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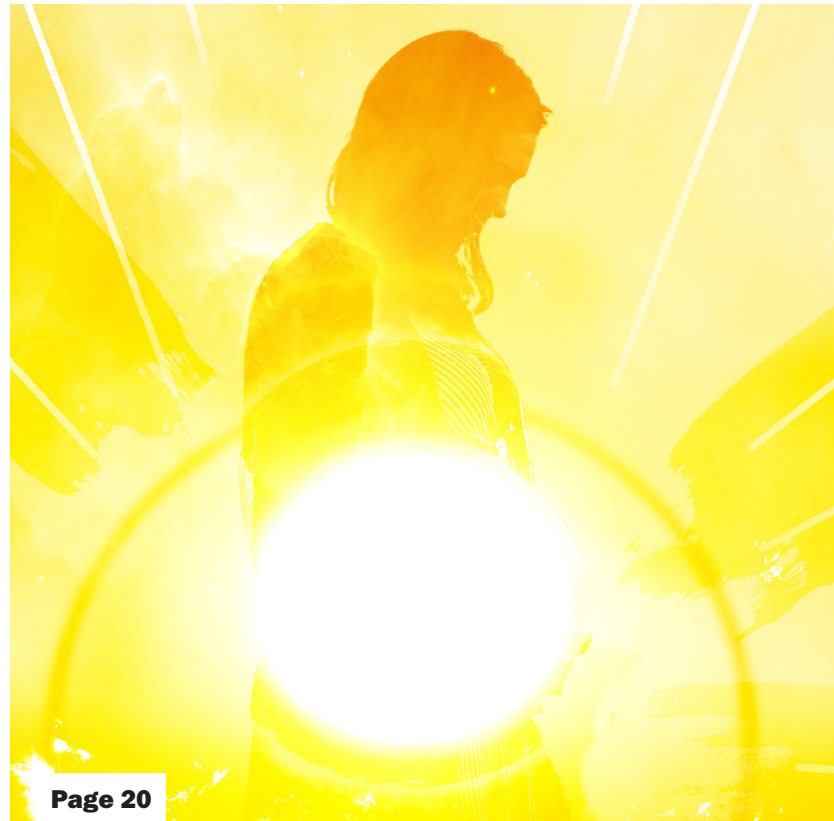
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Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for \$22.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Israel My Glory*, PO Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0908.

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FROM THE EDITOR

When I was a student at Word of Life Bible Institute, a professor from Dallas Theological Seminary told me one of the main reasons people leave the mission field is because they don't have enough education and can't answer difficult questions.

"Like what?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I had one man who was working in the bush in New Guinea tell me the natives wanted to know the identity of the woman in Revelation 12. He couldn't tell them because he didn't know."

Many people find the book of Revelation difficult to understand. They concoct all types of scenarios and fanciful allegories to explain what it means, but they miss the main point. God would not have included prophecy in the Bible if He felt we could not understand it. It's there because the Lord not only wants us to know what will happen in the future, but He also wants us to rest in the assurance that the future is completely under His control:

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure," calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isa. 46:9–11).

Prophecy demonstrates that the Bible is true and there is only one God: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Revelation 12, God gives us a snapshot of history—Jewish history, in particular—which is why this issue focuses on Revelation 12. When you finish reading it, you'll know exactly who the woman is; and you'll be able to identify the child and the dragon.

You'll notice we eliminated the news briefs on page 41. We felt this space would be better used to update you about conferences, classes, and other events available through The Friends of Israel. For news about Israel updated daily, please log on to foi.org/news.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine!

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief



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CANADA: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry - Canada, PO Box 428 STN A
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Printed in the USA by Waveline Direct.

H

of the Palestinian people or, more shocking, the first “Palestinian martyr.” These claims originate with the Arab community and try to delegitimize the State of Israel.

This is a new form of antisemitism, rooted in hatred of the Jewish people. It denies Jesus’ Jewish lineage, rewrites history, and removes the Promised Land’s Jewish heritage.

Antisemitism dates to the covenant God made with Abraham more than 4,000 years ago, in which God promised to bless the world through Abraham’s Seed (Gen. 22:18). This was God’s declaration that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come through Abraham’s descendants of promise (Gal. 3:8, 16). Being the nation that would birth the Savior made the Jewish people the enemy of Satan, the father of antisemitism.

Satan wants to destroy what God is using to redeem the world because God’s success means Satan’s demise. Satan’s final and greatest effort to eliminate the Jewish people is the focus of this issue of *Israel My Glory*.

Of course, turning Jesus into a Palestinian doesn’t attack Israel and the Jewish people alone. It also attacks the Christian faith. The New Testament is clear that Jesus was born to Jewish parents in the land of Israel. He observed Jewish Law, visited synagogues, quoted the Hebrew Scriptures, and went up to the Temple in Jerusalem for the holy days each year.

He fulfilled hundreds of Jewish prophecies, was born in the Jewish town of Bethlehem, and lived in the Jewish town of Nazareth. Today these towns are Arab; but in Jesus’ day, they were Jewish.

On the other hand, God’s Word contains not a single reference to Palestine. It speaks of Israel, Judea, and Samaria. Not until AD 135, 100 years after Jesus’ ascension, did the Romans rename the land Palestine after the Philistines, Israel’s archenemies. It was their way of stripping the Jewish homeland of its Jewish identity following the Jewish Bar Kokhba

rebellion. It is historically impossible for Jesus to be something that didn’t exist in His day.

To claim Jesus was a Palestinian also insults the Christian belief that modern Israel is a miracle and that God is fulfilling His promises to restore the Jewish people as a nation in their own land.

But one offense tops them all. The lie changes the purpose for which Jesus came. If Jesus had not been Jewish, He could not have fulfilled God’s covenant promise that the Seed of Abraham would bless the world. Jesus’ death would not benefit any of us because He would have had the wrong bloodline. God said only a Son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could die for the sins of the world.

Making Jesus a Palestinian puts a new spin on Replacement Theology. Centuries earlier, Christians originated Replacement Theology to claim God replaced Israel with the church. Now the new antisemitism replaces both Jews and Christians with a pseudo theology that claims a Palestinian Arab came to stand against Jewish aggression and show Arabs how to resist. Hence, His death made Him the first “Palestinian martyr.”

This stance, of course, perverts not only biblical truth, but also history. Though its audience may be small, it is too dangerous to ignore. As evangelical support for Israel declines, particularly among the younger generations, these lies may take hold. They appeal to people committed to social justice and who don’t know their Bibles well.

We know, as in the days of Asaph (Ps. 83), Israel’s enemies took “crafty counsel” together to “cut them [Israel] off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more” (vv. 3–4). But God preserved Israel in Asaph’s day, and He will continue to do so today and in the days to come (Rev. 12). God has promised that Israel will never cease to exist (Jer. 31:35–37). That is truth, and we can believe it.



by **Jim Showers**,
executive director of The Friends
of Israel Gospel Ministry



POINTING OUR KIDS TO TRUTH

The COVID-19 pandemic did more than shed light on the science of infectious diseases in the modern era. For many parents, it opened their eyes. As their dining rooms turned into remote classrooms, they received an education on the curriculum being foisted on their kids—and they were not amused.

In response, Terry McAuliffe, former Democratic governor of Virginia, replied, “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach.” No surprise, McAuliffe’s statement killed his 2021 reelection campaign.

Education has become the battleground of the culture war in America, and parents on both sides of the political spectrum are waking up to the fact that certain educators want to replace them as parents.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy has approved new health and sex education standards for kindergarten through grade 12. FOX News reported that beginning this fall, first graders in the Garden State will hear a lesson called “Pink, Blue and Purple” on gender identity and gender-role stereotypes. Starting with 6-year-olds, it will teach that gender is a choice.

In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis has signed a bill banning such discussion through third grade, and the law received more scrutiny in the national news media than New Jersey’s updated curriculum.

Chaya Raichik is an Orthodox Jewish woman with a wildly popular Twitter account called Libs of TikTok. With more than a million followers, Raichik has become an expert in exposing teachers who cavalierly inculcate children with their progressive, sexual agenda. Her mission is to unmask what she calls the “grooming and indoctrination” that take place in schools.

For a while, Raichik remained anonymous,

posting behind her Twitter handle. But her social-media presence created enough of a wake that *The Washington Post* did an exposé revealing her identity.

Yet the positive response to Libs of TikTok has been overwhelming. Many parents have said that after hearing what the schools are teaching their children, they have decided to run for their local school boards.

As a parent of four school-aged children, I see plenty of reasons to be concerned about the future. But over and over, God calls us into a position of faith, not fear: “For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you’” (Isa. 41:13).

The psalmist called children “a heritage from the LORD” and “arrows in the hand of a warrior” (Ps. 127:3–4). At some point, parents launch their children into life like arrows released from a bow. But what is our target? Warriors don’t shoot arrows aimlessly. They plant their feet firmly on the ground, set their sights on their targets, and release the arrows with purpose and precision.

Since the fall of humanity, the world has been trying to exchange the truth of God for a lie. But as parents, we have a divine calling to point our children to the Lord like arrows aimed at a bullseye.

God commanded the Israelites, “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Dt. 6:6–7). We should do no less today as servants of Jesus Christ; and, hopefully, when our children become adults, they will glorify the most high God.

by Chris Katulka

CAN A LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS?

Israeli President Isaac Herzog recently visited Turkey in a bid to normalize bilateral ties after more than a decade of diplomatic rupture due to disputes over the Palestinian issue. Herzog's trip, which included talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was the first by an Israeli president since November 2007, when Shimon Peres addressed the Turkish Parliament.

Erdoğan called the visit "historic" and "a turning point" in Turkish-Israeli relations. But Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu added that even if Turkey and Israel normalize relations, Ankara "will not change its policy with regard to the Palestinians."

Although Turkey and Israel have a long history of cooperation (in 1949, Turkey became the first Muslim country to recognize the State of Israel), their relationship has been extremely volatile. In the 1970s, Turkey downgraded relations with Israel by recognizing the Palestinian Liberation Organization and supporting UN Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with racism.

In the 1990s, bilateral ties were restored: Turkey and Israel signed two defense cooperation agreements, and the relationship flourished even after Erdoğan became prime minister in 2003.

But relations deteriorated in December 2008 when Israel launched a military operation against the Hamas terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip. At a January 2009 meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Erdoğan stormed off the stage after accusing Peres, then Israel's president, of being a "killer."

The relationship imploded in May 2010 when Israeli commandos raided

a Turkish ship, the *Mavi Marmara*, as it tried to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza. Nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists were killed. In September 2011, after a UN inquiry blamed Israel for the deaths, Turkey downgraded ties with the Jewish state and suspended military cooperation.

In March 2013, under pressure from the Obama administration, Israel apologized to Turkey and agreed to pay \$20 million in compensation to the families of those killed on the *Mavi Marmara*. In August 2016, Turkey and Israel normalized relations.

In May 2018, things again deteriorated after Palestinian rioters protesting the opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem were killed. Erdoğan accused Israel of being a "terrorist state," expelled the Israeli ambassador to Turkey, and recalled the Turkish ambassador to Israel.

Israel then sought closer ties with Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt and established diplomatic relations with its neighbors under the Abraham Accords. In December 2020, Israel normalized ties with Morocco; and in March 2022, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called Israel a "potential ally, with many interests that we can pursue together."

Erdoğan, increasingly isolated, now wants to normalize ties with the Jewish state. Many analysts agree his commitment to Palestinian statehood and



*
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

his support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood present major stumbling blocks to improved ties with Israel. He has, for example, repeatedly rejected Israeli demands that he close Hamas's headquarters in Istanbul, where Hamas directs terrorist attacks against Jews.

Former Israeli official Jacob (Yaki) Dayan noted that in all his interactions with Erdoğan, he felt the Turkish leader's "conspicuous lack of affection for Israel, and even hatred, did not come from his head but from his heart." He said Erdoğan's vision of a Middle East without Israel has not changed. "Erdoğan is an ideological leader with a clear view of the world; and while we come with a clear willingness and intention to improve relations, we always need to remember that. Can a leopard change its spots? Highly doubtful."



by **Soeren Kern**,
a senior fellow at the
Gatestone Institute, a
nonpartisan foreign-
policy think tank based
in New York City

UN FOISTS ‘COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA’ DAY ON WORLD

BY RAYMOND IBRAHIM

It’s official: The United Nations (UN) has formally accepted the concept of “Islamophobia,” a move that will undoubtedly further paralyze any measures against Islamic aggression.

On March 15, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to mark March 15 as “the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.” The resolution was introduced by Pakistan and supported by 55 Muslim-majority countries of the Riyadh-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is also trying to get the UN to accept “blasphemy” laws.

Two points worth considering are (1) what this bill will do and (2) the hypocrisy of all who support it.

For starters, the resolution will further freeze all frank discussion on Islam because criticism will fall into the category of “Islamophobia”—and that, of course, is the whole point: to place Islam on a pedestal and shield it from criticism.

The actual reason many feel Islam should be granted special protection is that, unlike Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., many of its teachings are problematic—killing apostates and “blasphemers,” treating women like property, and legalizing sexual slavery, to name a few—and, therefore, not suited for the modern world. Hence the real need to silence all criticism in the guise of “protecting Muslims.”

Meanwhile, those who truly need protecting from Muslims—for instance, religious minorities—get zero recognition by the UN. The Muslim persecution of Christians, for example, is a *real* phenomenon: It’s unwavering, constant, systematic, and systemic; and it conforms to Sharia-approved patterns—meaning its root source is Islam.

Since July 2011, I’ve been compiling a monthly series, “Muslim Persecution of Christians” (published by the Gatestone Institute), collating and summarizing the one or two dozen accounts of persecution that surface every month. The accounts documented in every one of these now 125 reports typically fit under the same themes—including the bombing, burning, or banning of churches; the rape and forced conversion of Christian women; murderous attacks on and long prison sentences for apostates, blasphemers, and evangelists; overall discrimination and exploitation; and, increasingly, the



outright slaughter of Christians.

Similarly, a study published in January 2022 found that, in 2021, “over 360 million Christians suffer[ed] high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.” On average, 16 Christians were killed for their faith *every single day*. During that same period, more than 5,000 churches were attacked and/or destroyed.

And the overwhelming majority of this persecution took place at the hands of Muslims. Worse, the Muslim nations that are especially brutal and notorious in their persecution of Christians—including Afghanistan and Somalia, respectively considered the worst and third worst persecutors and murderers of Christians in the entire world—are members of the OIC, the same organization that sponsored the “Islamophobia” resolution the UN just adopted.

And Pakistan—where not one week seems to go by without an underaged Christian girl being kidnapped, raped, and forced to convert and marry her abductor while the police and courts side with the rapists—is the nation that submitted the UN resolution.

Apparently not all religions matter to the UN. Only one religion matters; and that religion has just been granted a privileged position.

Raymond Ibrahim is a Shillman Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, a Judith Rosen Friedman Fellow at the Middle East Forum, and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Gatestone Institute. To read this article in its entirety, along with others by Raymond Ibrahim, log on to his website, raymondibrahim.com.

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Bringing Hope To the University of Florida

College campuses are notorious for their hostility toward the things of God. Such animosity deters some people from sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, but it doesn't deter Fred Schweig. Fred is our Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI) outreach representative at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville. With a total enrollment of more than 60,000, UF has the largest Jewish student population of any public university outside Tel Aviv.



*
Fred Schweig witnessing on campus.

Fred and his wife, Eva, are Jewish believers in Jesus who returned to America after living in Israel for 15 years. God burdened them both to reach college students with the forgiveness, salvation, and freedom found only in knowing the Messiah.

Since most young adults bury their faces in their cell phones and interact with friends online, Fred

intentionally speaks with students face to face. And, as Jesus did in the Scriptures, he listens to them closely to understand their personal worldviews and ascertain the best way to share the gospel.

Young adults open up to Fred about the hurt and pain that haunt their lives; and he teaches them about sin, shame, and guilt. Some students break down and cry, but Fred is there to offer them hope in the Lord and forgiveness and acceptance in Christ. Fred and Eva have learned that most students have never heard the gospel and don't know they need a Savior.

Recently, Fred talked with someone who was considering walking away from his Orthodox Jewish upbringing. The spiritually confused young man was looking for answers. Fred listened with concern and shared the truth that can only be found in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel.

Last year, the Schweigs shared Thanksgiving dinner with former UF students they discipled. These young adults have graduated, married, and now have jobs and families of their own. Through countless Bible studies and evangelism-training sessions, Fred and Eva taught them the errors of Replacement Theology, which they were learning in their churches. Today they understand God's love and plan for Israel and the Jewish people and know how to share their faith.

God is using Fred and Eva to raise up a new generation of believers in the Lord. They cling to the verse, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek [Gentile]" (Rom. 1:16). The Schweigs know the same power Paul wrote about 2,000 years ago is available today for all, including college students, who place their trust in the Lord Jesus.

If you would like to support Fred and Eva Schweig and others like them serving in North American outreach with The Friends of Israel, visit foi.org/NAMoutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayers and financial support.

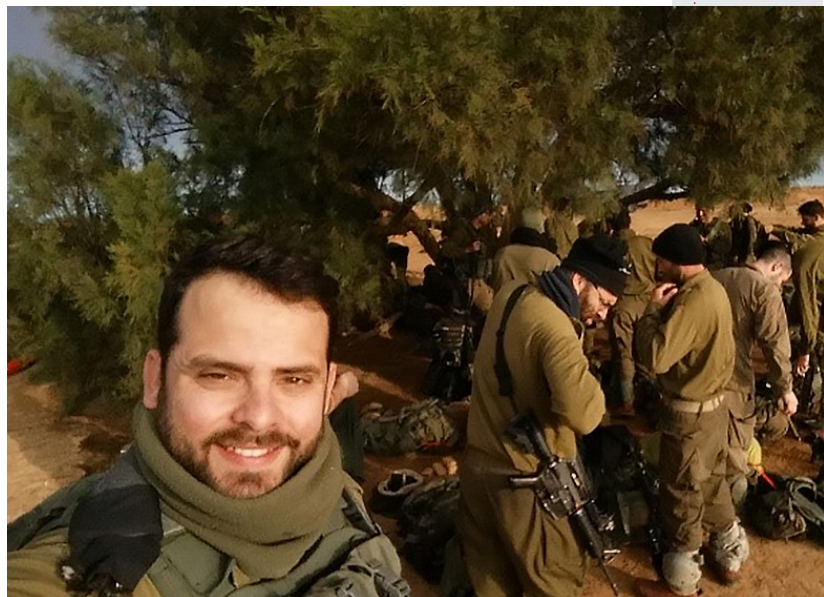
Sharing the Gospel in Israel

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is one of the most potent, battle-ready militaries in the world. Since its inception, the men and women who protect Israel's sovereignty have faced unique challenges. Probably the biggest is the fact that Israel's enemies lie on every mile of its borders, with the exception of the 120-mile-long coast along the Mediterranean Sea.

The Jewish state is extremely small, about the size of New Jersey, with a population of fewer than 10 million people. The IDF's first point of military doctrine is that if Israel is to survive, the IDF cannot lose a single military conflict.

At The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, we couldn't be prouder of the work our Israeli field representatives do, each of whom has happily served in the IDF. The Israeli government requires every citizen over the age of 18, men and women, to serve for two to three years in the military. One of our field representatives, Danny Kalisher, has chosen to continue serving in the IDF reserves as part of his ministry following his release from active duty. "Continuing to serve in the IDF," Danny said, "gives me great opportunities to share the Good News

*
Danny Kalisher



with unbelieving Jewish friends in my unit."

Because the IDF places reservists in units with the same soldiers they served with on active duty, Danny can continue building relationships and sharing his faith with the same men and women over many years. Danny also helps spearhead efforts to minister to soldiers serving and preparing to serve on active duty. He has partnered with other Israeli Christians to develop conferences and pre-army programs to introduce soldiers to Messiah Jesus, while helping them adjust to life in the IDF.

Recently, Danny finished a month of reserve duty (required every two years for reservists). It was intense, physically and mentally. But every time Danny gets the opportunity to spend time with his unit, he provides a voice of hope for young men and women who put their lives on the line every day to protect their country. What a natural environment to speak the truth of the gospel!

Please continue to pray with us for our team in Israel as they seek opportunities to share Messiah Jesus with their Israeli brethren. We thank God for their dedication and creativity as they serve Him.

If you would like to support our Israeli team or other FOI ministries around the world, visit www.foi.org/INToutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayers and financial support.

*
Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust
Remembrance Center

A MEMORIAL AND A NAME

BY STEVE HERZIG

IT'S CRITICAL THAT EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIANS UNDERSTAND THE
HOLOCAUST, SAYS YAD VASHEM
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE AND
PASTOR, MARK JENKINS.

I recently ran across a Pew Research study that sought to discover what Americans know about the Holocaust. It's not good news for evangelical Christians.

The survey contained four extremely basic multiple-choice questions:

1. How many Jews were killed in the Holocaust?
2. When did the Holocaust happen?
3. What were Nazi-created ghettos?
4. How did Hitler become chancellor of Germany?¹

The respondents were categorized by gender, age, ethnicity, region of the country, religious affiliation, political affiliation, and education. Forty-eight percent of all Americans surveyed got at least three of four questions correct.

The religion category interested me the most. Not surprisingly, Jewish respondents got the most correct answers, 3.2 out of 4. Second place surprised me: It went to atheists and agnostics, with 3.1 correct out of 4. Third were mainline Christians, with 2.3, followed by Mormons, with 2.2.

But tied near the bottom were Catholics and evangelicals, who both scored 2.1—barely better than the religious group called “Nothing in particular,” which scored 2 out of 4.

Clearly, evangelical Christians are severely deficient when it comes to knowledge about the Holocaust, and they need a source to help them understand it better.

In 1953, five years after the birth of the State of Israel, the Knesset enacted the Yad Vashem law creating a permanent Holocaust memorial, archive, and education center. The name *Yad Vashem*, which literally means “a memorial and a name,” comes from Isaiah 56:5: “To them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.”

Within the International Relations Division of the World Holocaust Remembrance Center is the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, launched in 2006 as an educational initiative to help Christians understand the genocide of World War II.

Mark Jenkins, a believer and pastor who lives in Richmond, Virginia, is the U.S. representative of the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. I interviewed Mark recently, asking him to help us become better aware of that terrible time in Jewish history.



STEVE: Welcome, Mark. Would you start off and explain your title?

MARK: I am a representative of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. I help the church understand why we as Christians should care about the Holocaust.

STEVE: Why should Christians care about the Holocaust?

MARK: The Holocaust, antisemitism, and Israel's existence are inexorably linked together; and getting educated about them is important, especially for Christians. I learned this on my first trip to Israel. I went with a leader of AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] who told me something I will never forget. He said, “You will never understand Israel unless you understand the Holocaust.” That is so true. The Holocaust was a unique and horrific event that occurred over 80 years ago, yet it still impacts Israel today.

It demonstrated so clearly that the Jewish people could not rely on any other nation for their security. It demonstrated that they needed their own state, a state with defensible borders they could protect. Today, when Iran threatens to annihilate Israel, or when their enemies say they want to push them into the sea, they take those threats seriously. They remember it was not that long ago when the Nazis tried to do the same thing.

STEVE: How did you get involved with Yad Vashem?

MARK: Well, you know, Steve, my background is TV production. I had experience working with various networks, including CNN, HISTORY channel, and Discovery Channel. My life changed when a local pastor recruited me to manage a regional broadcast ministry. I eventually became ordained, and God led me to a local church where I became a pastor.



*
Sculpture at Yad Vashem, the World
Holocaust Remembrance Center

**We can't let this happen
again. We can't be bystanders
because we are in it with the
Jewish people.**

Thirty years ago, there was a large Holocaust-survivor community in Richmond. I had the opportunity to work on the Spielberg Project, taping their stories. I've got to give Steven Spielberg credit because he tapped into something at a time before survivors began to open up to cameras and tell their stories. Until then, they kept their stories hidden.

Spielberg [director/producer of the Academy Award-winning Holocaust film *Schindler's List*] created a way (using a camera) to get them to talk, and many realized they were really talking to their grandkids who would

remember them. I realized the more I got involved that these were real people. They had names. They had lives. They had histories, and they survived. These taping sessions prepared me for the encounters I would have in Israel.

From that point, I felt like God said, "This is where I need you to be working—with and around the Jewish people." I read many books on Judaism and the Jewish people, including your book [*Jewish Culture and Customs*]. Thank you very much.

STEVE: Did any of your Jewish contacts want to talk to you about your faith?

MARK: Yes, one in particular. He was a high-up military person from Israel. He came to me privately and told me he had questions, and nothing was off the table. We talked for several hours. I will never forget his first question: "What is the deal with evangelicals?" That conversation provided both of us with quite an education.

STEVE: You must have heard Whoopi Goldberg's statement that the Holocaust was "not about race." She needs an education. What would you tell her if you had a chance?

MARK: Well, I would echo what our senior guy [Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem] said to her after she gave her apology: "We must not mince words. People need to know what led to the Holocaust: the unprecedented, murderous drive to annihilate the entire Jewish people, their religion, culture, and values by the Nazis and their collaborators, primarily due to the unfounded belief that Jews were their foremost and extremely dangerous racial enemy. While her apology and clarification are important, I extend a personal invitation to Ms. Goldberg and other influencers to learn more about the causes, events, and aftermath of the Holocaust here at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem."

PHOTO BY J ANDERS / UNSPLASH

SHALOM!

WELCOME TO FIRST FRIDAY!

STEVE: What would be the one thing you would like to get across to Christians concerning the Holocaust?

MARK: Here it is: We can't let this happen again. We can't be bystanders because we are in it with the Jewish people. If we believe our Scriptures, if we believe the apostle Paul, we are grafted in. We are one new man. We have a shared history and a shared destiny.

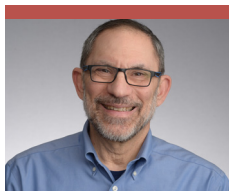
Yes, there is a role in the plan of God for the church. Yes, there's a plan of God for the Jewish people. But we are linked, and don't think persecution today is just against the Jews. Dennis Prager said the Christian is the "new Jew" in the sense that we're seeing an increase in Christian persecution.

I summarize it this way: Anyone who bows before the God of Israel is going to see persecution because the enemy of the God of Israel and the enemy of the God of the church is the same enemy. We are in it together.

Mark Jenkins can be reached by email at mark@cfyv.us. ★

ENDNOTE

- 1 "What Americans Know About the Holocaust," Pew Research Center, pewforum.org, January 22, 2020 <tinyurl.com/PewHolocaust>.



Steve Herzig

is the director of North American Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

On the first Friday of every month, something unusual takes place in Richmond, Virginia. It's a *Shabbat* (Sabbath) service where pastors and members of area churches gather in a church fellowship hall to welcome the Jewish Sabbath and learn more about the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith.

"We light the candles, recite traditional Jewish blessings (*Kiddush* and *Hamotzi*) over the juice and bread, bless our wives and our children, and sing Jewish songs—or at least Christian songs with Hebrew lyrics mixed in. Then we progress to a family fellowship meal," said Mark Jenkins, the U.S. representative of the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem and the organizer of First Friday.

"We encourage people to bring a dish to share," he said, "observing semikosher requirements. We're not strict, but we do prohibit pork and shellfish. After the meal, a guest speaker takes us deeper into the Hebrew foundations of our Christian faith."

Established in 2011, First Friday Shabbat has hosted such distinguished Bible teachers as Ed Hindson, theology professor and author of more than 40 books; Randall Price, author, archaeologist, professor, and president of World of the Bible Ministries; and Jim Showers, executive

director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Those attending also have heard from many leading experts on topics that range from foreign policy to eschatology—all designed to engage the local church for Israel.

Initially, Jenkins said, First Friday "was developed with a local group of pastors in response to returning 'Jerusalem pilgrims' who wanted to better understand the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith in order to gain context for their Bible studies—similar to what they gained by walking in the land of the Bible.

"People who returned from trips to Israel have also wanted to better understand the complexities of the Middle East, the Jewish-Christian relationship, and the modern State of Israel. First Friday Shabbat became an excellent forum for this."

But at its core, Jenkins said, First Friday "is for people who love the Lord and love what the Lord loves; and that most certainly includes 'the apple of His eye'" (Zech. 2:8), meaning Israel and the Jewish people.



by Steve Herzig

A LOOK AT THE COSMIC BATTLE SATAN IS WAGING
AGAINST GOD—AND GOD'S PROTOEVANGELIUM



THE CHILD AND THE SEED

BY DAVID M. LEVY

It has been said the key to all Messianic prophecy hangs at the Bible's front door and was given by God to that "old serpent, the Devil."¹ Strange though it may seem, Satan was the first one to learn of a Deliverer who would effectuate his demise. "To him [Satan]," wrote Bible commentator Herbert Lockyer, "was given the initial promise and prophecy of redemption from the sin he had brought into God's fair universe."²

The prophecy is Genesis 3:15—the first in a chain of prophecies tracing the Seed of the woman through the Bible to its ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah of Israel. The Messiah's victory over Satan shines like a beacon in the book of Revelation where, among other things, He is the "male Child" in Revelation 12:

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne (vv. 1–2, 4–5).

The woman is Israel; the dragon is Satan; and the Child is Jesus, divinely named Yeshua (salvation) in Hebrew, "for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21).

But the history of humanity doesn't begin in Revelation. It begins in Genesis, when God created Adam and Eve in His image and gave Adam dominion over the earth to rule it for His glory (1:26–28).

Satan, whom God created sometime before Adam, saw Adam as a rival. Speaking through the serpent, he deceived Eve into rebelling against God by eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden. She gave the fruit to Adam, the federal head of humanity, who then ate it willingly. Adam's sinful disobedience brought spiritual and physical death to himself and all mankind, and Satan became "the ruler of this world" (Jn. 12:31) and "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2).

From that time forward, everyone has been born a sinner into a world system dominated by the Devil, whom Jesus called "a liar and the father of it" (Jn. 8:44). It is only when we repent and turn to Israel's Messiah that we are delivered "from the power of darkness" and conveyed "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13). Faith in the Deliverer saves us.

With Genesis 3:15, the battle lines were drawn; and Satan would do everything in his power to "devour" the Child (Rev. 12:4).

THE FOUR-PRONGED PROTOEVANGELIUM

Genesis 3:15 is called the *protoevangelium* (first gospel) because in it God revealed His redemptive plan for humankind and creation. He told Satan the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His

heel.” This prophecy has four aspects:

1. THE COSMIC BATTLE. The word *enmity* (hostility) expresses an ongoing hatred. Satan will never stop warring against the woman (Israel, Rev. 12:1–2) because of her redemptive role in birthing the Messiah, the Savior of the world. This satanic hatred has undergirded all forms of antisemitism for thousands of years, including the modern version: anti-Zionism.

The word *seed* usually speaks of human, physical progeny. But in Scripture, it also identifies people morally and spiritually. The serpent’s seed refers to Satan’s kingdom of demonic forces and unbelieving, wicked people who pattern their lives after

one day return in glory to restore the Kingdom of David.

Although a bruised heel is painful, it is not fatal.

4. THE FINAL BLOW. Satan, however, will be destroyed. The Messiah will “bruise” his head, dealing him a lethal blow (Gen. 3:15). His ultimate destiny is the Lake of Fire, where he will be “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

THE VICTORY

Jesus came to Earth to free us from bondage to Satan. His death and resurrection broke the Devil’s power over death



Genesis 3:15 is called the *protoevangelium* (first gospel) because in it God revealed His redemptive plan for humankind and creation.



the Evil One. They hate God, His program, the Messiah, and all believers in Jesus. They are children of the Devil (cf. Jn. 8:44).

2. THE DIVINE BIRTH. The “Seed” of “the woman” refers to the Messiah, who would be supernaturally conceived by an Israelite virgin (Isa. 7:14; cf. Rev. 12:2, 5). Scripture traces the Seed’s bloodline through His mother: “Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi . . .” (Lk. 3:23–24, ESV). Explained Bible scholar Dr. Charles Ryrie,

*Luke affirms the Virgin Birth by the phrase **being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli.** Joseph was Jacob’s son by birth (Matt. 1:16) and Heli’s son by marriage. This is apparently the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, Mary.³*

This historical record runs contrary to all other genealogies in Scripture, which trace descendants through the male seed.

3. THE BRUISED HEEL. Satan “shall bruise His [Messiah’s] heel” (Gen. 3:15). The Messiah would suffer immensely, culminating with His crucifixion on a Roman cross. This was God’s plan. Jesus was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) as the final sacrifice for mankind’s sin. As the writer of Hebrews said, “Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (9:26). Three days later, Jesus arose from the grave and will

and guaranteed his eternal damnation. Today, “the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan” (v. 2), presides over a doomed domain. But the “male Child” will return as King of kings and Lord of lords “to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (12:5). As Isaiah prophesied,

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever (Isa. 9:6–7). ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Herbert Lockyer, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 59.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, ESV (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 1,242–43, n Luke 3:23.



David M. Levy

is the media resource specialist and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.



THE CONTINUING CONFLICT

Satan's goal is to rule the world instead of God and have all humanity worship him (Isa. 14:12–14). Consequently, he has tried to destroy the woman and her Seed since he first heard God's promise of a Redeemer in Genesis 3:15.

Before the Savior's birth, Satan tried to destroy the Jewish people to prevent the Redeemer from coming. Failing that, he tried to kill Jesus prematurely before the Messiah could become the final atoning sacrifice for humanity's sin. Failing again, he has been trying to prevent Jesus from returning to Earth by annihilating the Jewish people so there will be no Messianic Kingdom over which Jesus can rule. Here are but a few of his many attempts to thwart God's plan of redemption:

BEFORE JESUS' BIRTH

- Adam and Eve's son Cain murdered his righteous brother Abel. This was Satan's first attempt to destroy the Messianic line. But Eve bore Seth, who would continue it (Gen. 4–5).
- Hagar the Egyptian bore Abraham's first son, Ishmael (16:1–4, 15), who was not the son of promise. God's plan of redemption necessitated Abraham's wife, Sarah, to birth Isaac, through whom God would raise up Jacob and the Jewish people.
- When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, Pharaoh issued a decree to kill all male Jewish children at birth (Ex. 1).
- When the Israelites fled Egypt, Pharaoh attempted to destroy them at the Red Sea (chap. 14).
- The nation of Moab tried to prevent the Israelites from entering the Promised Land by provoking God to destroy them because of their sin (Num. 22–24).
- In 722 BC, the Assyrian army took the 10 northern tribes of Israel into captivity (2 Ki. 17).
- In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the two southern tribes into captivity (2 Chr. 36).
- When Ahasuerus ruled the Persian Empire, home to all of world Jewry, Haman tried to manipulate him into annihilating all of God's Chosen People (Est. 3–8).
- Around 175 BC, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) tried to corrupt Judaism by Hellenizing Israel with Greek culture and language (cf. Dan. 8; 11:2–35). Jews who refused to comply were persecuted and murdered so brutally that Antiochus is considered a type of the Antichrist.

BEFORE JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

- After Jesus' birth, Satan tried to "devour" the Child born by the woman (Israel, Rev. 12:1–4), using Roman King Herod

to kill all the male children born in Bethlehem around the time of Jesus' birth (Mt. 2:16). But an angel told Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, to flee with his family to Egypt (vv. 13–14). After Herod died, they returned and lived in Nazareth.

- Satan tried to corrupt Jesus by tempting Him to compromise His sinless obedience and trust in God the Father (4:1–11). He tempted Him physically by trying to persuade Jesus to command that stones be turned to bread to satisfy His hunger. He tempted Him mentally by trying to coax Him to jump from the Temple's high point, testing God's faithfulness to rescue Him from death. And he tempted Jesus spiritually by promising to give Him "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory . . . if You will fall down and worship me" (vv. 8–9). Jesus rejected each temptation by quoting God's Word (cf. Dt. 6:13, 16; 8:3).
- Satan used Peter to try to persuade Jesus not to go to the cross. Peter rebuked Jesus (Mt. 16:22), prompting Jesus to reply, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (v. 23). God's plan to redeem humanity depended on Jesus' obedience all the way to His death.
- People tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. Jesus had read the Messianic passage Isaiah 61:1 in a synagogue in Nazareth, saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). He also gave illustrations of God's miraculous acts among Gentiles. The congregation clearly understood Jesus was declaring God gave divine grace to the Gentiles but not to Israel because of Israel's unbelief (vv. 25–27). Filled with wrath, the congregation forced Jesus from the city and tried to kill Him by throwing Him over a high cliff. Jesus miraculously escaped, but Satan persisted in trying to kill Jesus throughout His ministry (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:59; 10:39).

BEFORE JESUS' SECOND COMING

- In AD 70 the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and scattered the Jewish people throughout the world, where Satan persecutes them continually and tries to destroy them.
- Throughout the centuries, satanically driven antisemitism has taken many forms: inquisitions, expulsions, persecutions, pogroms, anti-Zionism. The list goes on. Satan will persist until the times of the Gentiles end (Lk. 21:24) with Messiah Jesus' return to rescue the Jewish people from the Antichrist and establish His Messianic Kingdom. ★

by David M. Levy



THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

**WHO IS THE “WOMAN”
IN THE APOSTLE JOHN’S STRANGE VISION?
THERE IS ONLY ONE LOGICAL ANSWER.**

BY MIKE STALLARD

AS you study the book of Revelation, you might not notice Israel's presence much. In fact, a number of commentators say Israel is never mentioned there. But if you study Revelation carefully, you'll see the Jewish people and national Israel appear several times, particularly in chapter 12.

This chapter opens with the apostle John seeing a strange vision: "Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars" (v. 1). The woman is pregnant and soon births a Child (vv. 2, 5). She then flees to the wilderness for 1,260 days (three and one-half years; vv. 6, 14). In the wilderness, God takes care of her and protects her from the attacking dragon (vv. 6, 13–17), who is identified as Satan, or the Devil (v. 9).

WHO IS SHE?

Scholars have three major views concerning the woman's identity:

1. The Virgin Mary. Some see her as the virgin Mary. After all, she gives birth to the Christ Child who will rule the nations, as the birth narratives in the Gospels reveal to us. In addition, Genesis 3:15 records the first prophecy of the gospel and predicts Satan will oppose the Seed of the woman (the first hint of the coming Messiah), a truth that fits Revelation 12.

This view, however, is incorrect. Revelation 12:1 calls the woman a "sign," meaning she is symbolic and stands for something else. She is not an actual woman like the virgin Mary.

2. The Church. This view also is a common misinterpretation. Although it does justice to the idea that the woman functions as a sign or symbol, it does not align with the rest of the chapter's description and is woefully inadequate for explaining her identity.

If this view were correct, verse 5 would teach the church gave birth to Christ. But it is Christ who gave birth to the church in Acts 2. It was Christ who sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost to begin the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit where believers are placed into the body of Christ, the church (Acts 11:15–16; 1 Cor. 12:13). Jesus brought forth the church, not the other way around.

3. The Nation of Israel. This is the correct interpretation. Some balk at it, saying Israel is nowhere to be found in the context. But that is not true. Revelation 11 mentions a Jewish Temple (vv. 1–2) and two Jewish witnesses who are described as olive trees and lampstands, items common to Jewish culture (vv. 3–4). The miracles they perform are similar to those of Moses and Elijah (v. 6), and the context actually supports the idea of Israel at the beginning of chapter 12.

The image of the woman might bring to mind a similar description from Scripture. In Genesis 37:9–10, Joseph, one of the 12 sons of Jacob (whom God renamed Israel), had a dream in which God revealed that his brothers and parents would bow down to him. The sun, moon, and stars also bowed down to him.

His father, Jacob, rightly understood the symbolism: The sun represented him (Joseph's father), the moon was Joseph's mother, and the 11 stars were his brothers. All of them bowed to Joseph at the end of Genesis when he served as second only to Pharaoh. Added to the 11 stars that represented his 11 brothers, Joseph would be the 12th star.

So together, the sun, moon, and stars in Revelation 12 refer to the original family of Israel. The 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel, which produced the entire nation of Israel. Thus, the woman clothed in the sun, moon, and 12 stars in Revelation 12 is not a difficult symbol to understand in the context of the Old Testament.

COVENANTS AND CAPTIVITY

The nation of Israel is rooted in God's promises to Abraham, often referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant. These promises of land, seed, and blessing listed in Genesis 12:1–3 are formalized as an unconditional covenant in chapter 15 and fleshed out in more detail in chapter 17. God pledges to bless Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob and raise up a great nation.

But the people of Israel ended up in bondage in Egypt, and God used Moses to deliver them. Eventually, they reentered the Promised Land that God had set aside for His Chosen People (15:18).

Starting with Moses, Israel gave us the Old Testament. In it we find the great history of Israel, both good and bad, as the people followed the Lord sometimes and wandered into rebellion and idolatry at other times. We also find Moses promised the Israelites a prophet like him would eventually emerge from the nation (Dt. 18:15–18).

A high point in Israelite history was God's establishment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89). In it, God promised that through the seed of one man, King David, a line of kings would emerge.

But the nation suffered many low points. After the reign of Solomon (David's son), the nation was split into the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom (called Israel or Ephraim) and the

two tribes of the southern kingdom (called Judah). Because of their sin, the northern tribes were taken captive into Assyria in the late 8th century BC. Then the southern tribes were taken captive to Babylon for 70 years in the late 6th century.

Later, during the Persian period, Haman attempted to eradicate all of the Jewish people. But God, as He has done in all of history, rose up to provide favor and deliverance, this time through Queen Esther.

THE COMING RESTORATION

During all of these times of suffering, the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants remained intact. The nation's last king will be the Messiah, or Christ—the prophet like Moses, who will deliver His people.

The prophets often predicted the coming of this Messiah (Isa. 9:6–7; 53:1–12; Dan. 9:24–27; Mic. 5:2).¹ When Jesus first came to Earth, He came in Jewish flesh. It is clear the woman of Revelation 12:1, which is the nation of Israel, brought forth the Christ Child: “She bore a male Child who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (v. 5).

Revelation 12 shows God's ultimate intention is to restore Israel in its kingdom. When Satan is cast down during the future, end-times Tribulation, he will mercilessly attack Israel and the Jewish people for the last three and one-half years before the Messiah returns (vv. 12–14). The picture of this horrible persecution is the Dragon sending a flood after the woman: “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood” (v. 15).

But the earth opens up and swallows the flood to save the woman (v. 16). Jesus will save His Chosen People. As the vision of the woman indicates, Israel has a national and spiritual future, and God will always love the nation with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). ★

ENDNOTE

1. When studied carefully, the prophecies show the Messiah will come twice: once to die and once to rule and reign. This requires the resurrection of the Messiah after His death so He can return to Earth.



Mike Stallard

is the director of International Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

THE BEREAN BOX

Q

WHO IS AN OVERCOMER?

People in sports know the name Nike. It's a popular brand of footwear and gear identified by its logo: the swoosh, similar to a check mark. What many don't know is that *nike* comes from the Greek word *nikao*, meaning “overcomer.” Ancient Greeks used the word regarding athletic or military victories. The apostle John used *overcome* more than any other New Testament writer, referring to the Christian's victorious life in Christ:

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 Jn. 5:4–5; cf. 16:33; Rev. 2–3).

Each of us who is born again through faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin is an overcomer, and we all have victory over the world because Jesus won it for us by paying the redemption price for our salvation. We triumph in three ways:

- (1) We are linked to Christ's victory.
- (2) We have a new relationship with God the Father.
- (3) We have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who gives us power to be victorious over this evil world system.

We cannot overcome this evil world through self-effort (cf. Jn.

16:33). Overcomers are not superspiritual Christians who have attained a higher level of holiness, sanctification, or faithfulness to God than others. They simply are people who have been born again, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:13).

God promises great rewards to overcomers (Rev. 2–3). They will (1) eat of the tree of life (2:7); (2) not be hurt by the second death (v. 11); (3) eat of the hidden manna (v. 17); (4) receive a white stone and new name (v. 17); (5) have authority over the nations (v. 26); (6) remain in the Book of Life (3:5); (7) have their names confessed before God the Father and angels (v. 5); (8) be made pillars in the Temple of God (v. 12); (9) have Christ write on them the name of God, the New Jerusalem, and His own new name (v. 12); and (10) be privileged to sit with Christ on His throne (v. 21).

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things,” said Jesus, “and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (21:7). Our finite minds cannot comprehend the depth of what being an overcomer involves. We do know, however, that all true believers are overcomers (1 Jn. 5:4–5) who will enjoy the new heaven and new earth and all the glories of the new Jerusalem.

by David M. Levy



THE FIRE RE DRAC



THE TRY ED GON

**HE'S A DECEIVER, DESPOT,
DESTROYER, AND DEFAMER.
HE'S THE DEVIL, AND HE
WANTS YOUR SOUL.**

BY BRUCE SCOTT



All he wanted was a sugar apple. He didn't know it would cost him his life.

Muhamad Anwar, a 31-year-old fisherman, probably knew he was trespassing when he climbed the sugar apple tree in Indonesia's Komodo National Park in 2009. But the fruit was tempting. Perhaps he would have changed his mind had he known what lurked below—two Komodo dragons.

Komodo dragons are the largest lizards in the world. These carnivorous predators grow up to 10 feet in length; weigh up to 200 pounds; and use their powerful tails, sharp claws, jagged teeth, and deadly venom to destroy their prey. Their venom is so potent it “rapidly decreases blood pressure, expedites blood loss, and sends a victim into shock, rendering it too weak to fight.”¹ Although Komodo dragon attacks on humans are rare, they happen—and sometimes with tragic results.

While picking the forbidden fruit, Muhamad lost his footing and tumbled to the ground. The Komodo dragons immediately pounced on him. By the time local residents came to his rescue, Muhamad was so badly mauled he died from his injuries.

Muhamad's story somewhat mirrors that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There, a different reptile (a serpent) at a different tree also brought death. But behind that reptile lurked the true culprit—the ultimate enemy of God known as the Devil or Satan.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve weren't the serpent's only victims. Sin and death passed to all their descendants, except for one: the divine, sinless Son of Man, Jesus. Of Him it was prophesied that He would come into the world through the nation of Israel and, by His death and resurrection, crush the serpent's head, forever rescuing the souls of men.

God said in the first book of the Bible, “I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head [strike a deadly blow], and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15).

This cosmic conflict, which has driven world history, also appears in the last book of the

Bible, Revelation. In chapter 12, through a divine vision given to the apostle John, we see an overview of history, including the enmity predicted in Genesis 3:15. The vision involves three main characters who represent actual players on history's stage. The woman represents Israel, the male Child represents Jesus, and “a great, fiery red dragon” represents “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan” (vv. 2–9).

In both ancient mythology and the Bible, dragons are viewed as giant monsters to be dreaded and opposed. From God's perspective, a dragon best depicts His archenemy, Satan.

THE DRAGON'S DESCRIPTION

Lucifer was the highest-ranking angel God created. There was no angel more important. The prophet Ezekiel described him as the anointed cherub, perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him (Ezek. 28:14–15). That iniquity was pride: “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor” (v. 17).

The prophet Isaiah recorded his arrogance: “For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” (Isa. 14:13–14).

Defector. Five times Lucifer said in his heart, “I will.” Until that moment, there had been only one will, one desire, and one purpose in the universe: God's. When Lucifer rebelled against God, he earned the name *Satan*, which means “adversary” or “opponent.” Satan is God's primary adversary in the universe and opposes everything God wills, desires, and purposes. The Dragon has always wanted to be like God—to possess authority and receive worship (Rev. 4:8; 13:4)—and he'll do whatever it takes to achieve his goal.

The apostle John wrote, “Another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (12:3–4).

God showed John that Satan was ejected from heaven and thrown down to Earth. Jesus commented on that fall when He said, “I saw

Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Lk. 10:18). But the Dragon apparently convinced one-third of the angels, known elsewhere in Scripture as “stars” or “demons,” to join his rebellion.

Deceiver. The Dragon “deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9) and has done so from the beginning. Using the serpent, Satan “deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Cor. 11:3).

His tactics haven’t changed. He used them on Jesus, and he uses them on us today. He casts doubt on or denies everything God says in His Word (cf. Gen. 3:1, 4), while using the elements of his world system (“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”; 1 Jn. 2:16) to tempt people to sin against God. He blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4).

The Dragon even disguises himself as an angel of light (11:14). Jesus said he “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44).

During the future seven-year Tribulation, the entire world will be deceived into following Satan’s pseudo Messiah, the Antichrist.

Believers in Jesus should know his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11) and stand firm against them (Eph. 6:11).

Despot. The Dragon has “seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads” (Rev. 12:3). These heads, with their accompanying royal power (diadems), represent seven consecutive, historical world empires that have specifically impacted the nation of Israel.² The 10 horns represent the final world empire, which will be led by 10 kings during the Tribulation until the Antichrist usurps all power and rules the world (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12).

The Dragon will give the Antichrist “his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2). This despot will be the evilest, fiercest, most powerful autocrat the world has ever known. He will be the Dragon’s mightiest attempt to replace God with himself and usurp God’s throne so that he might not only rule on Earth, but also in heaven.

Devourer. “And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born” (12:4). Throughout history, Satan has opposed Christ. First he

tried to prevent the Christ Child’s birth. Today he tries to prevent Christ’s Second Coming. The Devil prowls about like a roaring lion, constantly seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Defamer. Satan is “the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). The word *devil* means “slanderer.” He attacks the reputations of his enemies. For example, he used the Pharisees to accuse Jesus of performing miracles in the power of the ruler of the demons (Mt. 12:24), meaning himself!

Curiously, even though Satan’s domain is Earth, he still has limited access to heaven and God’s presence (Job 1:6; 2:1). He accuses people who have believed and received God’s salvation. Like a prosecuting attorney, he goes before God the Judge, accusing believers of their sins, trying to demonstrate their unworthiness, and demanding they receive the penalty of eternal death.

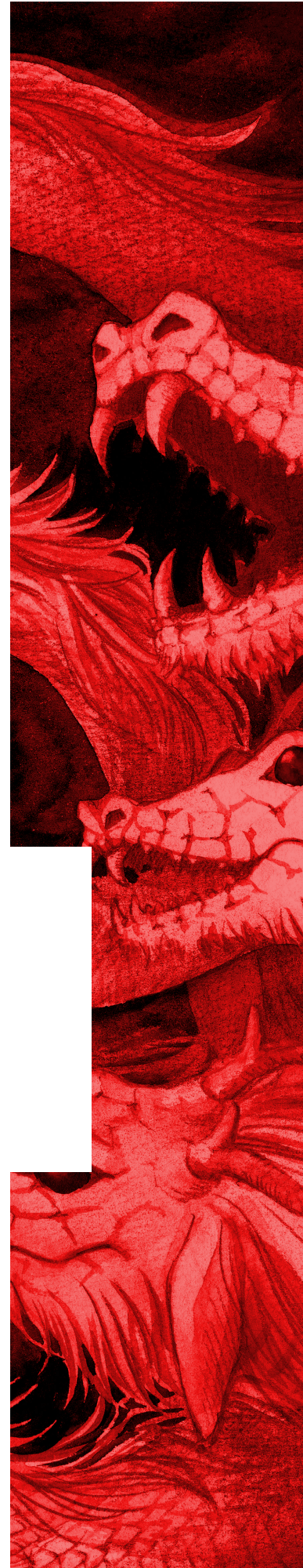
But there is good news. As believers, we have an Advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1–2). Whenever the Dragon brings an accusation against us, Jesus, our defense attorney, essentially says, “The penalty has already been paid. I paid it Myself with My own blood. And, Father, You

FROM GOD’S PERSPECTIVE, A DRAGON BEST DEPICTS HIS ARCHENEMY, SATAN.

are satisfied with my payment. I rest my case.” Then God, the righteous Judge, declares, “Case dismissed!”

The Dragon can accuse and defame all he wants. But born-again believers have assurance their sins have been forgiven. God’s acceptance of us is not based on our own merits but, rather, on Messiah Jesus and what He did for us.

Destroyer. “The serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman [Israel], that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood” (Rev. 12:15). During the Tribulation, the Dragon will attempt unsuccessfully to destroy all of Israel (v. 16). Such activity conforms to his



character. Jesus called him “a murderer from the beginning” (Jn. 8:44). He “does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (10:10).

God is characterized by peace (Rom. 16:20); the Dragon, by war. Through his human proxies, Satan has waged war for millennia. In fact, journalist Chris Hedges wrote,

Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history. . . . Estimates for the total number killed in wars throughout all of human history range from 150 million to 1 billion.³

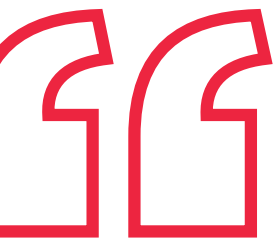
As terrible as these numbers are, they won’t compare to the number of deaths during the Tribulation (Rev. 6:4, 8; cf. Mt. 24:6, 7).

a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Jesus will utterly defeat the Dragon’s wicked proxies with just a word from His mouth (Rev. 19:15).

After Jesus’ 1,000-year reign, Satan will foment his final rebellion (20:7–9). It, too, will fail. He will be thrown into the Lake of Fire prepared for him and his angels, and they “will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (v. 10).

THE DRAGON SLAYER

In July 2021, a Filipino man caught one of the most venomous snakes in the world—a Northern Philippine cobra. It had wandered into his village, so the man decided to have some fun with it. Holding it up to a gathering crowd, the man claimed to have tamed the serpent. He then brought



THE DRAGON HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO BE LIKE GOD—TO POSSESS AUTHORITY AND RECEIVE WORSHIP—AND HE’LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO ACHIEVE HIS GOAL.

War is attributed to the Dragon and his proxies 10 times in Revelation 12–20. He wars against Israel, believers in Jesus, and the returning Messiah. He and his angels even wage war in heaven against the archangel Michael and his angels (12:7).

After the Tribulation, Satan will be imprisoned in the abyss (20:1–3); and the true Sovereign of the world, Jesus, will sit on His glorious throne and rule for 1,000 years (Mt. 25:31). At the end of that time, Satan will be released—and will wage war again (Rev. 20:7–8).

His hands are drenched with blood. Perhaps that is why he is portrayed as a great “red” dragon (12:3). But though he destroys people’s bodies, his main intent is to seize their souls (2 Cor. 4:3–4).

THE DRAGON’S DESTINY

Despite the Dragon’s best attempts to thwart God, he will be defeated. He failed to devour the promised Messiah (Rev. 12:5). He will lose his war against Michael and the angels, and he will fail to destroy the Jewish people (vv. 15–16).

When Jesus returns after the Tribulation, He will defeat and judge the Antichrist, False Prophet, and all the armies of the world that have warred against Him and against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2–3; Rev. 19:19). And it won’t be much of a fight. As the Father says in Psalm 2:9, “You shall break them with

the cobra’s head close to his lips, pretending to kiss it. The snake would have none of it and bit the man on the tongue. Tragically, the man collapsed and died in agonizing pain.⁴

You cannot tame a venomous serpent. It will destroy you, given the chance. The same goes for the serpent of old, the fiery red Dragon known as Satan.

Fortunately for us, we have the great dragon slayer on our side. His name is Jesus. He already has destroyed the Dragon’s power over all who place their faith in Him. And someday, He will destroy the Dragon altogether. ★

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- 2 These nations are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and a future manifestation of Rome during the Tribulation.
- 3 Chris Hedges, *What Every Person Should Know About War* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 1.
- 4 “Snake Man Who Claimed He Was Immune to Venom Dies When Cobra Bites Him,” *Yahoo! News*, July 20, 2021 <tinyurl.com/Philippines-Snake>.



Bruce Scott

is the director of Program Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

The Dragon's Lair

by Bruce Scott

There is a reason why Scripture calls Satan “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

The world and its godless, evil system are under his control. They belong to his spiritual kingdom of darkness (6:12), and his influence is universal.

Although invisible, Satan’s spiritual authority powers many governments around the globe (cf. Dan. 10:20). That is why Satan could offer to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world when he tempted the Lord to sin, trying to persuade Him to worship him:

Then the devil, taking Him [Jesus] up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours” (Lk. 4:5–7).

Who handed the world to Satan? Adam and Eve.

Originally, God gave control to Adam. Under God’s authority, Adam was supposed to subdue the earth and rule over it (Gen. 1:28). But when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, Earth’s administration automatically was transferred to Satan. Through their sin, they handed him the keys to the kingdom; and from that point on, this world and its evil system have belonged to the Devil.

This explains why the world is filled with evil, pain, suffering, injustice, war, hatred, confusion, chaos, immorality, and contempt for God and His Christ.

In Satan’s kingdom, people are at the Devil’s mercy. As unbelievers, they are vulner-

able to his attacks and subject to his influence and power. This world is, in effect, the Dragon’s lair; and he is constantly “going to and fro on the earth, and . . . walking back and forth on it” (Job 2:2).

The good news is that when we receive Jesus as our Savior, God not only forgives our sins, but also delivers us “from the power of darkness and convey[s] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). He saves us.

Although we remain in the Dragon’s lair physically until we die and enter God’s presence, we have the Holy Spirit within us; and He enables us to see the truth and overcome the influences of the world and the Devil. ★

**In Satan’s kingdom, people
are at the Devil’s mercy.**



UNSEALING THE TITLE DEED

A LOOK AT THE SEVEN-SEALED
SCROLL IN REVELATION THAT
ONLY JESUS CAN OPEN

BY TOM SIMCOX

On a recent trip to Florida, I had the privilege of conducting a brief Bible study with the man next to me on the plane. After chatting for a while, he asked, “Are you heading home to Florida, or are you on a business trip?”

“Actually,” I replied, “I’m a minister of the gospel, and I’m heading to a conference at the Word of Life Bible Institute in Hudson.” At that moment, our entire conversation changed. He asked me question after question about COVID-19 and global problems and wanted to know, “How will it all end?”

So I pulled back the curtain to the future and told him about Bible prophecy.

THE SEVEN-SEALED SCROLL

Many events are yet to come. God gave us prophecy in Scripture so we could understand how His plan for history will unfold. The book of Revelation is filled with future events. And, as I told the gentleman on the plane, a key element is the seven-sealed scroll:

I [the apostle John] looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals (4:1–2; 5:1).

The number of seals indicates the document’s extreme importance. In the days of the Roman Empire, when Revelation was written, a sealed document could

be opened only by the proper authority, someone who possessed proper credentials.

Realizing “no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it,” John “wept much, because no one was found worthy” (5:3–4).

This was no ordinary scroll. First, it was unique in that it bore writing on both sides, “inside and on the back” (v. 1). Second, it was heavily sealed. So what was this document? Bible scholar Dr. Charles Ryrie said the scroll “may be called

It seems this scroll contained the entirety of human history from creation to the fall of man to humanity’s final redemption through Messiah Jesus.

the ‘Book of Redemption,’ as it contains the story of man’s fall through sin and rise through Christ (Heb. 2:5–9).”¹

Bible commentator David M. Levy had an even clearer description: “This scroll contains Christ’s title deed to the earth by right of creation and redemption.”²

It seems this scroll contained the entirety of human history from creation to the fall of man to humanity’s final redemption through Messiah Jesus. When Adam sinned, the scepter of authority over Earth fell from Adam and was snatched up by Satan. But God promised to send a Redeemer who would pay the purchase price to buy back what was lost. That Redeemer was Jesus, who bought our redemption with His blood.

Adam’s sin brought us physical and spiritual death. But Jesus’ death and resurrection brought us life: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12, 15, 17).

John beheld a lamb standing “as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He [the Lamb] came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” (Rev. 5:6–7).

The title deed passed to the only One found worthy, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). The fact that Jesus was standing seems to indicate His readiness to bring prophecy and human history to its conclusion.

The seven horns remind us that as God, Jesus has perfect power. He is the omnipotent Lamb. The seven eyes denote His omniscience. As God, He knows everything, and nothing will escape Him. He will take the scroll, the title deed of world history, and bring it to its final conclusion.



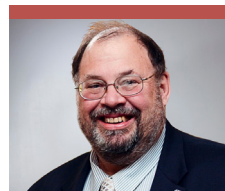
That is why John heard “every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea” (Rev. 5:13) say, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (v. 12).

Jesus has the authority to end history as we know it and establish His literal 1,000-year Kingdom on Earth. Someday, because of what He has done for us, everyone will behold the Lamb. And “at the name of Jesus,” every knee will bow and every tongue confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11).

Although the gentleman on the plane didn’t pray to receive Jesus as His Savior, at least he landed in Florida knowing God’s Word better than when he boarded. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, KJV (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1978), 1,793 n Heb. 5:1.
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Tom Simcox

is the Church Ministries training coordinator and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

ON THE DOCKET



RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Th. 4:16–17; cf. Jn. 14:2–3; 2 Th. 2:1–3; Rev. 4:1–2).

This event, reserved for the church only, is when all believers throughout the entire Church Age receive their resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:51–58). The Rapture concludes the church's presence on Earth, and God again focuses on Israel.



DECEPTIVE COVENANT

Then he [Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate (Dan. 9:27).

The “week” refers to seven years. This covenant marks the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation, which the prophet Jeremiah called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7).



SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake (Mt. 24:7–9).

First three and one-half years: God’s seven seal judgments afflict Earth (Rev. 6:1–17; 8:1–6), 144,000 Jewish male believers are sealed (7:1–8), martyrs stand before God’s throne in heaven (vv. 9–17), God unleashes seven trumpet judgments (8:7–9:21; 11:15), and God’s two witnesses appear (11:3–14).

Second three and one-half years: The Antichrist breaks the covenant, revealing his true, satanic nature and determination to exterminate the Jewish people. Satan is denied access to heaven, there is war in heaven (12:7–12), the Dragon (Satan) attacks the Jewish people (vv. 13–17), and the Antichrist and False Prophet institute the mark of the Beast and dominate the world (13:1–18). God unleashes seven bowl judgments (chap. 16) and judges religious and commercial Babylon (chaps. 17–18). Jesus Christ returns to Earth (19:11–16), and the Antichrist and False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire (vv. 17–21).



MILLENNIAL (1,000-YEAR) KINGDOM

The mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2:2, 4; cf. 11:6–10; Rev. 20:4–6).

Other characteristics: Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1–3), Tribulation and Old Testament saints are resurrected to enter the Kingdom (vv. 4–6; cf. Dan. 12:1–2), believers reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26), and Earth returns to an Edenic-like state (Isa. 11:1–16; 19:23–25). “When the thousand years have expired,” Satan is set free (Rev. 20:7). Satan leads a rebellion against King Jesus, fire from heaven destroys the rebels (vv. 8–9), and Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire forever (v. 10).



GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Then I [the apostle John] saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it. . . . And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. . . . And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books (Rev. 20:11–12).

Other characteristics: The sea, death, and Hades give up their dead, who then are judged and found guilty based on their works (v. 13). Death and Hades are cast into the Lake of Fire, along with “anyone not found written in the Book of Life” (v. 15).



ETERNITY

Now I [John] saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . [and] the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:1–3).

Gone are: tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain (v. 4); “the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars”—all of whom will “have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (v. 8).

Making a Will That Works



If your will is up to date, you enjoy a certain peace of mind. The fact that a plan is in place to care for your loved ones and favorite charities is a reason to sleep well. It's comforting to know you have thoughtfully arranged your affairs before you go home to be with the Lord.

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A REMINDER TO REMEMBER

* Modern-day mezuzah

➔ It has been said, “We are what we remember,” and “What we remember affects who we are and what we experience in life.”¹ This is especially true of our spiritual lives because what we remember about God forms the foundation for our faith.

In the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy), God repeatedly commands His people to “remember” in order to obey Him (Ex. 13:3; 20:8; Dt. 5:15; 8:2, 18; 9:7; 16:12; 32:7). Deuteronomy 6:4–5 gave Israel a brief statement of faith, one Jesus called “the first [foremost] of all the commandments” (Mk. 12:29) and one known to every Jewish person as the *Shema*.

Deuteronomy 6:7–9 tells the Israelites to remember by making the Scriptures the focus of their lives, instructing them, “You shall write them on the doorposts [Hebrew, *mezuzot*; plural of *mezuzah*] of your house and on your gates” (v. 9).

Although this *mezuzah* commandment may have been a metaphor for spiritual application (cf. Prov. 6:21), it became a literal observance. The word *mezuzah* first appears in Scripture regarding the doorpost where the blood of the Passover lamb was applied (Ex. 12:7, 22, 23). This physical demonstration of obedience, visible at the entrance to the home, set the people inside apart as belonging to the Lord. Perhaps this act set the precedent for the family faith commanded in Deuteronomy 6:8–9.

A stone model of a temple from excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa revealed the term *mezuzot* referred only to recessed door frames of the first Temple;² but the bronze pillars at the entrance may have had inscriptions, possibly following a literal interpretation of the Deuteronomy command.³

The earliest archaeological evidence for fulfillment of the *mezuzah* commandment dates from the second Temple period. In Cave 8 at Qumran, a *mezuzah* was discovered, along with dozens of small leather strips.⁴ The parchment inside the *mezuzah* contained the commandments of Deuteronomy 10:12–11:21. The Jewish Targum, an Aramaic paraphrase of the Bible (ca. first century BC), supports the literal interpretation.

Writing just after the end of the second Temple period, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus noted the *mezuzah*’s importance:

*Let every one commemorate before God the benefits which He bestowed upon them at their deliverance out of the land of Egypt. . . . They are also to inscribe the principle blessings they have received from God upon their doors . . . that God’s readiness to bless them may appear everywhere conspicuous about them.*⁵

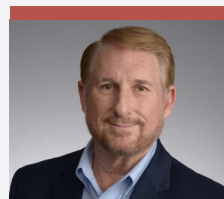
Moses Maimonides, famed codifier of the Mishnah, believed the *mezuzah* had nothing to do with protection but, rather, was meant to help people remember God’s Word:

*Whoever . . . has a mezuzah on his entrance, can be assured that he will not sin, because he has many who will remind him. These are the angels, who will prevent him from sinning, as [Psalm 34:7] states: “The angel of God camps around those who fear Him and protects them.”*⁶

Modern Judaism uses the *mezuzah* somewhat mystically to protect the home. Although the Bible never requires using a box containing Scripture, it does require that our lives be filled with God’s Word. Using a *mezuzah* or hanging Scripture art in a home may remind us to remember all God has promised and all we have promised God.

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- 2 Madeleine Mumcuoglu and Yosef Garfinkel, “The Puzzling Doorways of Solomon’s Temple,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 41:4 (July/August 2015), 36.
- 3 Franz Landsberger, “The Origin of the Decorated Mezuzah,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 31 (1960), 149.
- 4 M. Baillet, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, *Les ‘petites grottes’ de Qumrân, Discoveries in the Judean Desert III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 158–61.
- 5 Josephus, *Antiquities* 4:8.13.
- 6 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah Hilchot Tefillin u-Mezuzah* 6:13.



Randall Price

is a university professor, author, and world-renowned archaeologist. He is also the founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries (worldofthebible.com).

PAUL'S PERSONAL WORD

2 TIMOTHY 4:9–15

If we had written the apostle Paul's last words, we might have chosen to conclude his final epistle with a testimony to his victorious, faithful ministry. But the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write something different in 2 Timothy 4:9–15. The early church needed to know about Paul's fellow workers, both the faithful and the unfaithful; and it needed an inside glimpse into how weak and needy the apostle felt in his final days.

Paul craved the companionship of close friends, especially Timothy, and the personal need for comfort as he sat in a cold Roman prison, awaiting his execution. But above all, Paul wanted copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, which would encourage him and edify his soul.

PAUL'S REQUEST

Paul urged Timothy to come to Rome from Ephesus: "Be diligent to come to me quickly" (v. 9). The word *diligent* means "make every effort" and "do your best." It was like saying, "hasten, or hurry, to come to me."

Most commentators say Paul knew his time on Earth was short, and he wanted Timothy's companionship. Although he expressed loneliness and the need for assistance, Paul also wanted to give Timothy final instructions and encouragement. Timothy's trip would take several months; and with winter approaching, he needed to leave immediately (v. 21).

PAUL'S REPORT

Paul updated Timothy concerning others who helped or harmed his ministry: "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—

Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia" (v. 10).

Demas was a defector. Scripture tells us nothing about his background, salvation, or even when he met Paul and joined him in ministry. Paul mentioned him in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, indicating he was a respected worker at one time. But Demas had "forsaken," or abandoned, Paul when Paul needed him.

Paul did not state the specific crisis that caused Demas's defection, and we are not to assume his abandonment implies Demas denied belief in Christ. Paul simply said Demas deserted because he "loved this present world [age]" (2 Tim. 4:10). The apostle John commanded Christians, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15).

John used the phrase *the world* six times in verses 15–17, referring to the invisible, evil, spiritual system of this world governed by the Devil. The phrase *things in the world* can mean material objects, but here it refers to worldly values, attitudes, and evil thoughts and practices incompatible with God. Love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposed (Mt. 6:24).

Paul said Demas "departed for Thessalonica" (2 Tim. 4:10). Many believe Demas was from Thessalonica because he was listed with Aristarchus, who was from there (Phile. 24).

Paul also mentioned two other workers who departed: "Crescens for Galatia [a Roman province in Asia Minor], [and] Titus for Dalmatia" on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea (2 Tim. 4:10). Paul did not condemn these workers, as he did Demas, because they were faithful and dependable. It seems they left with Paul's blessing for these places where Paul had ministered.

Paul added, "Only Luke is with me" (v. 11). Earlier in his ministry, Paul called Luke the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14). Paul was extremely blessed to have Luke as his personal physician and companion on some of his missionary journeys. Luke's faithfulness was a great testimony to other Christians who lacked his boldness, and Luke stood out as one of Paul's closest friends.

On his way to Rome, Paul told Timothy, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). This was probably a surprise to Timothy. John Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first ministry journey but left them abruptly and returned home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).

Scripture gives no reason why Mark abandoned the missionary team. Barnabas wanted to include John Mark on their second missionary journey, but Paul refused. The two argued, but Paul was resolute; and the men agreed to separate. Paul chose Silas to accompany him on the second missionary journey, and Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus (15:36–40).

MOST COMMENTATORS SAY PAUL KNEW HIS TIME ON EARTH WAS SHORT, AND HE WANTED TIMOTHY'S COMPANIONSHIP.

Later Paul changed his mind about Mark and accepted him for the ministry (cf. Col. 4:10). Mark turned out to be a key helper, which teaches us relationships can be restored over time when all parties seek Christ's wisdom.

Working with Barnabas, Mark probably matured in his service for the Lord; and Paul had been made aware of the fact. Paul no longer viewed Mark as useless but, rather, as "useful" for ministry. No doubt Timothy would have been encouraged to hear about this change. Mark would be an asset to Timothy as they traveled together to Rome, as well as an encouragement to others who first had failed but later succeeded.

Paul told Timothy, "And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus" (2 Tim. 4:12). He was either sent to Ephesus already or would be sent soon to deliver Paul's last epistle to Timothy. And he would probably remain in Ephesus to minister in Timothy's place when Timothy traveled to Rome to be with Paul. Tychicus was not famous but was reliable and faithful in whatever he did. He was a great help to Paul and never deserted him. Paul asked Timothy to bring three things to Rome: "Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments" (v. 13).

The cloak was a large, heavy, sleeveless, round outer garment made from goat's hair, with an opening in the middle to slip over one's head like a poncho. It would protect Paul during the winter months.

The books were papyrus rolls, and the parchments were calf skins or vellum on which Paul could write. Commentators have speculated the scrolls were Old Testament writings, documents proving Paul taught a legal religion, or epistles he had written. Bible scholar Charles Ryrie said the scrolls were "probably Paul's personal copies of portions of the OT [Old Testament]."¹

Even as an old man with poor eyesight who was awaiting death in a dimly lit dungeon, the great apostle felt he needed to study. Carpus is mentioned only here, and no other information is given concerning him. All we know is that he lived in Troas and was a trusted and dependable friend of Paul.

PAUL'S REMINDER

Paul warned Timothy about an ungodly man who caused

him and the gospel much harm: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words" (vv. 14–15).

Alexander was a common name, and the word *coppersmith* in Greek refers to any metalworker. Scholars disagree on whether this is the Alexander mentioned in Acts 19:33 or 1 Timothy 1:20. Paul may have called him "the coppersmith" to separate him from all the other Alexanders in Scripture. Much more evidence is needed to identify him, but Timothy knew exactly who he was. Alexander was an evil man who may have been involved in Paul's arrest and lied about him at one of the apostle's trials.

Paul added, "May the Lord repay him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14). The word *repay* literally means "pay back." It is not to be interpreted as Paul's wish for vengeance. To the contrary, Paul knew God would repay Alexander for his maliciousness. This was a statement of fact, for God in His justice would not allow Alexander's evil to go unjudged.

Then Paul gave Timothy a strong command: "You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words" (v. 15). The word *beware* means to guard against Alexander's onslaughts to destroy Christianity and all who believe in Christ.

Paul's warning was critical in his day but is even more so today. We live in perilous times, when Satan possesses even more means to thwart Christianity and the preaching of the gospel. Having been warned, let us also guard against Satan's attacks, as Paul commanded.

ENDNOTE

- 1 Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, ESV (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 1,481 n 2 Tim. 4:13.



by David M. Levy,
media resource specialist and a Bible teacher
for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry

JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE

PART 4: THE DISCIPLINE OF WORSHIP

BY DAN PRICE

It happens almost every Sunday. When a church service begins, most of us aren't quite ready to worship. The music starts, Scripture is read, but our minds are a thousand miles away. Sometimes stress or pain or troubles make it difficult for us to focus. Sometimes, it's other things.

Whatever the reasons, I believe we need to think of worship as a spiritual discipline in which we can grow and have a closer walk with the Lord. Here are several biblical characteristics of worship that will help us mature spiritually.

CORPORATE WORSHIP

In Scripture we frequently see groups of people gathered for corporate, or group, worship. Corporate worship is a distinctly different experience than individual worship because it can only be done with others. However, it is not merely a bunch of individuals worshipping as it suits them. It's a family of interconnected people focused on creating a unique expression of their community's praise and love for God.

When we enter into corporate worship, we join a choir, so to speak; and God is the audience. Each one of us is a performer, adding to the praise the group offers to God through adoration, submission to His Word, singing, and giving. Corporate worship is about God hearing from us more than us hearing from God. If we leave worship without "getting anything out of it," then, likely, neither did God. We all must participate actively to create our church's expression of praise each Sunday.

Celebration. When we observe people worshipping God in Scripture, we see several characteristics that can help

us discipline ourselves for corporate worship. The Israelites sang and celebrated when God rescued them by drowning the Egyptian army in the Red Sea (Ex. 15). King David danced with abandon when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6). Singers in Solomon's Temple played a variety of instruments to inspire praise (1 Chr. 25). Even the psalms of ascent (120—134), which were designed for groups to sing as they went up to Jerusalem for feast celebrations, are largely joyful, exuberant, hope-filled songs.

When not focused on communal lament or confession of sin, almost all of the pictures of group worship in both the Old and New Testaments impart a tone of celebration. Celebration over what God has done should be the true disposition of our hearts when we worship.

Sacrifice. The apostle Paul taught that, in order to worship together as a body, we often need to sacrifice our personal ideas of what worship should include. He addressed this fact in his teaching on what types of songs we sing (Col. 3:16) and how quickly we should relinquish our preferences in worship (1 Cor. 8—9), even our sense of waiting for others: "Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another" (1 Cor. 11:33).

In other words, we must train ourselves to think of Sunday worship as an opportunity to meet other Christians' needs sacrificially as we give God praise.

Persistence. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us the Christian life is a "together" life. Christians have a new hope and a new family

that encourages us in our new identity. That's why it's vital to worship in groups, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" but persistently holding tight to our distinct community. Worshiping together reinforces who we really are.

All these characteristics beg for a disciplined approach to corporate worship. We must train ourselves to see worship as a group celebration of what God has done for His people. When we don't feel celebratory, we can still sing, pray, and engage the Word with our hearts focused on the goodness of the gospel. We can smile as we lift our eyes toward God, our help.

As a former worship pastor, I have pleaded with parishioners to see it as an act of worship when they sing a song for its truth and not its style. It's important to realize we can still worship well to a song we don't know. We can worship well to a song we know benefits a brother more than ourselves. And

People who spend disciplined, personal time in the Word, preparing their hearts by meeting with God repeatedly, will cultivate good soil where God's seeds will mature. Such people have ears to hear. They're ready to obey the Word when it's taught to them.

Consequently, corporate worship becomes more profound. Individual worship builds corporate worship.

Lamentation. Another principle of individual worship involves lamenting. The Bible contains more than 40 psalms of lament. There's even a book called Lamentations.

There will be times when we pour out our heartaches to God. Doing so is a regular, expected aspect of our individual relationships with Him. Don't be afraid to lay your disappointments, pain, and even accusations before the Lord (cf. Lam. 2). He wants to hear them—and approaching Him with them can be an act of worship.

Corporate worship is about God hearing from us more than us hearing from God.

we can even worship well to a poorly written song as long as the song speaks truth. Disciplined corporate worship starts with remembering we gather for God's glory, not our comfort!

INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

I like to compare corporate worship to Legos, those individual building bricks that contribute to a larger structure. Without the individual bricks, there is no Lego dragon or Lego skyscraper. Corporate worship is dramatically affected by our individual worship outside of church services.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, primarily individuals or individual families worshiped God. Large gatherings only occurred a few times a year at the Temple; and even after synagogues were established, worship still centered in Jewish homes on Shabbat. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, worship was a daily, individual pursuit, as people prostrated themselves before God in prayer, meditated on Scripture, and communed with the Almighty.

If we worship only on Sunday morning in church, we're missing a vital component of worship; and our corporate gathering will likely feel flat and difficult.

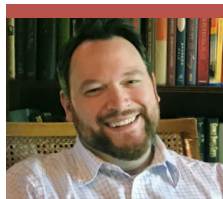
The parable of the sower is helpful here (Mk. 4:1–9). Jesus equated the fruitfulness of studying God's Word with different types of hearers and different types of soil. Good, prepared soil will produce great fruit. But unprepared soil will yield little.

Praise. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul reminds us that all of life can be used to praise and glorify God: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

From a moment of praise over a beautiful sunrise to prayers for strength, everything can be a catalyst to turn our hearts toward our Creator and Redeemer. Sometimes individual worship is an intentional time of regular study or prayer, and sometimes it's simply having a heart that quickly admits God into every moment of our days. Learning to discipline ourselves to have both spontaneous and intentional times of individual worship is what it means to walk with the Lord.

WORSHIP IS ON PURPOSE

Worshiping God, both individually and corporately, requires discipline. But the incomparable, blessed result of a close walk with the Lord is worth the effort. May our imaginations and thoughts be dominated daily by the greatness and goodness of our magnificent God.



Dan Price

is assistant director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

DEFYING U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL

BY YORAM ETTINGER

(JNS)—U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is pressuring Israel to stop sharing its concerns about the adverse impact U.S. policy on Iran will have on the national security of the United States and Israel and to refrain from acting unilaterally against the Islamic Republic.

He also is pressuring Israel to (1) freeze Jewish construction—while encouraging Arab construction—in Judea and Samaria and eastern Jerusalem; (2) redivide Jerusalem; and (3) withdraw to the pre-1967 ceasefire lines, which the late Abba Eban, a former Israeli foreign minister, called “The Auschwitz Lines.”

Israel’s prime minister should follow in the footsteps of Israel’s founding fathers—from David Ben-Gurion through Yitzhak Shamir—who defied U.S. pressure to make reckless concessions.

In 1948 and 1949, the United States, Britain, and the United Nations threatened Israel with severe economic and diplomatic sanctions if it failed to both absorb anti-Israel Arab refugees and end the “occupation” of areas in the Galilee, coastal plain, Negev, and western Jerusalem. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion fended off overwhelming pressure, even though Israel had a population of only 650,000 Jews and hardly any military or economic infrastructure.

According to James McDonald, the first U.S. ambassador to Israel, Ben-Gurion said, “The United States is a powerful country; Israel is a small and weak one. We can be crushed, but we will not commit suicide.” McDonald had this to say in his book *My Mission in Israel*:

Ben-Gurion . . . warned President Truman and the Department of State . . . that they would be gravely mistaken if they assumed that the threat or even the use of United Nations sanctions would force Israel to yield on issues considered vital to its independence and security. . . . If tiny Israel were convinced that its independence or national security were at stake, it would resist a UN decision even if that resistance threatened to bring down on it overwhelming economic sanctions. . . . The more I studied and observed the manner in which he [Ben-Gurion] met the burdens placed upon him, the more convinced I became that he was one of the few great statesmen of our day.

Israel’s prime minister today should be aware that U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation was enhanced dramatically during that period. This happened due to the principle-driven conduct of Israel’s leadership, Israel’s unique technological and mili-

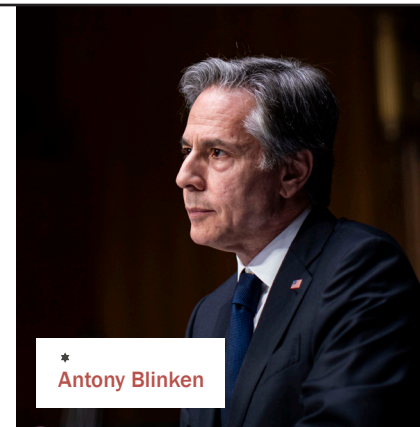
tary capabilities, and Israel’s growing contribution to America’s economy and national security.

Israel’s premiers during this period demonstrated that historic and national security concerns supersede diplomatic convenience. They understood the difference between popularity and strategic respect; the latter required defiance of both pressure and the odds.

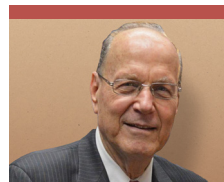
Methodical U.S. pressure from 1948 to 2017 reflected the worldview of the State Department, which has been systematically wrong on the Middle East. That worldview was characterized by brutal opposition to the Jewish state; the embrace of Ayatollah Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority; and the exertion of pressure on Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, etc.

- In 1948, Ben-Gurion declared Israel’s independence in defiance of a brutal campaign by the U.S. State Department, Pentagon, CIA, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. President Truman was hesitant until the last minute.
- In 1949, Ben-Gurion rebuffed U.S. and global pressure to withdraw to the suicidal 1947 “Partition Plan.”
- Between 1967 and 1974, prime ministers Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir repulsed U.S. pressure to stop building Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, the Golan Heights, and eastern Jerusalem.
- In 1981, Prime Minister Menachem Begin ordered the bombing of Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in defiance of the most brutal U.S. pressure (followed by severe punishment).
- In 1981, Begin applied Israeli law to the Golan Heights despite severe threats by the U.S. administration.
- In 1982, Begin rejected the “Reagan Plan,” which stipulated Israel’s withdrawal to the pre-1967 ceasefire lines.
- From 1983 to 1992, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir expanded construction in Judea and Samaria, despite vehement U.S. opposition.

These well-documented facts illustrate that defying U.S. pressure enhances Israel’s posture of deterrence, minimizes regional instability, reduces the prospects of war, and bolsters the United States’ strategic respect toward Israel.



*
Antony Blinken



Yoram Ettinger

is a former ambassador and head of Second Thought: A U.S.-Israel Initiative. This article was first published by *The Ettinger Report*.



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“It is our duty to go to these people, so that is what I will continue to do.

by Zvi Kalisher

There are many ultra-Orthodox organizations here in Israel. Each one is filled with people who want to show how faithfully they work against those who do not believe as they do. They especially try to make trouble for those of us who believe in God according to the Bible and have faith in Jesus.

We put our trust in the Lord, and we go to stiff-necked people to teach them about salvation. This is our obligation before the Lord, and we do this with great joy. But they say we are dangerous!

I have lived among these people for many years, and I know their mentality. I go to their synagogues to speak with them. Some of them know me and even like to speak with me. I never go to them aggressively, but slowly and surely. And I never bring books with me—only one small Book: the Holy Bible.

Before I read from it, I give the Bible to them so they can see with their own eyes that it is the Holy Scriptures. Recently I went to a synagogue where the rabbi spoke about the Messiah, saying that He must come this year!

Many of them listened attentively. I

was waiting for the rabbi to finish, as I always do. Then he asked, “Are there any questions?” I am always waiting for him to ask this question.

“Rabbi,” I said, “I have a question.”

“I am so happy that someone among us was listening and has a question,” he replied.

“It is very clearly written that the Messiah was already here,” I said.

He stared at me.

“From which old storybook have you taken this false news?” he asked. “Who told you this? I see you are not one of us,” he said, noticing that I was not dressed like the ultra-Orthodox men. “Tell me, from which book have you found such stories?” he asked.

“From the Holy Bible,” I said. “This is what I have believed. Because we are

“This is our obligation before the Lord, and we do this with great joy. But they say we are dangerous!

of the Lord written by the Holy Spirit.”

When I said, “by the Holy Spirit,” they started to shout at me. One said, “Of course, you are with those Christians because they speak about the Holy Spirit!”

This time I read to them from Psalm 51: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (vv. 10–11).

“What did King David ask from the Lord?” I asked. “He asked for the Holy Spirit. What do you teach your pupils? That they must worship after false beliefs?” I asked the rabbi.

This time I was sure they would cast me out of the synagogue. But they started to ask me questions instead. “How did you come to this subject?” one asked me.

“I believed in the Lord according to the Holy Bible, which was written by the Holy Spirit. I do not put my faith in a big stack of books that teach false beliefs and are against the will of the Lord,” I said. “You are afraid of the truth. You will not read Isaiah 53.” Isaiah 53 clearly speaks of Jesus.

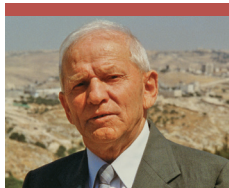
Now they became angry. “So, you follow This Man!” one shouted, meaning Jesus.

But I was not afraid. I remembered Luke 12:11–12, which always encourages me: “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

It is our duty to go to these people, so that is what I will continue to do. Pray they will read the Holy Bible, written by the Holy Spirit, instead of their big stack of commentaries and that they will put their faith in God, instead of in their rabbis.

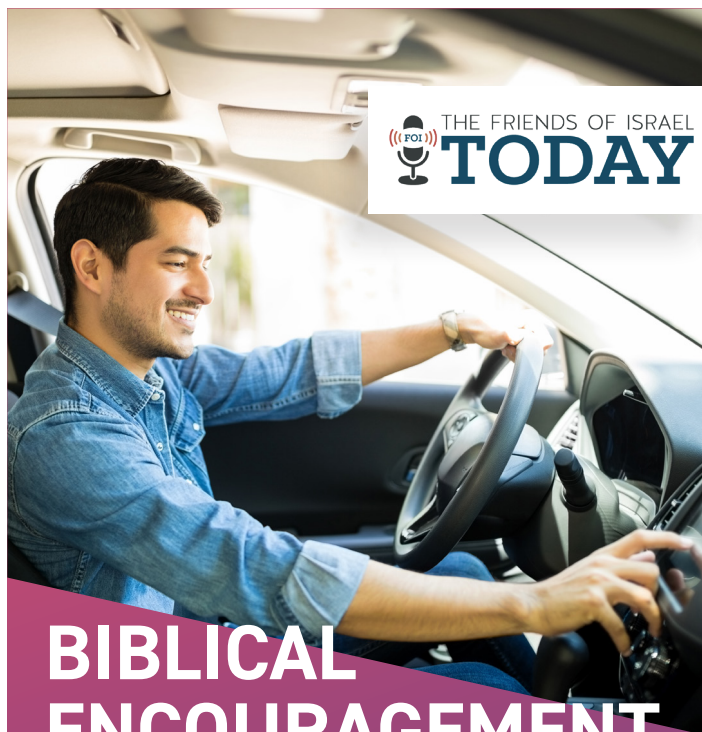
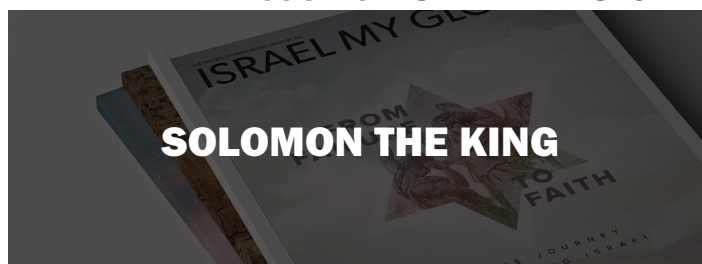
the people of the Bible, we must bring this Book to the ends of the earth and bring His salvation according to what is written in Isaiah 49:3–6. This is all written here. If you do not believe me, here is the Bible! Take a good look, and see if these are old stories or the words

From The Friends of Israel archives



Zvi Kalisher (1928–2014) was a Holocaust survivor who was known for his unwavering faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry for more than 55 years.

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