Willow Valley Conference AD by BSC
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ABOUT THE COVER
Dominating the cover of this issue is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, created by Art Director Tom Williams. The dramatic symbolism projects the thrust of the Old Testament prophecies that trace the lineage of the coming Messiah. The New Testament records of the genealogies that culminate with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth provide a magnificent confirmation of His right to reign as Israel’s promised Messiah. In addition, you will discover some timeless elements of the grace of God in placing selected Gentiles into the genealogy of Jesus.

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EDITORIAL

What Goes Around

We are all well acquainted with the names of people like Corrie ten Boom, Oscar Schindler, and Raoul Wallenburg. Each is distinguished for rescuing Jewish people who were marked for death by the satanically driven Third Reich of Adolph Hitler. Their compassion and courage have not been forgotten by the Jewish people. A street on the grounds of Israel’s national memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, is appropriately named “The Street of Righteous Gentiles.” There, carob trees stand vigilantly over plaques memorializing those Christians and others who did not forget the Jewish people. Nor will these Gentiles be forgotten by Israel.

A popular expression I rather enjoy avoiding is “What goes around, comes around.” In this context, however, it seems especially appropriate. In the 1930s and, 40s, Jews were being killed by the millions. Today the specter of another such episode has arrived on a smaller scale.

The Israel Defense Force has the vacated South Lebanon. Its stay in the Security Zone has exacted a high price. Some five hundred IDF soldiers have lost their lives protecting the Israeli towns along the northern border. Israel’s departure has sounded an alarm and flashed a green light to Hizbollah terrorists to implement their plan to exterminate all the Christians they have branded as collaborators in South Lebanon.

It is often said that Jewish people have long memories—a quality credited with contributing to their survival. Jewish suffering in Europe and sundry other parts of the world has sensitized the nation to barbarous acts against oppressed people who are unable to defend themselves. When the IDF pullout from South Lebanon was announced, it sparked an immediate flurry of inquiries about the fate of those Christians who would be left behind. Hezbollah’s brutal decree soon roused Israelis into action.

Residents of the town of Metulla in the north of Israel have announced that he will host SLA families if the government will provide funds for education, social services, and assistance in obtaining work. For its part, the Israeli government has arranged with a real estate firm to find nine hundred apartments—all located in Jewish areas—for these endangered Lebanese. In a show of solidarity with their Christian brethren, several Christian Arab villages have expressed a willingness to assist the SLA families.

So in the case of Jews and Christians, what goes around does indeed come around. Over half a century ago, courageous Christians in Europe sheltered Jewish people from the fury of the Nazis. Now the Jewish people have the opportunity to return the favor. And they are doing so.

Inherent in this scenario is a question for other Christians the world over. For decades, a pall of silence has prevailed when we receive reports of our brethren being maimed and murdered. It just doesn’t seem possible that such horror could befall believers in a world such as ours, awash in advanced technology and widespread affluence. But irrefutable evidence is mounting that Christians are fair game for slaughter; and we can no longer turn a blind eye to the hundreds of thousands who are suffering persecution, deprivation, and death. The plight of the South Lebanese is a wake-up call, and this is no time to press the snooze button.
What Every Jewish Person...
Booklet AD by BSC
The issue has come full circle. When Gentiles began to accept the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, in the first century, a question arose: Should Jewish people (who dominated the church at the time) and Gentile believers worship as a family in the same assemblies? To say the least, it was a thorny issue. Some believed that it was preferable to be separated and maintain the historical distance that had existed between the communities. There were those, however, who thought otherwise. The church, they reasoned, was a totally unique phenomenon. In this new era, there was to be no division.
Jewish people and Gentiles had become members of the same family and, therefore, should be interdependent, mutually support one another, and function as members of the same body.

Today the same questions are being raised. Should Christian believers of Jewish descent resurrect the synagogue system and break ranks with their Gentile brethren? Opinions on the subject span a wide spectrum and often initiate rather heated debates. Of course, believers have the latitude to choose different paths when it comes to cultural adaptations in their worship styles. Few would argue this point. But something more basic than incorporating lox and bagels into the services of a local assembly is involved here. It is extremely important to remember that no matter how strongly one may be attached to ethnic and cultural heritage, they should not form the basis of our worship. In other words, Jewish-ness is not a valid reason for believers to join together in worship. The same may be said about people from various elements within the Gentile community. The focal point of our worship must always be the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, all other factors become minor and subsidiary considerations. This thought is carried by the Holy Spirit into the second and third chapters of the book of Ephesians.

The Gentile Dilemma

Wherefore, remember that ye, being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands—That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:11–12).

Earlier in the chapter, Gentiles were described as “dead in trespasses and sins” (v. 1). As if that were not enough, they were classified as living and moving in a circle far removed from the favor of God. Among whom also we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:3).

The ravages of malignant paganism coupled with a sin nature had consigned the whole of the Gentile world to spiritual catastrophe and, ultimately, eternal destruction.

But—

Of all of the single-word transitions in Scripture, the little word but often looms above the rest in significance. It most certainly does in the present context. But [emphasis added] now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). This surpassing verse is prefaced by another but. In this instance, the word is directly coupled with the name of God. But God [emphasis added], who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), . . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:4–5, 8–9).

I suppose the most astonishing aspect in this revelation is that after millennia of alienation from Jehovah, suddenly the door of redemption was thrown open to Gentiles, and they were invited to become members of the family of God. And beyond anyone’s wildest dreams, those who believed became heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

We often marvel, and rightly so, at the wonder of our Lord’s preservation of the Jewish people against all odds and His purpose to bring about, once and for all, a consummate reconciliation to the Messiah. But it is no less a marvel that the Sovereign of eternity would condescend to light the way home for belligerent and estranged Gentiles. And how was this accomplished? It was through the cross work of the Savior, who came to “give his life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45), even for the off-scouring of the world.

No Middle Wall

But while the plan of redemption was being accomplished, another work of grace was taking place. It is no secret that the history of this
planet is littered with the debris of vicious animosity between Jews and Gentiles. Gentile persecution of the sons of Jacob constitutes a bloody chapter in the sordid chronicle of human behavior. In spite of this fact, God was sovereignly moving to another purpose—one that would stand as an enduring testimonial to what only He could do.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us (Eph. 2:14).

The language could not be more precise. Even the most committed anti-Semite, who lives under the guise of Christianity, cannot explain away the obvious. That middle wall was the one that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. It was a barrier placed between the courts of Israel and the court of the Gentiles. The apostle Paul and all his readers clearly understood what that partition was about. It was a barrier that said “No” to every Gentile who ever wanted to set foot on Mount Moriah. The courts of Israel, the altar of sacrifice, and the Holy of Holies were off limits to the heathen. Only death lay beyond the fence.

But with the rising of the sun on that glorious resurrection morning came a new day. Through the cross work of the Messiah, that wall had been torn down. And the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was swept away with the debris of that forbidding, restraining barrier. A new era had been ushered in. No one had expected it, but it had been part of the divine plan all along. It was, as it were, a mystery that was now revealed.

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace (Eph. 2:15).

Just as there could be no mistaking what was meant by the abolition of the partition in the Temple, there was no misunderstanding concerning the reference that of the two, God was making one new man. Jewish believers and Gentile believers were being fused into a totally new entity. The two were becoming one in Christ.

Redundancy is often tedious. Editors cringe when they see it. But when the Lord decides that redundant phraseology is in order, we would be well advised to listen carefully. And He decides so here, perhaps because the thought of Jew and Gentile becoming members of the same family is one that elements on both sides might not wish to entertain. So God Himself presses the point.

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:16–18).

One new man, one new body. Thus the Church of Jesus Christ is introduced. Jew and Gentile now inhabit the same frame. They are, indeed, one. It is an unmistakable fact of life. But this fact is not the sum of this new reality.

A Living Sanctuary

Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19–22).

This is a marvelous word. Jewish believers, along with their Gentile brothers and sisters, are being interspersed as building blocks in a divine sanctuary. Within that new building, the Spirit of God is making His abode. When He speaks of our being “an holy temple in the Lord,” it is not something to be taken lightly. Being the habitation of God is an extremely serious matter. This being the case, we must examine carefully the ramifications of what God intends for us through this new reality.

Viewing the Cathedral of Grace

There is a rare testimonial aspect related to this new sanctuary. It is, in fact, a magnificent cathedral of grace. With Jew and Gentile reconciled in Christ, God has created an undeniable witness to His mercy and grace. In a very real sense, Jewish and Gentile believers who worship
and serve together as members of the Body of Christ provide an indisputable witness to the power of the gospel. They are a public demonstration of what only God can do. The world cannot reproduce it, nor can the world deny it. Jews and Gentiles are truly reconciled through the finished work of Christ.

**Principalities and Powers**

There is a verse in the third chapter of Paul’s marvelous epistle that cannot be diminished. In fact, it is almost incomprehensible to the human mind.

*To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:10).

His church has been put on display, not only before human eyes but also before creatures in other realms of the universe. Thus He declares to all in the created universe of God—to Satan, fallen angels, and those who follow in God’s train—“Come and see! Come and witness what I have done. Come see my people, my church.”

It is not off the mark to say that redeemed Jewish people and Gentiles, worshiping and serving together, are the most powerful witness in the universe to the grace and mercy of God.

*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:9–10).

**The Glory of God**

In concert with the revelation that the church manifests the wisdom of God before “principalities and powers in heavenly places,” is the fact that the church is also a vehicle by which He reveals His undiminishng glory.

*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Eph. 3:21).

Through the church, a chosen vessel of His grace and mercy, Jehovah is perpetually displaying His abounding wisdom and glory. You will remember that the Jewish people have been chosen for the express purpose of being a “light for the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6, KJV). This will, of course, be fully realized during the Millennium. But through the church, He is performing a very special work today. Between verses 10 and 21, we are treated to a comprehensive view of just what the Lord is doing in order to show His wisdom and glory to every created being in His universe during this Age of Grace.

We learn of His eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, the boldness and confidence available through Him, strength and power by way of His Spirit, faith that roots and grounds our love, the surpassing love of Christ, the ability to be filled with all the fullness of God, and enablement to do exceedingly beyond all that one could ask or think through the divine power that works within us.

A few moments of meditation on all these treasures will bring to mind some of the central attributes of God Himself. Therefore, what is being manifested through simple believers here on earth defies manufacture through human ingenuity. We are, indeed, *new creatures in Christ*. A sovereign God has chosen to encapsulate His wisdom and glory in the church that He has condescended to create. Little wonder that this body should have been chosen to reflect His glory “throughout all ages.”

**The Unity of the Church**

It seems to me that the question of whether Jewish believers and Gentile Christians should worship together is emphatically answered in Scripture. And if there are deficiencies in the understanding and conduct of some congregations with regard to Jewish things, they can best be corrected by the presence of their Jewish brethren in their midst. The middle wall has, indeed, been broken down. And when we sit down together to worship, we can best confirm this glorious fact to a heart-hungry world.

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There is a well-known children’s television show that uses music and games to teach simple math and reading and help youngsters understand difficult concepts, such as around, behind, underneath, alike, and different. To teach the concepts of alike and different, it usually presents three things that are clearly alike and one that is obviously different. Then it asks the children to decide which thing doesn’t belong.

To someone familiar with Old Testament law, Matthew 1:5 contains something that doesn’t belong—the name of Ruth, a Moabitess. By purely legal standards, she constitutes a serious breach in the lineage of the Jewish Messiah; but by divine standards, she is a magnificent trophy of the sovereignty and grace of God.

Her story is told in the Old Testament book that bears her name. During one of the bleakest periods in Israel’s history—the time of the judges, when everyone “did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25)—Ruth stands out as a woman of sweet humility and childlike faith. She came to the Promised Land a penniless, young, pagan widow clinging to her elderly mother-in-law, Naomi; and she left a legacy that included her great-grandson—King David, the sweetest psalmist of Israel—and his greater Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Her story begins in Ruth 1:1: “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.” God only sent famine during a time of judgment. Trying to flee the judgment, Elimelech took his wife, Naomi, and his two sons,
Mahlon and Chilion, and went where the law forbade him to go—to a heathen nation. There he died. His sons married Moabite women with whom they had no children; and they, too, died. Naomi, elderly and empty, decided it was time to go home. Orpah, Chilion’s widow, returned to her people. But something about Naomi had so strongly impacted Ruth that despite Naomi’s best efforts to dissuade her, Ruth vowed never to leave:

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee; for where thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

So Ruth and Naomi left for Israel. Naomi could hardly have arrived in Bethlehem with anyone of a less desirable bloodline. The Moabites traced their lineage back to Lot. Moab was the name given to a son born from an incestuous relationship between a drunken Lot and his eldest daughter, following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19).

The descendants of Moab later became a thorn in the side of the children of Israel. It was Moabite King Balak who paid Balaam, the prophet for hire, to curse the Jewish people (Num. 22—23). When that didn’t work and God blessed them instead, Balaam counseled Balak (Rev. 2:14) to force God’s hand by luring the Israelite men into fornication with Moabite women. This caused the Lord to send a plague that killed twenty-four thousand Israelites (Num. 25). Largely because of this sin at Baal-Peor, God commanded that no Moabite enter the congregation of the LORD “even to their tenth generation” (Dt. 23:3).

On the surface, this prohibition made Ruth an extremely unsuitable candidate for marriage to an Israelite. But God doesn’t look on the surface; He looks on the heart. So Ruth arrived in Bethlehem and gleaned in the fields, picking up what the reapers left behind. Gleaning was among God’s provisions for those who had nothing. But it was hard, backbreaking, humiliating work that generally yielded little. Often the grain was hard to reach, and the gleaner had to crawl in the dirt to get it.

Ruth was led by the Lord to glean in the fields of a godly man named Boaz, who “commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; And let fall also some of the handfulls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” (Ruth 2:15–16).

He told Ruth that the whole town knew she had left behind her Moabite family to become a stranger in a strange land. “The LORD recompense thy work,” he told her, “and a full reward be given thee by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust” (2:12).

That evening, Ruth came home with much grain. When Naomi inquired about it, Ruth told her of Boaz. “Blessed be he of the LORD,” declared Naomi, “who hath not withheld his kindness to the living and to the dead. . . . The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen” (2:20). Naomi knew the law of levirate marriage and decided to seek Ruth’s wellbeing by giving her instructions that might secure for her a husband and a family.

It was the end of the barley harvest, and Boaz was spending the night at the threshing floor guarding the grain. Naomi told Ruth to wash, dress, and go to the threshing floor, but to remain inconspicuous. “And it shall be,” said Naomi, “when he lieth down, . . . thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do” (3:4).

While today this sounds odd, even immoral, it was completely consistent with Old Testament law. In Deuteronomy 25:5–6, God provided for levirate marriage to insure the continuation of the family line. *Levirate* stems from Latin and means “husband’s brother.”

Ruth, a Moabitess, had no obligation to submit to the law of Israel. Yet...
she humbled herself under it and, in effect, asked Boaz, a man much older than she, to perform the service of the goél, or “kinsman-redeemer,” by marrying her according to Mosaic law, so she could bear a son to carry on her husband’s name.

Normally, this request would have been made in a public place such as the city gate. But because Ruth was a Moabitess and Naomi probably wanted to spare Boaz the public humiliation if he refused, she had Ruth go quietly to the threshing floor.

Struck by her loyalty and kindness, Boaz replied, “I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (3:11). He told her, however, that there was a nearer kinsman than he, who had to be given the opportunity first. Boaz said he would go to the gate on her behalf to ask the nearer kinsman.

True to his word, Boaz went to the city gate and confronted the nearer kinsman. After learning he would have to marry Ruth and “raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (4:5), the man was unwilling.

“I cannot redeem it for myself,” he said, “lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right for thyself, for I cannot redeem it” (4:6). Being a kinsman-redeemer was costly. It involved assuming all debt and expense for someone else. In Ruth’s case, the goél would have all the expense of rearing a family and tending to property that, in the end, would never be his. The Bible doesn’t specify why the nearer kinsman refused. Perhaps he was married and already had a family to support. Whatever his reason, he counted the cost and was unwilling to become the redeemer. So Boaz stepped in and married Ruth, who became the mother of Obed, who became the father of Jesse, who became the father of David, the king of Israel.

The Scriptures teach that the Lord loves all His creation. He chose the Jewish people as His special vehicle to bring His truth, His Word, His Messiah, and, ultimately, Himself to the world. Placing a Moabitess woman in the Messianic line underscores the fact that Messiah Jesus came to redeem all because He is not willing that any (Jewish or Gentile) should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). “God so loved the world” (Jn. 3:16) is not just New Testament theology—it is a biblical constant.

Like anyone else who comes to God God’s way, Ruth is a trophy of His divine grace. Despite her lineage, she embraced the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and David, the greatest king of Israel who ever lived (other than Christ, Himself) was far fewer than ten generations removed from his Moabitite heritage.

But the book of Ruth reveals another truth as well. It provides a beautiful picture of God’s redemption of mankind through Christ, our kinsman-redeemer. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, plunging all humanity into estrangement from God. God promised to redeem that which was lost (Gen. 3:15). Hence God had to become man so He could become a near kinsman and purchase back what was His to begin with.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians, explained this great truth: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5–7).

When He came to earth in the incarnation, Jesus assumed the form of a man. The word for “form” is the Greek word morphe, the root for the English word metamorphosis. Jesus has always been God; but He morphed, or changed, His outward appearance to take on the appearance of a man.

But that wasn’t enough. He then took on the form of the lowest kind of man—a slave, or bondservant. A bondservant willingly professed his loyalty and love for his master by publicly allowing an ear to be pierced with an awl (Ex. 21:5–6). From that moment on, he was forever identified with and bound to his master.

Jesus publicly professed His love for us and allowed His body to be pierced on the cross of Calvary. Before a body was created for Him (Heb. 10:5), Jesus was purely spirit, as is God the Father. When He became a man, however, he identified with humanity as a near kinsman; and that identification will endure forever. When we arrive in heaven, we will see in His body the marks of His love for us—and how that great love caused Him to forever mar His own inheritance to redeem us.

Ruth the Moabitess does indeed belong in the lineage of Messiah. Her place there is perfect. She was a woman of great and humble faith whom God still uses to show us that “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). In the words of hymn writer Julia H. Johnston, His grace is “marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe; you that are longing to see His face, will you this moment His grace receive.”

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In 1998, twenty thousand American middle and high school students were surveyed regarding their personal ethics. The results were disconcerting, to say the least. Although 97 percent considered it important to be a person of good character, 30 percent admitted they had stolen something the previous year. Sixty-two percent confessed to cheating on a test; and 83 percent acknowledged lying to a parent or teacher.

In fact, more than one-third said they lied on the survey. Yet, according to the “1998 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth” cited by the Josephesinon Institute of Ethics, 91 percent were, nevertheless, satisfied with their personal ethics and character.¹

Evidently many young Americans feel that doing the right thing is good, but doing the wrong thing is also good when expedient.

Two Gentile women included in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah...
would disagree. Their lives stand in direct contrast to the modern code of situation ethics. One did what she knew was right, despite an environment of paganism and duplicity. The other put feet to her faith in the only true and living God. Who were these women, and how did they end up in the physical line of the Messiah?

Their names are recorded for eternity in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. “And Judah begot Perez and Zerah of Tamar; . . . And Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab” (Mt. 1:3, 5).

**Righteous Tamar**

The story of Tamar and her father-in-law, Judah, is found in Genesis 38. Judah, Jacob’s son, had married a Canaanite woman who bore him three boys—Er, Onan, and Shelah. When Er grew up, Judah chose a wife for him.

Her name was Tamar (“palm tree”). Scripture does not say much about this woman of integrity. Apparently she was not Jewish, for she was not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nonetheless, what stands out most about her life is her character, not her lineage.

Tamar’s marriage to Er ended abruptly: “And Er, Judah’s first-born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him” (Gen. 38:10). Judah now had lost two sons. Fearing he might lose a third, he told Tamar to remain a widow and wait until Shelah grew up, at which time Shelah would take her as a wife.

Tamar obeyed. The Bible does not say how many years she waited; but after a considerable time, Shelah grew up. It became apparent to Tamar that her father-in-law had no intention of marrying him to her.

At that point, Tamar faced an ethical dilemma. Should she acquiesce to the moral degeneracy evidenced by Er, Onan, and Judah and just forget the whole thing—perhaps even marry into a completely different family? Or should she take matters into her own hands and do the right thing by trying to perpetuate Er’s family line? She chose the latter.

Having heard that Judah had become a widower, she deceived him into believing she was a prostitute. Not recognizing her, Judah requested her services and paid her with his signet ring, bracelets, and staff (38:18). These were symbols of authority and marks of identification. He gave her these as a deposit, intending to pay her with a goat later. But when Judah sent a Canaanite friend back with the goat and instructions to retrieve her belongings, the woman could not be found. In fact, nobody had even heard of her. Much to Judah’s chagrin, he had to let the whole matter go, “lest we be shamed” (38:23).

Three months later, Judah learned Tamar was pregnant. Since she was a widow and unmarried, everyone assumed she had acted immorally. Judah’s judgment was severe and to the point: “Bring her forth, and let her be burned” (38:24).

But when Tamar arrived, Judah had a surprise waiting for him. “By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff” (38:25).

Judah was caught red-handed. It was a shameful moment, reminiscent of a later scene between King David and Nathan the prophet following David’s sin with Bath-sheba (2 Sam. 12:1–14). Like David, Judah had been quick to pronounce judgment on someone else until he was confronted with his own sin. To his credit, however, he acknowledged Tamar’s virtue and the error of his own ways. “She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah, my son” (38:26). Judah released Tamar and did not have relations with her again.

For her righteous stand, God blessed her and gave her not one son, but twin sons—Perez and Zerah. In fact, the name of Perez became great in Israel and was later invoked as a channel of blessing in the book of Ruth: “And all the people who were in the gate, and the elders, said, . . . let thy house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah” (Ruth 4:11–12). Most significantly, through the ancestry of Tamar and Perez, the Messianic line continued, culminating with Jesus Himself (Lk. 3:23, 33)—a noble reward for a young girl who stood for what was right.

**Faithful Rahab**

“And Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab” (Mt. 1:5). Rahab’s story is found in the book of Joshua. In chapter 2, the children of Israel were ready to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land of
Canaan. God had been patient with the Canaanites for more than six hundred years. As He had told Abraham, “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16). But now it was judgment day, and Israel was going to be the sword in God’s hand.

With the great walled city of Jericho looming before him, Joshua sent two young men on a reconnaissance mission. They entered the city and lodged in the home of a harlot named Rahab.

As with Tamar, the Bible does not go into Rahab’s background. She obviously was not Jewish, but Canaanite. God abhorred the Canaanites because of their abominations (Lev. 20:23). Along with polytheism, they practiced incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, child sacrifice, witchcraft, necromancy (conjuring up the spirits of the dead), and sorcery (Lev. 18; Dth. 18:9–14). Their wickedness, in fact, had become so great that now God was ready to utterly destroy them. The fact that she grew up in a corrupted culture and her display of faith in the God of Israel all the more remarkable.

Rahab’s testimony is a wonderful illustration of how a person comes to saving faith. First she heard God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Josh. 2:11). When the king of Jericho sent messengers demanding Rahab turn over the spies, she told them the spies had already left. In actuality, she had hidden them on her roof under stalks of flax. Like Corrie ten Boom, who, thousands of years later hid Jewish people from the Nazis during World War II, Rahab was a believing Gentile who protected the lives of God’s Chosen People in their time of need.

So deep was her faith in the God of Israel that she knew the Israelites would conquer Jericho and asked the spies to spare her and her relatives. The two spies agreed, and Rahab helped them escape through her window over the city wall.

This action proved the genuineness of her faith. As the apostle James put it, “In like manner also was not Rahab, the harlot, justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (Jas. 2:25).

James did not say Rahab was justified (declared righteous) by her works in the sight of God. God sees the heart and justifies people solely on the basis of faith (Rom. 4:1–5:1). But her actions justified her in the sight of men, because the only way men can see the reality of someone’s faith is when they see the works of faith (Jas. 2:18).

Later, when the Lord destroyed Jericho, Joshua and the two spies kept their word. “And Joshua saved Rahab, the harlot, alive, and her father’s household, and all that she had” (Josh. 6:25). Rahab could have been content with just her own deliverance. Instead, between the time the spies left her house and the fall of Jericho, she evidently witnessed to her family and gathered them under her roof, so the God of Israel would protect them. Rahab is a timeless example of a woman who was saved by God’s grace through faith.

“By faith the harlot, Rahab, perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31). God not only spared Rahab’s life, but He also rewarded this Gentile woman in other ways. She later married Salmon, a Jewish leader from the tribe of Judah (and direct descendant of Tamar); and she became King David’s great-great-grandmother. Through Salmon, the Lord gave Rahab the greatest honor of all—she was placed in the direct line of Jesus the Messiah.

By today’s standards, Tamar and Rahab had little to recommend them. Neither had power, possessions, or prestige—elements the modern world considers so necessary to succeed. But what they did have was more important. They had character, faith, and the courage to act on their personal convictions. They were not merely hearers of the Word. They were doers (Jas. 1:22). And God rewarded them for it, both temporally and eternally.

In December 1999, the Gallup organization took its annual religion poll. Eighty-eight percent surveyed said they considered religion important in their lives; 86 percent expressed a belief in God. But 45 percent said they care more about their own views and those of others than they do God and religious teaching. And when asked if their religion was the best path to God, 82 percent said they believed other religions were equally as good.²

In the midst of an American culture that is rapidly realigning with Canaan—or as one writer put it, “slouching towards Gomorrah”—we must ask ourselves this question: Are we willing, as Tamar and Rahab were, to do what is right and live by faith, even if we don’t see the rewards in this lifetime?

The generation that follows us will certainly be looking for our answer.

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Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. To the Jewish mind of that day, the first and most fundamental question demanding an answer was this one: “Is this Jesus a descendant of the house of David?” Thus Matthew began his narrative of Jesus’ life with the bold affirmation: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1).

The hope of Messiah animated the ancient Jewish soul. But that hope of Messiah animated the ancient Jewish soul.

The Genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew

Its Purpose. Matthew penned his Gospel to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. To the Jewish mind of that day, the first and most fundamental question demanding an answer was this one: “Is this Jesus a descendant of the house of David?” Thus Matthew began his narrative of Jesus’ life with the bold affirmation: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1).

Even today, this is where any claim to Messianic identity must begin. One thousand years before the birth of Jesus, Yahweh had cut a covenant in which He had promised King David, “thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). For generations, Israel had rejoiced in the hope that God had promised to “build up thy [David’s] throne to all generations” (Ps. 89:4). Indeed, the Israelites had been taught that as they ascended toward the Temple to worship, they should remember that very promise and sing with the psalmist: “The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” (Ps. 132:11).

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Messiah had to be the “son of David” and, as such, “the son of Abraham.” The issue of descent from these two great fountains of Jewish identity and hope is paramount.

**Its Distinctives.** Though in many ways a standard Hebrew genealogy, this section is peculiar on at least two counts. First, it is arranged symmetrically: three groups of fourteen generations each. According to A. T. Robertson in his *Harmony of the Gospels* (Harper & Row), this rather artificial structure is intended as “an easy help to the memory.”1 But in order to achieve this symmetry, Matthew counted one name twice (Jehoiachin) and omitted others—most specifically, the three generations of kings after J[eh]oram: Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah (1:8–9). (Compare with 1 Chronicles 3:10–12.) Perhaps Matthew omitted these because they were the most immediate descendants of the northern tribes’ wicked rulers, Ahab and Jezebel!

At any rate, the omission does not compromise the integrity of the genealogy. The list was intended to demonstrate descent, not to be an exhaustive register of names. Furthermore, the verb translated “begot” more literally means “was the ancestor of.” Matthew easily demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled the first test of a Messianic claimant (descent from David), and he did so in a way that could be easily memorized.

Second, Matthew’s genealogy is unusual in that it refers to four Old Testament women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bath-sheba (though not by name). Matthew seemed to regard them as anticipated Mary on two counts: (1) According to Raymond E. Brown in his work *The Birth of the Messiah* (Doubleday), each of these women “showed initiative . . . and so came to be considered the instrument of God’s providence” in bringing forth the Messiah;2 and (2) there was something unusual about each woman’s relationship to her husband—a narrative element that was irregular, even scandalous, but necessary to perpetuate the Messianic line. Thus did these women foreshadow Mary, who responded in humble but anxious faith to the angel’s announcement of her miraculous but unusual pregnancy, and who possibly endured malicious rumors concerning the birth of her first son.

**The Genealogy in the Gospel of Luke**

**Its Purpose.** Luke penned his Gospel for a Greek (Gentile) audience. His goal was to demonstrate the genuine humanity of Jesus—to establish for his readers the truth of Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of man.” Therefore, his genealogy traces Jesus’ lineage not only to David (3:31) and Abraham (3:34), but all the way back to Adam, “the son of God” (3:38). By this means, Luke proved that Jesus is truly man and, thus, “the Messiah belongs not to Israel alone, but to the whole world of sinners.”3

**Its Distinctives.** Luke’s genealogy is almost startling in that Luke inverted the standard order: He began with Jesus and worked backwards to Adam. Official registers always list persons as they are born, thus moving from earlier to later generations. This anomaly clearly indicates that Luke’s genealogy was his own work, drawn from public documents but crafted to emphasize the individual at the beginning of the list, namely, Jesus. Again, Luke placed his genealogy at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, rather than at the beginning of the Gospel. Not until the Messiah had been anointed by the Spirit (3:22) did the drama of Messiah’s ministry commence; and this ministry was Luke’s focus. (Compare Moses’ pedigree, recorded not in connection with his birth, but at the beginning of his public ministry [Ex. 6:14–27].)

A word needs to be said in defense of the historical veracity of the genealogies of both Matthew and Luke. The fourth-century historian Eusebius stated that in the time of Herod, the genealogies of distinguished Jews were burned in order to hide Herod’s own “base origins.”4 Consequently, some have argued that there were no records in the days of Jesus. But Josephus, a late contemporary of Jesus, said nothing of such destruction; and he published his own genealogy.

Furthermore, the decree “that all the world should be registered” (Lk. 2:1) would have been useless without public records. If the genealogies had been inaccurate or unverifiable, they certainly would have been attacked by first-century unbelievers who knew that if they could disprove Jesus’ claim to Davidic and/or Abrahamic ancestry, they could discredit him as a false messiah. But there is no evidence that anyone ever disputed the accuracy of the genealogies. This fact is powerful testimony to the veracity of these documents.

**Reconciling the Two Genealogies**

Reconciling the genealogies is especially difficult at one point: They are very much distinct from
David to Christ; yet they both seem to trace the line of Jesus’ adopted father, Joseph. (Compare Matthew 1:16, “And Jacob begot Joseph,” with Luke 3:23, “Joseph, who was the son of Heli.”) Bible believers have suggested two basic approaches to this dilemma. The first is to posit that both genealogies do, in fact, trace Joseph’s line, but that one follows his physical ancestry while the other records his legal lineage. The earliest proponent of this approach was Eusebius who observed that even in the fourth century, there were many uninformed opinions as to how to deal with this apparent conflict. He argued that Joseph’s mother had been widowed without children, had married a brother of her deceased husband (levirate marriage, Dt. 25:5–6), and then bore Joseph by that second husband. Thus Joseph was the legal son of Heli (the first husband) but the natural son of Jacob (his mother’s second husband). This explanation is possible; but it rests on the hypothesis of a levirate marriage, and it leaves some important questions unanswered.

A much stronger case can be made acknowledging Matthew’s genealogy as that of Joseph, but Luke’s as the genealogy of Jesus’ mother, Mary. Three points are key in defending this approach. First, the name Joseph in Luke 3:23 is the only name in the list without the definite article. (Each name in Matthew’s genealogy also has the article.) This is compelling evidence that this name should not be read as part of Luke’s genealogical list; rather, it is part of the parenthetical statement inserted in that verse. Thus the verse should read, “Jesus himself . . . being the son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Heli.” It was not Joseph who was “the son of Heli,” but Jesus. Heli (or Eli) is best identified as the father of Mary.

Luke was dealing resourcefully with a dilemma that arose from the fact of Jesus’ virgin birth. Descent was not to be traced through a man’s mother, but through his father. Because of Jesus’ supernatural conception in the womb of a virgin, He had no physical father. Thus His physical genealogy had to be traced through his nearest male relative, His maternal grandfather. The name of that man was evidently Heli, as recorded in Luke 3:23.

Second, Luke had already given significant attention to Mary in the first two chapters of his Gospel (1:26–56; 2:19, 51) in contrast to Matthew’s nativity narrative, which mentions Mary only as the wife of Joseph. Given Luke’s focus on Mary in his telling of the nativity, it is plausible that the genealogy he inserted after that narrative is, in fact, that of Mary.

Finally, there are two remarkably important ramifications to this understanding of the genealogies. The first relates to Jesus’ twofold qualification to sit on the throne of David. On the one hand, Solomon was the son of David to whom the throne had been promised (2 Sam. 12:24–25; 1 Chr. 22:9–10); thus the legal authority to the throne must descend through him. Because Jesus’ adopted father, Joseph, traced his lineage to David through Solomon, Jesus inherited that prerogative (Mt. 1:17). On the other hand, God had promised in the Davidic Covenant that only David’s seed—his physical descendant—would ever sit on that throne (Ps. 89:4). Luke twice intimated Mary’s descent from David: first in recording the angel’s words to Mary (“and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David” [1:32]) and again in recording that Mary went to register in the city of David (2:5). But if Luke’s genealogy is not that of Mary, there is no explicit biblical affirmation that Jesus is a physical descendant of David.

Given the importance of the Davidic Covenant, however, it is certainly reasonable to expect just such an affirmation—indeed, to find it in the genealogy recorded by Luke.

The second ramification relates to Jeconiah, a king whom Matthew identified as an ancestor of Joseph (1:11–12). Jeremiah pronounced a curse upon Jeconiah, proclaiming that “no man of his [Jeconiah’s] seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah” (Jer. 22:30). Because of that curse, the line of David from which Joseph descended was disqualified to sit on the throne. Had Jesus been the physical son of Joseph, He would have inherited that curse. However, He was not. He was the physical son of David through Mary. (Compare with the Greek relative pronoun “of whom” in Matthew 1:16, which is feminine singular.)

Thus, as S. Lewis Johnson has stated in his article “The Genesis of Jesus,” “Jesus, genuinely a son of David through Mary according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 1:3), by reason of the virgin birth and nonparticipation in the seed of Joseph, qualifies to receive the title without coming under the curse.”

Though they may seem dull and irrelevant at first, these genealogies are extremely important to the claims of Christ. And when properly understood, they become a marvelous manifestation of “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom. 11:33).
Vexillology. Most people have never heard the term; but according to World Book Encyclopedia, it is the study of the history and symbolism of flags. Its root can be traced to the Latin word for “square flag” or “banner”—vexillum.

Today every country in the world has a flag uniquely designed to represent it. Usually, careful thought has been invested in choosing just the right colors and emblems to symbolize the national identity, with the hope that just the sight of the flag will inspire, motivate, and encourage the country’s citizens.

And generally it does. In America, many of us have been known to wipe away a tear or two each time Old Glory soars into ascendancy during the awards ceremonies at the international Olympics.

The citizens of the modern State of Israel are no different and are unsurpassed in demonstrating emotion and pride in their flag. Simply designed, the Israeli flag incorporates a solid white background overlaid with two horizontal blue stripes. Displayed prominently on this field of white is the blue Star of David. Its thoughtful design inspires people to think beyond their own modern state. It is a flag that binds the people of Israel today with the people of Israel in the time of King David himself.

Israel stands as the lone nation in the world whose flag has its roots in the pages of Scripture. In the Hebrew Bible, God communicated His desire for visible rallying points for His people Israel. Two Hebrew words are used to designate that desire: degel and nes. Degel is rendered variously as “flag,” “banner,” or
“standard” and was used by Moses in the book of Numbers. Nes, translated “ensign” or “banner,” was used by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Numbers 1:52 records that the children of Israel were to “pitch their tents . . . every man by his own standard.” In addition, they were instructed to encamp “with the banner of their father’s house” (Num. 2:2). Each tribe possessed a God-given emblem that distinguished it from the others. This provided orderly movement for a population that was estimated in the millions.

The prophet Isaiah recorded that in the future, Messiah will “set up an ensign for the nations” (Isa. 11:12). In the book of Jeremiah, the word standard indicates a rallying point: “Blow the trumpet . . . Assemble yourselves, . . . Set up the standard toward Zion” (Jer. 4:5–6).

No trace of those flags or banners exists today. Dispersed into cultures extending to the four corners of the earth, the Jewish people were divided for nearly two thousand years, with no homeland in which to raise a banner of national identity. In the early years of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, founder of the modern State of Israel, began thinking that a flag could help unite his cause. On June 12, 1895, he recorded in his diary that he was contemplating a white flag with seven golden stars: white to symbolize the new life that awaited his countrymen in their land, and seven stars to depict the seven working hours in a day.

For the next two years, Herzl and other prominent Zionists dialogued concerning the flag’s design; but they could not seem to reach a consensus. According to an article entitled “The Israeli Flag,” cited by The Jewish Student Online Research Center (JSOURCE), David Wolffsohn, a colleague of Herzl’s at the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, in 1897, said this of its birth:

“What flag would hang in the Congress Hall? Then an idea struck me. We have a flag—and it is blue and white. The talith (prayer shawl) with which we wrap ourselves when we pray: that is our symbol. Let us take this Talith [or tallit] from its bag and unroll it before the eyes of Israel and the eyes of all the nations. So I ordered a blue and white flag with the Shield of David painted upon it.”

The blue stripes affixed to Israel’s flag serve as a reminder of the attire Jewish men wear when they pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even before the flag was created, a man named L. A. Frankl wrote a poem in 1860 entitled “Zivei Erez Yehudah,” describing its colors: “All that is sacred will appear in these colors: white—as the radiance of great faith [and] blue—like the appearance of the firmament.”

Because the exact shade of blue that was to have been used on the tallit is unknown, the flag has no determined shade either. Thus light blue is used, knowing that no one knows what the correct shade should really be.

The Star of David in the center of the flag has long been regarded as a Jewish symbol. It is often referred to as the “Jewish star” by both Jewish people and Gentiles alike. The star is formed by one triangle superimposed upon another—one pointing up, the other pointing down. According to JSOURCE, “by leading a life of Torah and mitzvot [good deeds] the Jew strives to bring together the worlds of the spiritual [point facing up] and the earthly [point facing down], the worlds of the holy and the secular.”

Other interpretations also abound. One is that the six outer points stand for the six aspects of the Lord’s spirit: namely, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. Another contends that the star represents the three aspects of man: body, soul, and spirit.

There is no reference to the Star of David in the Bible. In fact, the Hebrew Magen David means “Shield of David” rather than “Star of David.” Tradition says that the six-pointed star appeared on David’s battle shield, but there is no hard evidence to substantiate that belief. What is known, however, is that the Nazis used the star as a badge of shame, forcing the Jewish people to wear it on their outer clothing to mark them out for persecution and extermination.

The nation of Israel took that badge of shame and turned it, instead, into a bold and striking symbol of pride for Jewish people everywhere.

Although vexillology may not be a well-known word, or even a well-known discipline, it is, nevertheless, helpful in understanding the nation of Israel. It would be most beneficial, however, to apply the discipline of vexillology to Jehovah-nis’si, (“the LORD is my banner” [Ex. 17:15]). Doing that might yield more than historical information—it might yield a relationship with the true and living God.

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Batsell B. Baxter tells of a huge painting hanging in the Supreme Court Building of Switzerland. In the foreground are the litigants who have come to the court seeking justice. Above them are seated the Swiss judges, robed in black. By what criteria will they pronounce judgment? The artist’s answer is simple: There stands Justice (usually depicted as blindfolded, with her sword held vertically) with her eyes opened wide and her sword pointing downward to an open book on which is written “The Word of God.”

The standard of judgment in this painting was also God’s standard when He judged Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea. Israel was guilty of breaking the Mosaic Law found in God’s Word. Hosea chapter 5 expands the basic themes of God’s indictment against Israel.

Ironically, those who were to teach about judgment (priests) and to execute justice (princes) were now the subjects of judgment.

There were three charges leveled against the leaders of Israel. First, they were a “snare on Mizpah” (v. 1). Second, they were a “net spread upon Tabor” (v. 1). Israel had been snared, or trapped, like an animal and netted, or entangled, like a bird into heathen worship at cultic sites dedicated to the Canaanite deity Baal. The word Mizpah means “watchtower.” There were at least five places throughout the land called Mizpah. The two most famous were Mizpah in Gilead, east of the Jordan, where Jacob and Laban made a covenant before God (Gen. 31:45–55) and Mizpah west of the Jordan that was a border town in Benjamin between Judah and Israel. Mount Tabor is located in northern Israel, southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Mizpah in the south and Mount Tabor in the north were high places in the land and symbolized the heathen worship being practiced by Israel in every area of the country.

Instead of safeguarding the people of Israel, the priests and princes had seduced them by...
God; for the spirit of harlotry is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD” (v. 4). In other words, their evil doings prevented them from turning to God in repentance. Therefore, Israel was locked into judgment, with no place to turn to escape the impending punishment. The “spirit of harlotry” had enslaved them, making them incapable of reversing their course of action. Here was a nation privileged above all others in the knowledge of God. God had revealed Himself to Israel, made a covenant with her, and given her the Law. Yet despite all this blessing, Israel had ignored God, causing her to become ignorant of the Lord’s ways and His desire for repentance.

Whenever God chastened Israel, it was with these two objectives in mind: to punish them for sin and to bring them to repentance.

Punishment Announced

The result of sin would be that “the pride of Israel doth testify to his face; therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them” (v. 5). The phrase pride of Israel can be interpreted two ways. The first is that God, who is the pride of Israel, would withdraw Himself from the sinful nation that ignored Him and would testify, or bear witness, against it through judgment. The second is that Israel’s pride, or self-reliance, would testify, or bear legal witness, against the nation concerning the reason for the nation’s judgment. The latter interpretation better suits the context of the passage. It was pride and iniquity that brought both the northern and southern kingdoms to judgment.

One day Israel would wake up to her condition and seek the Lord. “They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD, but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them” (v. 6). With numerous and costly sacrifices, Israel would seek forgiveness and favor from God, but her works were in vain because her repentance was not sincere; and God had withdrawn His presence from the nation. How true the Scripture that says obedience is better than sacrifice.

Hosea continued, “They have dealt treacherously against the LORD; for they have begotten strange children; now shall a moth devour them with their portions” (v. 7). Israel’s infidelity in practicing cultic worship produced “strange children,” or illegitimate offspring, who would reflect the wicked works and ways of their parents. The Israelites had practiced sexual fertility rights through Baal worship in the hope that they would have a productive harvest. In reality, their sinful practices resulted in their destruction and that of their crops.

Israel’s destruction was fast approaching. The Assyrian army was already on the march. The watchman was to “Blow . . . the
horn in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah; cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin” (v. 8). Gibeah and Ramah were strategic cities in Benjamin, and Beth-aven (Bethel) was the southernmost area in the northern kingdom, since it was on the border of Israel and Judah. The southern kingdom was to be on the alert that the invading army was almost at the doorstep and had arrived at the kingdom’s border.

The outcome was certain. “Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be,” said the Lord (v. 9). God affirmed through Hosea that Israel would be made desolate in the day of judgment, a literal fulfillment of Leviticus 26:32–35.

Judah was not to rejoice over the destruction of Israel for, in time, she, too, would be destroyed. Judah was guilty of moving landmark stones that divided property between neighbors and would be judged for her actions. “The princes of Judah were like those who remove the boundary; therefore, I will pour out my wrath upon them like water,” said the Lord (v. 10). The Mosaic Law forbade anyone, even kings and high officials, to move boundaries and pronounced a curse on those who did (Dt. 19:14; 27:17).

Some believe that the crime of moving landmarks is metaphorical and is mentioned to cover all social injustices that were practiced by the leaders of Judah.

In verse 11, the Lord abruptly returns to the theme of judgment on Ephraim. “Ephraim is oppressed and broken [crushed] in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.” This tragedy is what Moses prophesied would come upon Israel if she turned away from God’s commandments and statutes (Dt. 28:33). “Walked after the commandment” could refer to following King Jeroboam’s command to worship the two calves of gold he had placed in Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:28–29). It was this sin that precipitated the downfall of Israel.

Speaking to both Israel and Judah, God said, “Therefore will I be unto Ephraim like a moth, and to the house of Judah like rottenness” (v. 12). As a moth slowly and silently eats away a woolen garment, so would God consume Ephraim. Judah, like a piece of wood, would silently decay from “rottenness” on the inside. The demise of Israel and Judah had begun long before this point in their history; and both would be consumed and carried away into captivity—but Judah more slowly.

**Political Alliance**

Israel and Judah were acutely aware of their disease and likely demise. Yet Ephraim did not seek the Lord, but went “to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb” for help and healing (v. 13). The phrase King Jareb means “warrior king” and might refer to the time Israel’s King Menahem (2 Ki. 15:19–20) or King Hoshea (2 Ki. 17:3) made an alliance with Assyria. “Judah saw his wound” (v. 13) and, during the reign of Ahaz, sought help from Tiglath-pileser III (2 Ki. 16:5–9) at a later date. But the warrior king of Assyria “could . . . not heal you, nor cure you of your wound,” said the Lord (v. 13). No political power could heal Ephraim of her fatal sickness of sin; as a nation, she was doomed to destruction and death.

The reason the great Assyrian empire was powerless to help was because God had already determined to destroy Israel. God said, “For I will be unto Ephraim like a lion, and like a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him” (v. 14). Because Israel and Judah had looked to powerless political potentates for help, God would no longer work slowly and silently to destroy them. The Lord announced that He Himself, would attack and destroy these nations through the use of foreign powers like Assyria and Babylon. Like a lion, God would tear them into pieces and carry them away to the den of their oppressors.

And as a lion returns to his den after rending and devouring its prey, so the Lord said, “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early [earnestly]” (v. 15).

Israel is still estranged from God today. Yet God’s ultimate purpose for judging Israel is restoration. He will become inaccessible and unapproachable to Israel until she does two things. First, she must come in humble repentance before God and acknowledge her sins. Second, she must turn away from all human help and seek the face of God in prayer, crying out for His grace and mercy.

After centuries of suffering, Israel will one day earnestly seek the Lord. This will take place during the Great Tribulation when Israel will undergo the greatest suffering in her history. Only then will Israel experience ultimate relief from pain and be rewarded as a nation.

There is a timely lesson here for the nations of the world. Political alliance is not the answer to survival because political power is unable to bring any nation grace and prosperity. God alone can rescue a nation from affliction and destruction.

And one day, He will judge every David Levy is the Director of Foreign Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
It can never be said that the Middle East comes up short when it comes to contradictions. A case in point has been the wrangling that has gone on over the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from the security zone in South Lebanon. For years the Lebanese, Syrians, and their compatriots in the Palestine Liberation Organization have been demanding that Israel get out of South Lebanon. But as soon as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak made it clear that Israel will unilaterally pull out, these same people objected, saying Israel should stay because they themselves cannot and will not insure the safety of the border towns in northern Israel.

More recently, Lebanon’s President Emile Lahoud has asked the UN to be responsible for collecting weapons from Palestinian refugees in the south of his country. A somewhat worried UN official said: “He confuses us.” The Lebanese and Syrians have wanted to arm the Palestinians with the intent of using them to continue the fight against Israel after the withdrawal. At the same time, they are asking the UN to tell them to drop their guns.

A Palestinian official said he believes that the Lebanese request for the UN to disarm militant factions is their way of showing their dissatisfaction with Syria’s efforts to make Lebanon a hostage to its negotiations with Israel. Of course, the question almost no one asks is how it will be possible to convince the Syrians to get their occupying force of 40,000 troops out of Lebanon when and if a peace agreement is reached.

To add to the confusion is the word from terrorists operating out of Lebanon that no matter what is agreed on between Israel and Syria or Lebanon and Israel, the war will not end. Their latest claim is that the northern border between Israel and Lebanon is not a border at all. They will push their campaign forward to capture the Hula Valley, which is in the heart of Israel’s water-rich agricultural area.

What this actually says is that these contradictory statements and confusing claims are only diversionary sideshows to the ultimate objective of Syria, the Palestinians, and their terrorist cohorts throughout the region. That objective is the final annihilation of the State of Israel. The tragedy is that too many leaders in the Western world are allowing them to play this game.

it can never be said that the Middle East comes up short when it comes to contradictions. A case in point has been the wrangling that has gone on over the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from the security zone in South Lebanon. For years the Lebanese, Syrians, and their compatriots in the Palestine Liberation Organization have been demanding that Israel get out of South Lebanon. But as soon as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak made it clear that Israel will unilaterally pull out, these same people objected, saying Israel should stay because they themselves cannot and will not insure the safety of the border towns in northern Israel.

More recently, Lebanon’s President Emile Lahoud has asked the UN to be responsible for collecting weapons from Palestinian refugees in the south of his country. A somewhat worried UN official said: “He confuses us.” The Lebanese and Syrians have wanted to arm the Palestinians with the intent of using them to continue the fight against Israel after the withdrawal. At the same time, they are asking the UN to tell them to drop their guns.

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The nation of Israel and the Jewish people are an enigma to this world. Their existence defies human logic; their preservation contradicts all historical trends. Their uniqueness as a people astounded even Mark Twain, who wrote this about them for Harper's Magazine in 1897:

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. . . . The Egyptian, the Babylonians, and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they were gone; . . . The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was. . . . All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality? 1
The answer to Mark Twain’s question is found in Isaiah 41.

The Chosen People

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend; Thou, whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away (Isa. 41:8–9).

God’s plan for this world revolves around one people. God chose the Jewish people not because of their number, power, greatness, or anything of that nature. It is simply that God is sovereign and chose Israel to be the vehicle for His plan for the world.

The purpose of that plan is at least threefold. First, God desired someone to bring His Word to the world. According to Deuteronomy 4:1–2 and Romans 3:1–2, God used the Jews to produce the Bible. The Old and New Testaments were both written by Jewish men. Secondly, God intended the nation of Israel to be a witness to the world of the one true God. Isaiah 43:21 states, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.” Lastly, God intended to use the nation of Israel as the vehicle to bring the Messiah into the world. Micah 5:2 clearly says that the King of Israel, the Messiah, would come from among the Jews and be born in Bethlehem. Thus redemption for the world would emanate from the womb of a Jewish mother.

The beginning of Israel’s unique history started with Abraham, so that God might work out His plan for this world. Apart from God, Israel and the Jewish people defy explanation.

Apart from God, Israel and the Jewish people defy explanation.

The Preservation of the People

The preservation of the Jewish people is astounding, to say the least. Nations and peoples of far greater number, wealth, and geographical size have come and gone. The great empires of world history, such as the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans have all stepped off the scene of world history, yet the Jewish nation marches on. The explanation for this phenomenon is found, in part, in Isaiah 41:10, 13, and 14: Fear thou not; for I am with thee. Be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. . . . For I, the LORD thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

The omnipotent God of this universe is protecting and keeping His Chosen People from destruction. So sure is the Bible of the Jewish people’s continued presence on this earth that it states in Jeremiah 31:35–37 that one would have to destroy the entire universe before one could do away with them. God’s plan and purpose for mankind is centered around them, and they will exist forever because they stand in the center of God’s will for this world.

The Conflict of the People

The history of the Jewish people has been one of constant conflict. Nation after nation has tried to erase them from the pages of world history. From the Pharaohs to the pogroms, from the Hamans to the Hitlers, from Antiochus Epiphanes to the eventual Antichrist, all have sought (or will seek) to annihilate the Jews. The greatest part of Israel’s history, in fact, has been made up of conflicts with surrounding nations. Peace has never come to that nation whose capital is named the city of peace—Jerusalem. Yet the promised end of all who rise up against her—those who hate her, those who persecute her, those who make war with her—will be their destruction. They will become as they intended Israel to be. God will keep His promise in the covenant he made with Abraham: “I will . . . curse him that curseth thee [the Jew]” (Gen. 12:3).

The conflict and the preservation of the Jewish people were expressed well in an essay entitled “What is a Jew?” by Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy:

This question is not at all so odd as it seems. Let us see what peculiar kind of creature the Jew is, which all the rulers and all the nations have together and separately abused and molested, oppressed and persecuted, trampled and butchered, burned and hanged, and, in spite of all this, is yet alive. . . . He whom neither
slaughter nor torture of himself for years could destroy; he whom neither fire nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe from off the face of the earth; ... such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is everlasting as eternity itself.

The Consummation of the People

The end of this age, as we know it, will climax with all the nations of the world coming against Israel at the battle of Armageddon (Joel 1:15; 3:9–17; Zeph. 3:8–9; Zech. 12–14).

In that day, God will use the nation of Israel to help Him destroy the nations of the world. Zechariah 12:8 says that the Lord will defend Israel; and the feeblest among the Jewish people “shall be like David; and the house of David shall be like God.” All the nations of the world will be defeated (Zech. 14:3, 9), and all those who hate the Jews will be judged (Mt. 25:41–46).

After this great battle and deliverance by the Messiah, the long-awaited Messianic Kingdom will be set up. The great promises of Isaiah that the “wolf also shall dwell with the lamb” (Isa. 11:6) and that the “voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her [Jerusalem], nor the voice of crying” (Isa. 65:19) will finally be realized. True peace will finally come to Israel and the world.

The Purpose of Israel

That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it (Isa. 41:20).

According to this verse, the Jewish people exist for at least four reasons.

So sure is the Bible of the Jewish people’s presence on this earth...that one would have to destroy the entire universe before one could do away with them.

That people may see the Jewish people and their history and realize that they are unique to this world. When Frederick the Great of Prussia challenged a believer in his court to prove the truth of the Bible and his God, he astutely replied, “The Jew!”

That people may know the existence of the Jewish people can only be explained supernaturally. Her continued existence is not explained by luck, coincidence, or any other fluke of nature.

That people may consider that the God of the Bible has done this miraculous work and seek a relationship with the sovereign God of the universe. If the God of Israel is powerful enough to bring these things to pass and to judge not only individuals but also nations that contradict His will, He deserves our attention and our worship. What will happen to you in light of this Holy God?

That people may understand that the God of Israel is the true God of this universe. He is the One we need to listen to and obey.

Israel’s history is relevant to people the world over, Jew and Gentile alike, and prompts them to respond in faith to the Holy One of Israel. God issues the world a challenge in Isaiah 41:21–23:

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen; let them show the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

The history of the Jewish people establishes the God of the Bible as the only One who has met this challenge to perfection. No other entity man has ever worshiped, including Allah, Buddha, or whomever, has ever been able to do these things. The God of Israel and the Bible is indisputably the one true God of this universe.

And the Bible is the Word of the one true God. He and He alone is the One to be sought and obeyed. It is He who promised He would bring a redeemer; it is He who told us in His Word how to recognize that redeemer; and it is He who has the power to do as He promised. Just as He said, He sent the Messiah of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, who fulfilled hundreds of prophecies written about Him. Jesus summed up the teaching of the Old Testament and the challenge it issues to people everywhere: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me” (Jn. 5:39).

Mark Robinson is the Western States Director for The Friends of Israel.
Maranatha Book
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Jesus Christ and the Future Kingdom of God

(Part 8)

In the previous article, we noted that the Kingdom of God has at least two aspects, or expressions: the universal and the theocratic. The universal Kingdom is the rule of God administered directly or indirectly over the entire universe (including the earth) and everything in it. This aspect has existed continually since God created the universe.

The second is the theocratic Kingdom of God, which is more limited in scope. It is only one expression, or aspect, of the universal Kingdom; and it is restricted to the administration of God’s rule through a human agent over the earth alone. It also is restricted to two 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 of God constitutes the first and last phases of God’s universal Kingdom-rule over this present earth. It does not exist continually throughout world history.

Christ’s References to the Kingdom

Given these distinctions, to which of these aspects of the Kingdom of God was Jesus Christ referring when He said, “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15) and when He taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Mt. 6:10)?

Jesus’ statement, “the kingdom of God is at hand,” indicated that there was some sense in which the Kingdom was not yet present. The fact that He taught His disciples to pray for God’s Kingdom to come indicated the same thing. That prayer was a petition, asking that God’s Kingdom come, in some sense, in the future.

Since the universal Kingdom has existed continually since God created the universe, that aspect was already present when Christ indicated that there was still some way in which the Kingdom of God had not yet arrived. Evidently, Christ was not referring to the universal Kingdom aspect of the Kingdom of God in His statement and teaching on prayer.

However, since the theocratic Kingdom ceased to exist after the fall of man, that aspect of the Kingdom of God was not present when Christ said, “the kingdom of God is at hand.” Thus it is the theocratic Kingdom of God that corresponds to what Christ’s statement indicated—that there was some sense in which the Kingdom of God was not yet present.

The same holds true with regard to Christ’s model for prayer. Christ taught His disciples to pray for God’s Kingdom to come in the future. The theocratic Kingdom of God will exist again during the future Millennium when Christ Himself will reign for 1,000 years. It will be the last phase of God’s universal Kingdom-rule over this present earth. Thus the theocratic Kingdom aspect of the Kingdom of God matches the sense of the Kingdom of God involved in the prayer that Christ taught.

In both instances, therefore, Christ was referring to the future theocratic Kingdom of God, not
to the universal Kingdom. Clearly, he indicated that the theocratic Kingdom of God was not yet present but would be in the future.

The Meaning of Christ’s Reference

Since Christ referred to the future theocratic Kingdom of God in His statement and model for prayer, what did He mean when He indicated that the Kingdom was “at hand”?

Normally, when people say that something is “at hand,” they mean that it is near. Consequently, when Christ said, “the kingdom of God is at hand,” He indicated that there was some sense in which the future theocratic Kingdom of God was near while He was present on earth. In fact, the word translated “is at hand” means “approach, come near,”1 and the tense indicates that Christ was saying, “The kingdom of God has come near.” But in what sense was it near then?

It was near in the sense of its potential for establishment in the world. Because Jesus Christ, who possessed the power necessary to establish the future theocratic Kingdom of God, was present on earth, that Kingdom had the potential to be established while He was here. That is what Christ meant when He said, “The kingdom of God is at hand”; and that is why He taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

The Requirements for the Kingdom

What is required before the theocratic Kingdom of God can be reestablished in the world?

The theocratic Kingdom of God will exist again during the future Millennium when Christ Himself will reign for 1,000 years.

John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1–2), Jesus Christ (Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15), and the apostles of Christ (Mt. 10:1–3, 7) all declared that the future theocratic Kingdom was “at hand.” Their message also referred to that Kingdom both as “the kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God.” But the fact that both versions of the message are designated “the gospel of the kingdom” (Mt. 4:17, 23; Mk. 1:14–15) indicates that both referred to the same Kingdom. Thus John the Baptist, Christ, and His apostles all indicated that the future theocratic Kingdom of God was near in the sense of its potential for establishment in the world while Christ was present on earth.

Yet the gospel of the Kingdom included more than the declaration that the future theocratic Kingdom was near. It also included a twofold command for its hearers: They were to believe that it was near (“believe the gospel” [Mk. 1:15]), and they were to repent because that Kingdom was near (“Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” [Mt. 3:2; 4:17]).

The declaration that the Kingdom was at hand, combined with the command to believe and repent, implied that the theocratic Kingdom would not be established until the hearers of that gospel obeyed its twofold directive. In other words, the Kingdom would not be established until the hearers believed in the content of that gospel and repented.

The Distinctions Related to the Gospel of the Kingdom

The New Testament contains two different gospel messages: the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel concerning Christ. The latter was defined by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1–5. Three distinctions reveal that they are not the same message.

**Distinction in Content.** The gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel concerning Christ were unlike in content. Whereas 1 Corinthians 15 spoke of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Kingdom said nothing about those things.

The record of Jesus sending His apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom is found in Matthew: “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them,
sent the apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, He gave them a restricted commission. He said, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not; But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 10:5–7).

In contrast, after Christ died and rose from the dead, He gave the apostles a universal commission. He said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15); and “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations” (Mt. 28:19). This universal commission was associated with the gospel concerning Christ because Paul signified that the gospel that he preached focused on Christ’s crucifixion and “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth,” whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:23–24).

Distinction in Preparation for Ministry. The third distinction is that these two gospels had different preparations for ministry associated with them. When Christ commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom for some time: “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (16:21). The language indicates that although the apostles had already been preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, Jesus had never told them about His coming death, burial, and resurrection. Thus the apostles had not been proclaiming those things while they were preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.

In addition, Peter’s negative reaction to that new revelation from Jesus demonstrated that the gospel of the Kingdom, which he had been preaching for some time, said nothing about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ: “Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee” (Mt. 16:22). If Peter had already been preaching Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, he would not have reacted so strongly to Christ’s revelation of it.

The fact is that the apostle Paul defined a second gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 when he wrote, Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and in which ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; And that he was seen.

In contrast with the gospel of the Kingdom, this gospel that Paul preached and defined focused on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. However, it said nothing about the Kingdom of God being at hand.

Distinction in Commission. The gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel concerning Christ also had distinct commissions associated with them. When Christ

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Russia exhibit 'Hitler's skull'

The Jerusalem Post (Internet Edition) — Part of a human skull with a bullet hole in the center — purportedly that of Adolf Hitler — has been placed on exhibition at the National Archives in Moscow.

Also on show are some of Hitler's personal possessions, including the sofa on which Hitler sat with his mistress, Eva Braun, when they committed suicide. It still has blood stains.

The exhibits were said to have been taken from the KGB's secret stores.

The exhibition is being held to mark the 55th anniversary of Hitler's suicide.

Hitler asked his adjutant that his body be burned so that it would not be put on display by the Allies. The Russians say that the remains of the burned body were found by members of the Red Army near the bunker where Hitler spent his last days.

The remains were reportedly kept in Moscow until former president Leonid Brezhnev ordered them destroyed in the seventies. But the skull is said to have remained in the secret stores of the KGB until this day.

**Pitbulls tagged with Jewish stars**

The Jerusalem Telegraphic Agency On Line — Germany's Jewish leaders are planning to take legal action to stop pitbull owners from tagging their dogs with the same yellow stars the Nazis forced Jews to wear. The owners of these and other fighting dog breeds, which have been banned by Berlin authorities, are planning a rally to protest what they call racist attempts to wipe out their dogs.

**Palestinians teach children to hate**

International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem — Teachers in Palestinian

Gentiles Join March of the Living

The Jerusalem Report — Participants are currently being recruited for a new program to take non-Jews from around the world on tours of the Nazi death camps in Poland and then to Israel. Tentatively called the March of Remembrance and Hope, it is modeled after the March of the Living International, which since 1988 has taken over 35,000 Jewish youths, mainly from North America, on a two-week tour of Poland and Israel.

The first group of mostly North American Christian participants is now being assembled, and is set to go toward the end of the year, says Aharon Tamir, the director of the new program, which is being run from the Tel Aviv headquarters of March of the Living.

The lengthy process of finding candidates for the trip began at a conference held last November at Washington D.C.'s Holocaust Memorial Museum. The recruitment drive has been extended to European countries, such as Britain, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden, and has been helped along by cooperation from local universities, labor unions, and Holocaust centers.

"There are a lot of Holocaust-deniers in the world," says Tamir. "Our purpose is to let participants know what happened in Europe 55 years ago, so it doesn't happen again."

The first Christian group, which is expected to number 1,000, will follow the same itinerary in Poland as the Jewish groups have — visiting cities where Jews used to live, followed by the Majdanek and Treblinka death camps — and be guided by survivors and teachers. It will arrive in Israel in time for the first Christmas of the new millennium.

"Bionic man" hears again

Israel Wire — An innovative operation, by international standards, of the inner ear has resulted in restoring hearing to deaf people in Israel as well as children born deaf.

The revolutionary technique involves implanting the shell-shaped cochlea in a manner that bypasses the sound-relaying factor in the inner ear and connects it by an electrode directly to the brain. The system was invented by Professor Yona Kronenberg at the Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer and will be displayed for the first time at an all-European scientific congress in Berlin and later in Antwerp, with emphasis on using it for children.

Prof. Kronenberg said the electrodes are introduced into the inner ear and connected to the auditory nerve which, in deaf patients, may not be deteriorated but essentially disconnected.

The new method, developed in Israel, is performed with full anesthesia and takes little time, less than an hour, in place of more than three hours for existing techniques. It also has no complications.

For more Israel in the News, updated at least twice each week, visit our Web site at www.foigm.org.
schools are formally instructed to drill into the minds of their young students the idea that "Zionism is racist and aggressive," and implant the value of "wrath toward the alien thief who stole the homeland and dispersed its people." Such are the chilling findings of a new exposé recently released by the Palestinian Media Watch center, headed by Itamar Marcus, based on its comprehensive review of the official teacher's guides accompanying textbooks used by the Palestinian Authority in its schools.

For several years now, the center run by Marcus has monitored and translated from Arabic mainstream Palestinian newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasts, and textbooks used in Palestinian schools for anti-Israel and anti-Semitic content. In a widely circulated report last year, Marcus found PA textbooks were filled with inciteful descriptions of Jews and Israelis as cunning, deceitful, and treacherous, and routinely referred to Israel as the "Zionist enemy" and "oppressors." The new 19-page study reveals that the official PA guides (which Palestinian teachers are required to use) contain much the same, instructing the educators to saturate the minds of their students with incitement against Israel and extreme anti-Semitic views.

For example, PA teachers are required to prepare their students for a Jihad (holy war) to liberate all of "Palestine" and to "cherish the jihad fighters who quench the earth of Jerusalem with their blood." They are to instill in their students the idea that "Jews are dangerous enemies of Allah, Islam, and the Arab nation." Students are asked to emulate the efforts of Saladin, who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders. PA teachers also are to refer to Israel as the "Zionist occupier," and place it in the same category as "Fascism-Nazism."

Meanwhile, new history books introduced in PA schools define Israel as a "thieving conqueror," while the only map of "Palestine" in new PA textbooks eliminates the state of Israel, while labeling Haifa, Jafa, Beersheba, as Palestinian cities, and the entire Galilee and Negev as Palestinian land. With the advent of the Oslo peace process in 1993, Israel pioneered a curriculum that promoted peace with its Arab neighbors, a program now in its seventh year that reaches all Israeli pupils. But the PA has maintained a rigid curriculum that continues to call for the liberation of all of Palestine, while describing Israel, Jews, and Zionism in the most demonic terms. PA officials say in their defense that these books are supplied by Jordan and Egypt. But this hides the fact that Israel adopted similar Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks when administering schools for Palestinian Arabs, but deleted "offensive" sections. Despite the damaging report, the U.S. has decided to increase its substantial support of Palestinian education by an additional $10 million

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○ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.
Here in Israel, there is a new surprise every day. But never was I as surprised as when I took my wife to the hospital on the bus—and I have lived here fifty-three years.

Once a month, my wife must go to the hospital for tests. When I go with her, I wait many hours for her to be finished. So I was always able to find someone to talk to about the Lord. Sometimes it goes slowly, but I always have someone to talk to about the Lord.

This time I could not believe what happened. On the bus were some of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish boys who are always opposing us and making trouble for those of us who believe in Christ. They do so, saying they are “sanctifying the holy Name.”

When these people came on the bus, they immediately started to make a big commotion to promote their fanaticism. I cannot be as quick to speak about my beliefs as they are. So I remained quiet to see what was going to happen.

Then an older woman started shouting at them. She screamed at them saying, “You are the biggest extortionists the world has ever seen! For money you would sell all the land in Israel!”

So a big argument started. They said, “We come to bring people the good news from our great rabbi, who is holy.” Then I had no more patience. I could no longer keep quiet. It was as if a green light came on and said, “Go! Luke 10:3.” It is written there, “Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.”

So I told these boys, “You will all be punished forever, and also your great rabbis who make themselves so holy. They are no more holy than the greatest sinners, and they will never be forgiven because they are fighting against the commands of God. They teach people to walk in the evil way. Such ones cannot see the light of the Lord but only everlasting darkness. And you, do you know whom you are serving? Satan!”

And then I had a very big surprise. Most of the people on the bus were on my side.

The ultra-Orthodox told me, “We will call the police on you now because you said that we worship Satan. You are accusing such a holy one as this great rabbi.”

Then all the people on the bus starting shouting, “Go! Call the police because we all say the same thing. He is Satan, and you worship him.”

I told everyone that God has chosen us to be His servants. I asked the people to take a good look and see with their eyes whom these chosen people are serving.

“As it is written in Isaiah 1:2,” I said, “‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.’” I continued to read to them from my Bible: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass, his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider” (Isa. 1:3).

The ultra-Orthodox were listening. They were very tense and their nerves were strained when I read this to them. “You do not worship the Lord,” I said. “What you are doing is the greatest evil. And you call yourselves activists for God!”

Then the people on the bus started saying that according to the law that these ultra-Orthodox want to force everyone to follow, they themselves should be stoned for what they are doing.
The young men were very angry with me. “We will never forget you!” they said.

I told them my door is always open, and they have an invitation to visit me any time they want. “This is my obligation before the Lord,” I said, “to warn people like you. You come among people and bring poison. As it is written in the book of Ezekiel, ‘I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;... if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity’ (33:7, 9).

“I bring people the real good news,” I said, “not the false things from your so-called holy rabbis, but what is written here, in the Bible. You even try to boycott the Word of the Lord to keep people from knowing the full truth about our Savior, Yeshua Hamashiach. And which chapter do you refuse to read? One of great importance—Isaiah 53. The Bible speaks of Him not only in this chapter but also in others. You reject the Word of God, but there is no power on earth that can erase the truth.”

The ultra-Orthodox looked at me and asked, “Do you know to what organization we belong?”

I answered, “Yes, I know. The organization of Satan, whom you make so holy! Therefore, you will pay a high price.”

When I began to make it clear that I believe in Jesus, I was sure that now I would have more enemies against me. But no! No one opposed me, because I had told everyone that I had fought in all of Israel’s wars since 1944—not like the Orthodox who refuse to fight for Israel. They merely sit and eat the bread of idleness.

As the bus ride ended, they tried to threaten me by saying, “This is not the end. We will see you again someday.” I said, “Fine. You are welcome. You need to know the truth.”