bible to chapter 53 of Isaiah and told them to read it for themselves. Then I said I would give them the correct explanation of the passage. So they began to read. Soon one of them said, “But we have never read this chapter before.” I asked them why not. They did not know what to say. So I said, “How many years have you served your rabbi?”

One of them said, “You know, many Christians are using this chapter.”

I told them that those who believe the Lord according to the Law never boycott what is written here. They believe with all their heart and soul. “You,” I told them, “read this important verse from Deuteronomy 6:4—Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad—‘Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One’ (Masoretic Text), and you read with your lips only. But we, whom you call ‘those pagans,’ read with our hearts. We never run away from the truth, but receive it as it is written. The Lord is our God! The Lord is One!”

Then I looked around the marketplace and there were people standing behind me, listening. When I was through speaking, some even replied, “You are right! We have learned much here.” Even at the marketplace, the truth can come out.