

SHOSHANAH

Program of Messianic Jewish Studies

July 3 - August 27



Ephesians
First John
Old and New Testament Surveys

Week 3-5

Galatians
Highlights of Jeremiah
Bible Study Methods
Spiritual Life
Zionism and Israel's History

Week 6

Life of Messiah

Weeks 7-8

Jewish People in the Book of Romans
The Doctrine of Humanity
The Doctrine of Sin
The Post-Mosaic Jewish Holy Days

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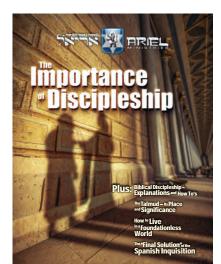




Every summer Ariel Ministries welcomes people of all ages and nationalities to join us for the Messianic discipleship program held at the Shoshanah Campus. The program centers on establishing and growing believers in Yeshua through in-depth study of the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Learning modules are taught in 1, 2, and 3 week formats with plenty of free time included in the schedule. Whether you come for only one week or for the entire eight-week program, the Shoshanah Campus, beautifully nestled in the scenic Adirondack mountains, will provide the perfect environment for a fun and relaxing spiritual retreat for the whole family.







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the apostles to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching others. The first participle, going, means evangelizing the whole world and preaching the gospel to the whole creation. An important element of this going, however, has been lost in most parts of the church, and that is Romans 1:16—to the Jew first. Carmine Rizzo explains how the discovery of this truth has changed the church he has been pastoring for years.

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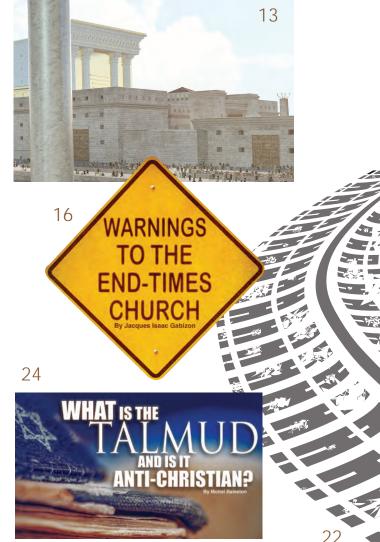
Mottel Baleston explains how a set of conversations of Jewish rabbis, the Talmud, has become an excuse for some Christians to justify bigotry, conspiracy theories, and hatred toward the Jewish people.

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Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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Ushat a year 2020 haz been!

From devastating wildfires to a pandemic and the crash of the stock market, from a global movement for racial justice to a

massive explosion that wiped out the port of Beirut—the list goes on and on. In times like these, the church is called to be a beacon of hope and a place of *Shalom* ("peace") in the world.

One way that Ariel Ministries has followed this calling in 2020 is by publishing a new book by Dr. Paul Wilkinson. This British author presented a manuscript to us that he wrote at the beginning of the year when the going started to get tough. The title of this new work, *Israel – The Inheritance of God*, somewhat betrays the actual topic. Yes, this book is about Israel. However, as Dr. Thomas Ice wrote in his endorsement of the book, it "focuses on God!" One of our proofreaders expressed precisely what went through my head while editing *Israel – The Inheritance of God*. She wrote: "At times I found myself reading along, forgetting that



I was supposed to be proofing it! There is such a richness and a passion to Paul's writing, and he blends together scholarly and devotional points so gracefully. I can say my love for God is deeper now after reading the book, and I look forward to doing so again!"

The December 2020 edition of *Ariel Magazine* focuses on another aspect of the church's privileges and responsibilities: discipleship. Some of the articles provide food for thought as to how we all can be involved in the training of our brothers and sisters in the Lord. In the Ministry News section, you will find examples of people who are discipling others in the most unlikely places. May the articles encourage you to fulfill your part in God's plan to bring light to this world and offer hope in times when the going is indeed getting tough for many people around the globe.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who* are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Mt. 5:14-16)

In Messiah,

Christiane Jurik

Editor-in-Chief editorarielministries@gmail.com



Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives



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ARIEL BRANCHES



Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

Website:www.ariel.org.au Email: info@ariel.org.au Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac and Sharon Gabizon

Website: www.arielcanada.com

Email: info@arielcanada.com J. I. and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. Their projects include door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal and translating Ariel's manuscripts into French. Ariel Canada established a messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching Ariel material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

Email: bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. He teaches Ariel's material all over the country and is responsible for the translations into the Gujarat language.



Ariel Israel Sasha & Lilian Granovsky

Email: sashag@ariel.org
Sasha and Lilian Granovsky represent Ariel Ministries in
Israel. The husband and wife team has been representing
Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are
responsible for coordinating the translation of our
manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



Ariel Germany

Website: www.cmv-duesseldorf.de Email: cmv-cmv@t-online.de Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

Email: hungary@ariel.org Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband and wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



Ariel Italy

Website: www.arielitalia.it Email: info@arielitalia.it

Paolo and Martina Speciale represent Ariel Ministries in Italy. The husband and wife team coordinates the translations of our manuscripts and books into Italian. Their goal is to share the Messianic Jewish perspective in Italy through live teaching, social media pages, and seminars.



Ariel New Zealand

Web: http://ariel.org.nz/

This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Nigel Christensen, Matthew Lord, Don Thompson, and John Cavanagh. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact info@ariel.co.nz.



Ariel Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. We also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar contact us at dfw@ariel.org.

ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



Michael & Hannah Gabizon – Students (Montreal)

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Michael and Hannah Gabizon are missionaries representing Ariel Ministries in Canada. The young couple has actively been involved in teaching and discipling people through God's Word. Their goal is to identify other young people within their sphere of Influence who may be interested in becoming involved with Ariel.



John Metzger – Field Representative (North Carolina)

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Missionary and author John Metzger represents Ariel Ministries in North Carolina. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences.



Gary & Missy Demers – Camp Representatives (New York)

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Gary and his wife Missy are the managers and camp facilitators of the Shoshanah campus in Upstate New York. Every summer they help host Ariel's Program of Messianic Jewish Studies.



Roberto Anchondo – Field Representative (El Paso, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico)

Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. He is currently discipling groups of men in the Jewish perspective. He also works with numerous churches in Mexico, teaching the importance of standing by Israel.



Jack Nakashima (Rock Hill, SC.)

Email: jacknariel@gmail.com

Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



Ariel Italia Projects

In September of this year, Ariel Italia was officially founded! The paperwork is signed and sealed, and we are excited to see what the Lord's plans are for this branch in Italy!

For now, our plans for the immediate future concern three main areas: translation, teaching, and expanding our website and social media platforms. Since the beginning of our involvement with Ariel Ministries, the

Lord has given us the chance to improve and strengthen our translation and revision skills thanks to an empowered team. Two groups of proofreaders help us with the revision of the translated Messianic Bible Studies, books, and articles. Six people are volunteering their time and skills to perfect the translations of the articles and Bible Study manuscripts. Another special group is dedicated to the translation and revision of the books. A great team of

brothers and sisters is helping us create engaging images and posts shared every day on Ariel Italia's social media pages. This has led to many new contacts and questions, and it is a great way to reach Italy's Jewish community that is very active on social media.

Our desire is to give to as many Italians as possible the chance to study the Bible using Ariel Ministries' material and hopefully to study at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies at the Shoshanah Campus during the summer.

Lots of projects require lots of prayers. We count on you!



Ariel India

Ariel's branch in India is a small but very active part of the ministry. Led by Bakul Christian, the branch primarily focuses on teaching the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective and on making our material available in Gujarati and some other languages of the country. These are the things we read about on a regular basis in Bakul's prayer letters. What the reports do not always show is that behind the obvious activities are important human encounters. Recently, Bakul told us the following story:

"There is a lady in my church who is a nurse. Although she has a good job in a local government-run hospital, this lady has many personal problems and recently tried to commit suicide. A friend of hers called me. I immediately ran over and was able to talk the lady down from going through with her plans. However, the neighbors heard the news and called the police, probably with the good intention to save the lady. When the officers came, they realized that the nurse is a believer, so they wanted to arrest her. However, the head inspector was brought up in a

Christian school. So, for now, only charges were filed, and a court will



Bakul and Jenet Christian with a car they recently bought to reach people in the remote areas of their state.



have to decide whether she broke the law."

The history of Christianity in Gujarat started in 1320 when the Dominican missionary Jordanus Catalani brought Catholicism to the state. While there are several important Protestant churches, only 0.52% of Gujarati Indians consider themselves to be believers. The state has an

anti-conversion law that was enacted in 2003 as the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act. This law seems to be the basis of the nurse's arrest. Let's pray that she will be set free soon!



Baptisms in Hungary

There is no denying it. The year 2020 has been difficult for many people in ministry, including Rita and Ivan Nagy of Ariel Hungary. During the summer months, they held their services either via Zoom or in a park. They also continued their work among Jewish Holocaust survivors and a group of Chinese believers in Budapest as best as they could. In their most recent report, they wrote:

"In spite of the difficult COVID situation, a few beautiful things happened in the second half of the year. First and foremost, one of the Jewish Holocaust survivors our friend Paivi has been ministering to has come to saving faith in her Jewish Messiah. We are praising the Lord for this beautiful development! Also exciting is the story of two ladies, both over 70 years of age, whose relatives are attending our Messianic fellowship meetings. Sometime this year, they started reading the Bible, and the more they read, the more questions they had. They reached out to their relatives, who, in turn, began answering the questions by using Ariel material. Eventually, the ladies asked to be baptized. We used the small basin of a sauna for the immersion. The ladies were so emotional, and we all cried. This was a great experience for all of us and a testimony to the congregation! Another beautiful thing that happened in the past few months is that a Jewish friend of ours taught a summer course about the Shulchan Aruch. At the end of the course, a Jewish couple asked us about our faith. It was a beautiful opportunity to tell them about their Jewish Messiah."



Reaching People in Liberia

The first time Wion and Shirley Wleh flew from Liberia to New York in order to attend Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies was in 2016. The pastor and his wife have been able to return every year since. In 2019, they applied to establish an Ariel branch in their country, and their wishes were granted. Currently, the couple is waiting for the Liberian government to approve the ministry.

Wion is serving as Senior Pastor of a congregation he founded in 1991. He has also planted churches in other communities. All of the pastors and

elders of these churches attend Wion's training program of Messianic Jewish Bible Study. Presently, there are over twenty students in his class, and everyone who has gone through the program is using Ariel's material in their own churches.

Another area of ministry is farming. Wion and Shirley went to the Philippines to do a study in organic agriculture to train people for sustainability and poverty reduction. When they came back to their home country, they established True Vine Organic Ministries. The primary objective of the ministry is evangelism and discipleship among the poor. Realizing that many churches only meet the spiritual needs of the people, they decided to focus their attention on discipling the poor with the added bonus of meeting their physical needs by equipping them in organic agriculture. They are using Ariel Ministries' material in the discipleship of their organic agriculture students.







A group of Bible students who are learning the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in Liberia



Wion with some of his organic farming students



Work Behind Bars

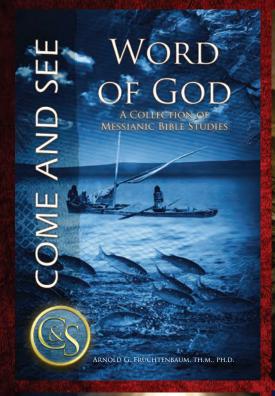
We would probably all agree that a rather unusual location to teach Dr. Fruchtenbaum's material is prison. However, in August, we received a letter from Denny, who wrote:

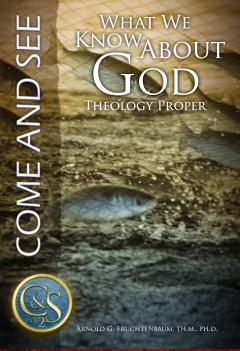
In the late 1990s, Dr. Fruchtenbaum and his ministry graciously donated all 190 of his manuscripts to our Chapel library for the inmate population to check out. When after seven years no one had checked them out, the prison chaplain who knows I love studying God's Word said to me, "Would you like to have these manuscripts as your personal property? If you don't want them, I will have to toss them out." I asked if I could browse through the material first because we have limited space in our cell drawers and all 190 manuscripts was a lot of paper. After noticing how doctrinally sound the material was, I took all the manuscripts off the Chaplain's hands. I came to prison in 1995. By 1997, I was leading men in Bible studies. But in early 2006, when I got all Arnold's manuscripts, I started using them to lead the Bible studies. This is when God really started bringing men to me in here. At one point, the Lord had me discipling eight men at six different time slots each week. God saw to it that most of them stayed together for three years to complete their training in His Word. Because I keep using Arnold's manuscripts over and over again with each new believer, I have read some of them up to ten times.

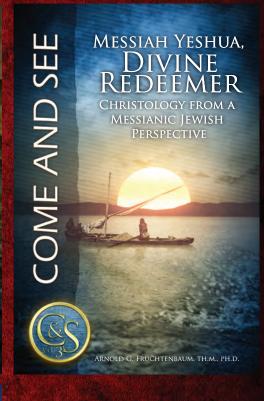
Most of the men I get to disciple are babes in Christ. Early on, I wondered if Arnold's teachings contained too much meat and not enough milk for them, and I asked the Lord about it in prayer. In response, He put on my mind and heart that even though it is all meat, the way Arnold wrote the manuscripts was as a scholar to a layman, rather than scholar to scholar. It was as if he put the meat in a blender and liquified it. If a spiritual babe were to drink liquified meat, it would accelerate his growth. Over the years, this illustration has proven to be true. I have seen men grow by leaps and bounds through the material. Now, they are no longer children tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14a). I can't recall the number of men I have been able to introduce to Ariel Ministries since 2006, but it's a lot.

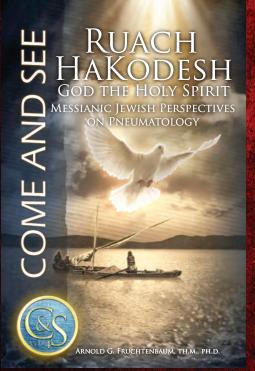
Come and See

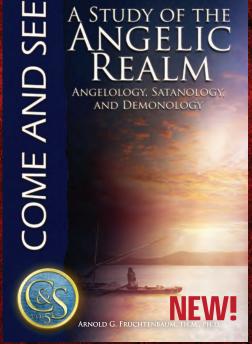
A solid foundation for discipleship in biblical truth









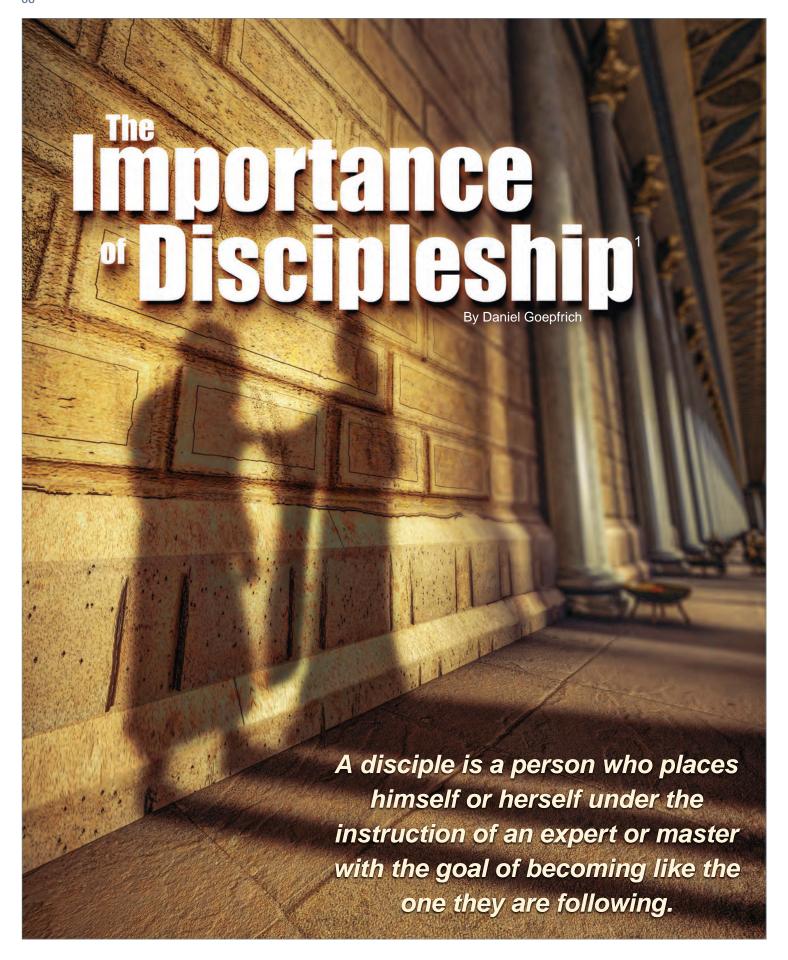




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The Importance of Discipleship By Daniel Goepfrich



With every new year comes the hope of something better—better diet, better relationships, maybe even a better job. Not only is 2021 no exception, but the dramatic events of 2020 may have made this the most anticipated new year since 2000.

The global church was not exempt from the effects of 2020 as they highlighted modern Christianity's Achilles' heel—the lack of genuine, committed biblical disciples. We have auditoriums and worship centers, groups and classes, megas and minis, community centers and food pantries. Every week, in hundreds of languages around the world, sermons are preached and songs are sung, yet the church is in a state of crisis. In the United States, membership is declining across most denominations. Pastors and church leaders are falling in public scandals, and some are driven to the point of suicide under the weight of their work. Biblical doctrine is being replaced by feelings, experiences, and culture-driven ideology. Across the world, the church has been marginalized by apathy from within and attacks from without, and in many places, it has begun to assimilate ancient pagan practices that have only been stripping it of the powerful, life-changing impact it could be having.

The solution for this is a return to

biblical discipleship.

During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Yeshua gave His eleven apostles only a few commands that are recorded in Scripture, but Matthew 28:19-20 provides the broad commission that contains the elements of all the others:

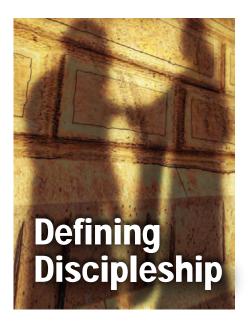
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.²

Make disciples. This means more than "proclaim the gospel" (Mk. 16:15) or "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). While it certainly includes those things, this commission is best explained within its context by the two participles that follow it: "baptizing them" and "teaching them to obey." A disciple is not

simply a believer or convert or fan, although he must be all of those things. In the fullest sense of the word, a disciple (mathētēs, $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\dot{\eta}\varsigma$) is someone "who engages in learning through instruction from another," who is "constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views." In other words, a disciple is a person who places himself or herself under the instruction of an expert or master with the goal of becoming like the one they are following.

Finding a modern term to explain this type of relationship is difficult. Words like "student" and "pupil" do not go far enough. Decades ago, a good word was "apprentice," although today it suffers from the associated concepts of rookie, newbie, novice, or amateur. Even the New Testament writers never used the word "disciple"

outside of the Gospels and Acts, preferring more descriptive terms like "holy," "saint," or Paul's signature phrase, "in Messiah." However, it makes sense to continue using the terms "disciple" and "discipleship" to connect them with Yeshua's commission to the apostles.



Once again, a disciple is a person who places himself or herself under the instruction of an expert or master with the goal of becoming like the one they are following. Notice four key elements that biblical discipleship requires. First, discipleship is a process that happens to a person. While groups and classes can help create environments for discipleship, groups cannot be discipled. Groups may or may not contain biblical disciples, but having a group meet to discuss Scripture, pray, and enjoy fellowship is not discipleship. Discipleship takes place at the individual, personal level.

Second, discipleship requires a relationship with someone else. Discipleship cannot happen in a vacuum. It assumes that the disciple has attached himself to someone else to

accomplish something that he could not do on his own. In Yeshua's commission, this is found in the words "baptizing" and "teaching."

At its most basic level, water baptism has always been a way for a person to publicly link or identify himself or herself with the specific message or teaching of the group or teacher they are following. For a disciple to be baptized "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" means a voluntary submission and identification with God through the person of Yeshua as He revealed Himself and as His apostles recorded in Scripture.

Third, discipleship requires an expert teacher. Yeshua told the eleven apostles, "Teach them ... everything I have commanded you." Biblical disciples must understand that their pastors, teachers, and professors are not the experts they are following, and those teachers must understand and regularly acknowledge that as well. While Yeshua certainly gave these leaders as an important gift to His church (Eph. 4:11), Yeshua Himself is the expert teacher. He is the Great Teacher, the Great Shepherd of His sheep. Yes, He uses both human and non-human (the Holy Spirit) agents to accomplish the necessary teaching (1 Cor. 2:6-16), but Yeshua is the One we are following-no one else. The expert we choose to follow matters. Thus, biblical discipleship is not simply a casual connection to God or Yeshua but a growing understanding of who

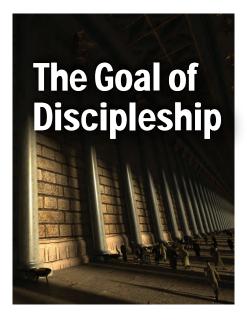
He is, what He taught, and what He expects from His followers.

Finally, discipleship has a defined goal or destination. In the preceding paragraph, a few words are missing from Yeshua's command. Not only did He say, "Teach them...everything I have commanded." He said, "Teach them to observe everything I have commanded." In other words, Yeshua expects His followers to grow in their obedience toward Him until they finally become like the Teacher. In theological terms, this is how we become renewed in the image of God. Consider how the Apostle Paul used this concept in his teaching:

Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

[You were taught] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:22-24).

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator (Col. 3:9-10).



Most people do not understand how important and powerful biblical discipleship is. If believers were fulfilling their commission of becoming biblical disciples and helping others do the same, many counseling ministries and support groups or programs would be unnecessary. The rooms would be empty because regular, ongoing counseling and support are natural parts of the discipleship process, often "disguised" as biblical teaching. The New Testament knows nothing of counseling ministries and support groups, but it knows all about the discipleship process.

This is not to say that these ministries are bad or ungodly; on the contrary, they can meet an important need for growing believers. However, if these same believers and their churches were intent on working through the biblical discipleship process and were regularly and inten-

¹ Parts of this article have been adapted from *Biblical Discipleship: The Path for Helping People Follow Jesus* by Daniel Goepfrich (Exegetica Publishing, 2020). Used by permission.

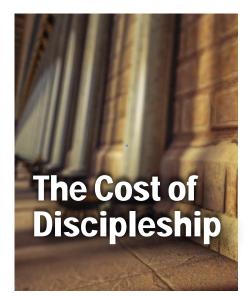
² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV. The words "Jesus" and "Christ" were replaced with "Yeshua" and "Messiah."

³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 609.

⁴ Emphasis added here and in the subsequent verses.

tionally growing themselves and each other, these disciples would find that they no longer need these other agencies as much. And—if they are honest—those running these agencies would be glad! What counselor would not rather help a believer avoid the issues that they typically spend their time helping them correct? What group leader would not rather lead his group in celebrating spiritual victories instead of supporting them through spiritual losses and failures?

Of course, spiritual failures are part of the maturity process. They will still happen, and correction will be needed, but they should be met with Messiah's own love and grace as demonstrated by those who regularly invest their time and energy in knowing Him better and loving Him more. Disciples who are growing are the hands, mouths, and ears of the Savior as they exercise their spiritual gifts and fulfill God's desire that the body of Messiah "builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16).



"Anything worth doing is worth doing well," says the familiar adage. Another that applies here is, "You get what you pay for." Salvation is a gift; discipleship

requires time, effort, and sacrifice. The Savior once asked the great crowds following Him, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Lk. 14:28). It seems like a silly question; only a fool would start an endeavor of that size without thinking through what it will cost him. The Savior agreed and then applied that truth to anyone who wants to follow Him. Salvation is free; discipleship is costly. Discipleship is not easy. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ... A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn. 15:18, 20). However, the rewards of discipleship are inestimable and eternal:

- Discipleship is the process by which we learn to follow Yeshua, fulfilling those "good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).
- It is how we achieve spiritual maturity, God's will for us: our sanctification.
- It is our mission (Mt. 28:19-20), commanded by the Savior Himself and exemplified by the apostles (2 Tim. 2:2; Col. 1:27; Eph. 4:11-16).
- It is the theme of—or major encouragement in—every apostolic epistle.
- It is not something simply glossed over or mentioned

infrequently. It has a specific path laid out, explained, and illustrated in detail, proving its supreme importance in the life of the believer.

And, while discipleship is distinct from salvation and cannot cause us to lose our salvation, the believer who chooses not to follow Yeshua will suffer the loss of fellowship and ministry opportunities in this life and rewards in the next.

The importance of biblical discipleship becomes most apparent during transition when a church or ministry is looking for new teachers and leaders. If the church has promoted and practiced biblical discipleship well for some time, there is a better chance that those teachers and leaders will be available and ready within their own congregation or staff. If the intentional discipleship process is relatively new or has not been done well, the church may have to look outside for new leaders because they have not yet been developed "at home."

An example of this principle can be found in the New Testament, especially in the epistles that were written toward the (real or perceived) end of the apostles' lives and ministries. Consider these familiar passages by Paul when he was a prisoner in Rome—both during his first time (perceived end) and second time (real end)—and by Peter from his second letter. Notice how these men thoughtfully emphasized both personal spiritu-

al growth and the importance of growing others.

He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Messiah, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph. 4:11-14)

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Messiah. (Col. 1:28)

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:1-2)

Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Yeshua Messiah Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. (2 Pet. 1:12-15)



Thus, we discover that biblical discipleship is a process and that the goal of this process is individual spiritual growth or maturity—a believer in Yeshua becoming more and more like Yeshua. However, there is one more phrase the apostles repeatedly used—almost like a mantra—to sum up the entirety of the process: "know Him."

This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (Jn. 17:3)

We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Yeshua Messiah. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 Jn 5:20)

that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Phil 3:10)

In his final preserved letter, Peter presented eight clear, linear steps that are necessary for any person to move from being unsaved to a full disciple of Yeshua. Interestingly, Peter saturated his teaching—even bookending his letter—with this vital concept of knowing Yeshua:

his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. ... For if these [eight] things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Yeshua Messiah more intimately. (2 Pt 1:3, 8; NET)

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Yeshua Messiah. To him be the honor both now and on that eternal day! (2 Pt 3:18; NET)

May the articles in this issue spur you on, echoing the apostolic encouragement:





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Community Church (South Bend, IN). He teaches Greek at Calvary University (Kansas City, MO) and Bible exposition for Word of Life Bible Institute (international campuses) and is an Associate Professor of Bible and Theology at Tyndale Theological Seminary (Hurst, TX). In 2017, he founded Theology is for Everyone (theologyisforeveryone.com) to produce biblically-sound resources that everyone can use and understand. He is the author of *Biblical Discipleship* (2020), *New Testa-*

(2020), New Iestament Chapter by Chapter (2017), and Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage (2007), as well as several journal articles and multiauthor contributions.







Means of Becoming a Disciple

Discipleship is a very important facet of the spiritual life. But how does a believer become a disciple?

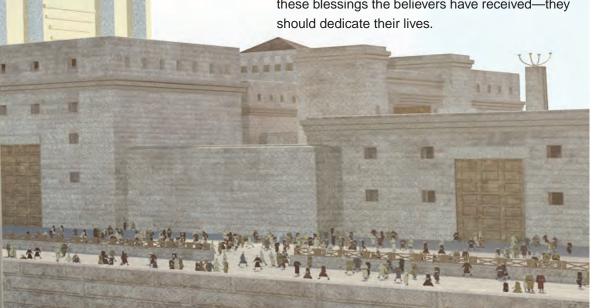
First and foremost, the beginning of discipleship is faith. Only a regenerated believer in Yeshua can live a spiritual life. The second step is dedication. The believers have to dedicate themselves to the Lord, making Him the Lord of their lives.

In Scripture, dedication is always on the basis of blessings received. Because of what believers have received from God, they should dedicate themselves to Him.

Romans 12:1-2 states:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul's exhortation to believers to present themselves, to dedicate themselves, is on the basis of the mercies of God. This phrase is a one-statement summary of all that Paul wrote in the first eleven chapters of Romans. In light of what God has done for the believer by providing justification, sanctification, and glorification—in light of all these blessings the believers have received—they should dedicate their lives.



The same truth is found in I Corinthians 6:19-20:

> Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.

Because of the blessing believers have received, which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and because they have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, they should therefore glorify God in their bodies.

Hence, the basis of dedication is always on the basis of blessings received. In light of what God has done for His children, they should be willing to dedicate themselves to Him.



The Components of Dedication

There are three specific components to the aspect of dedication. The first component is the initial act of dedication. This is the point of Romans 12:1. It is a decisive presentation of our bodies, dedicating them to the Lord's use. In the Greek text, the word for "to present," parastēsai, is in the aorist tense and emphasizes a decisive, singular act. It is an irrevocable act of surrender.

The second component of dedication is separation and non-conformity to the age in which we live. That is the point of Romans 12:2. After dedicating ourselves to the Lord, we should not be fashioned according to this world. In other words, we should become "unfashionable" as far as the world is concerned (I Pet. 1:14). This is the key characteristic of the spiritual life. This is the part that emphasizes the outward conformity. We do conform to the world but to the Word.

So as far as the world is concerned, we are unfashionable.

The third component of dedication is transformation. That is also the point of Romans 12:2. The means of transformation is by the renewing of [the] mind. The result will be the proving of what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This is the inward area-inward conformity to what the Bible demands.



The Meaning of Dedication

The best verse to explain the meaning of dedication is James 4:7a, which states: Be subject therefore unto God. Simply put, the meaning of dedication is the subjection of our lives to the Messiah. We are subjecting ourselves; we are subjecting our lives to the Messiah.



The Areas and Frequency of Dedication

The believer must personally be dedicated to the Messiah. This is the point of Romans 6:13:

neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Furthermore. the believer commanded to dedicate his body. Paul makes this point in Romans 12:1 and I Corinthians 6:19-20.

How often should we dedicate ourselves and our bodies? The fact that the Scriptures use the agrist tense implies that the dedication happens only once. We need to make only a one-time dedication of ourselves and our bodies to the Lord's use. However, having made this initial once-and-for-all dedication, it does require of us a continuous commitment to it. The believer now needs to find out what the will of God is in any particular situation. But what if a believer falls away from his dedication? What if there is a violation of the dedication vow? Would that not mean that now he must re-dedicate his life all over again?

The answer is no. The remedy to a violated dedication vow is not re-dedication, but restoration. When a believer falls from his dedication vow, it does not mean all is lost. Because all is not lost, we do not need to start from scratch, where rededication would be required. Restoration simply means that we are to get back on track at the very point where we got off and then go on living a dedicated life.

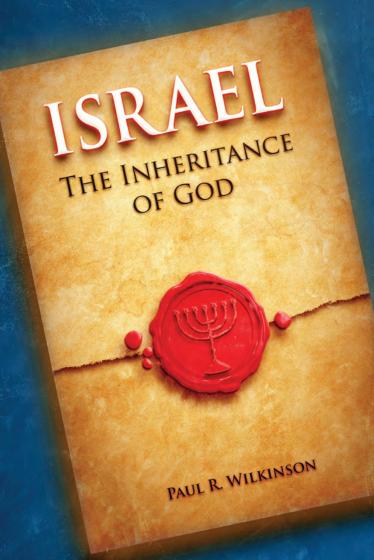
The question now is a personal one: On what side of the line of dedication do you stand? If you have never made this dedication of yourself and your body, now that you realize what God expects of you, now is the time to do it. On the other hand, if you have at one point in your life dedicated your body to the Lord and made Him the Lord of your life, you now need to examine where you stand on this line of dedication.



The Results of Dedication

Chiefly, a believer who has dedicated his whole being to the Lord will know, do, and enjoy the will of God (Rom. 12:2). Dedication allows the Holy Spirit to fill the believer because dedication is the prerequisite in the spiritual life for being filled by Him. Furthermore, it becomes the beginning of the road to discipleship.

ISRAEL THE INHERITANCE OF GOD



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BIBLE STUDY Warnings to the End-Times Church By Jacques Isaac Gabizon

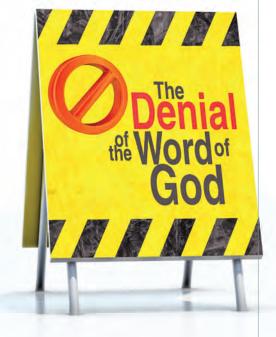
God's Word provides prophecies that describe WARNINGS the conditions of the end times. The TO THE following study will point out a **END-TIMES** few signs the church can expect to see more and more in the years to come. They fit into what Dwight Pentecost called "a system of denial" in the late 1950s. As will be seen, this system of rejection focuses on confounding believers, with the final aim being to diminish God and His Word so as to separate believers from their Creator.





Denial is a powerful weapon.

It shifts the burden of proof to the other person. When confronted with the denial of biblical truths, the believer may not see the road that God has laid out for him. In these end times, the attack on God's truth has noticeably increased. Yeshua warned His church of it.





The first is the most widespread denial. It is the denial of the Messiah-of who He is and what He came for, Remove Yeshua from God's Word and one's faith in the God of the Bible will fall apart.

According to 1 John 4:3, every spirit that does not confess that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. That Yeshua has come in the flesh means that He is not human like us but that He is from above. The Prophet Micah prophesied that Yeshua would be born in Bethlehem but that His origins are from eternity, from everlasting (Micah 5:2). Only God is from

eternity and from everlasting. Whoever denies this truth is an antichrist. The prefix "anti" means "instead of" or "against." Those who deny Messiah are against Him. They want to replace Him. They invent all kinds of theories to diminish Him. Some say He is an angel. Others say He is a man who became God. This is a great blasphemy. Others try to belittle Yeshua by putting the Holy Spirit before Him or a powerful woman next to Him. Again others do not want to offend and so speak of Him as "a good man," someone who is not like the others or someone who is better than others, but it does not mean that they believe in Him or consider Him as God.

In 2 Peter 2:1, Peter warned: But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. False teachers deny both the person and the work of the Messiah. While they may say nice things about Yeshua, they fail to confess Him as God and as the one and only Savior.

The second denial of the end times pertains to the Word of God. The rejection of sound doctrine is a consequence of the first denial: Deny Yeshua, and the person will slowly move away from the Scriptures. A case history is Israel. In John 5:46, Yeshua told His people, If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. Here, Moses stands for the Tanach, the Hebrew Scriptures. After Messiah's first coming, the rabbis had to move out of the Scriptures and develop a new religion since they did not believe in Yeshua. Another case history is the church. For the last two thousand years, the church has been following the same route as Israel and will eventually ask Yeshua to leave (Rev. 3:14-22).

There are many verses in the New Testament that speak of this form of denial. For example, 1 Timothy 4:1-2 states: Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their 18

own conscience seared with a hot iron. According to this passage, the origin of any false teaching is from demons. Just as the serpent said in the Garden of Eden, "Did God really say..." (Gen. 3:1), so it is today. The sheep are really in trouble when the shepherd starts speaking kindly of the wolf. This is when anti-biblical truth is adopted in a congregation. The doctrines of demons alienate believers from their God. Their conscience is seared with a hot iron. The Greek word for "seared," kauteriazo, is the origin of the English word "cauterized." It means "to sear with a branding iron," "to deaden one's spirit." Farmers brand their cattle to indicate ownership. This is a way these demons claim someone's soul.

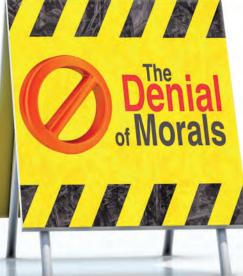
Denial the Faith

The third denial is the denial of the faith. Once one removes God and His Word, faith will fly away.

What is faith? Faith is saying "Amen" to God. It is the eye of spiritual sight by means of which we see God. It is the divine evidence and conviction

of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). It is God-given. Paul warned in 1 Timothy 4:1 that in the latter days some will depart from the faith. The Greek word for "depart," apostēsontai, is of the same root as the term "apostasy," which itself speaks of a divorcing. One divorces God after knowing of Him.

This third denial is a growing plague, and today, we see many prominent people in Christianity who depart from the faith and are vocal about it.¹



The next denial naturally flows out of the three previous denials. It is the denial of morals, meaning the departure from what the Bible says is right and good. Some even go so far as to reverse morality: Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isa. 5:20).

In Luke 17:26-30, Yeshua prophesied that in the end times immorality would compare to the one that existed during the time of the flood and at the time of Sodom:

²⁶And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

What were the conditions at the time of the flood? In Genesis 6:13, God provided the reason for the flood: The end of all flesh has come before Me. for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. The Hebrew word for "violence" is hāmās. It expresses more than physical violence. It is used for the hatred of man, such as when someone gives a false testimony or when someone transgresses God's law and commits immoral acts. The Hebrew word for "destroy," shachath, is repeated four times in the context of this verse. Once it is found in Genesis 6:11, twice in verse 12, and once here in verse 13. The point is that as man keeps on corrupting himself, there comes a time when God must remove His restraining power and leave man to his corruption.

As for the sin of Sodom, nowadays man is absolutely free to do what he wants, but Yeshua is very clear on the

¹ An example of this phenomenon is the story of Marty Sampson, a worship artist of the band Hillsong, who renounced his faith in 2019.

particular action of the city of Sodom (Gen. 19:4-5): It is a precursor of judgment from God.

Such things, then, are among the denials of godly morals. They destroy the Law of God.



As an introduction to the fifth denial, one may ask in what condition the world will be when the tribulation begins. The answer is that the world will be in seemingly good shape. In Luke 17:28, Yeshua said that it will be like in the days of Lot. People will be eating and drinking and going about their business. One does not do these things in times of war. These are signs of prosperity, and the description matches a characteristic of Bible history before a tribulation strikes: There are always false teachers telling the people that everything is fine when in reality war is looming on the horizon.

This can be seen in the account of Micah who complained before the Assyrian deportation: If a liar and deceiver comes and says, "I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and

beer," that would be just the prophet for this people! (Micah 2:11). At the time when the Assyrians were at the door, the people were so far from God that any good news of prosperity, wine, and beer along with lies intoxicated those who did not understand the times.

About 150 years later, another calamity was about to strike Judah, but the same types of people were proclaiming peace when there was none. As the Babylonians were at the doors of Jerusalem, God said through Jeremiah: They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace (Jer. 6:14). They were beating down on people's souls with lies so that they could not see the truth anymore.

As it was with Noah and Lot and the Israelites, so it is today: For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape (1 Thess. 5:3). The Spirit says that in the end times, there will be those within the church who will speak of peace when there is no peace. This truth leads to the fifth denial of the end times: the denial of end-times prophecies.

Today, people think that these prophecies are either gone, fulfilled, or mean something completely different. Peter predicted that this would happen in 2 Peter 3:3-4: Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the begin-

ning of creation." In the end times, many will mock prophecies that speak of the second coming of the Lord, the rapture, and the Messianic kingdom. Those who mock these prophecies often follow the doctrines of amillennialism or postmillennialism. Both basically teach the same thing: "Peace, peace!" Amillennialism means "no millennium." This doctrine is held by the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and a large and growing segment of Protestantism. Postmillennialists teach that Yeshua will return after the millennium. Neither one of the doctrines teaches that there will be a thousand-year kingdom of Messiah on earth. They believe that Satan is already bound, that we are living in the Messianic Age, and that Messiah reigns through them and they will bring peace on earth.

In order to teach these things, amillennialists and postmillennialists need to take large portions of Scripture, such as the book of Revelation, symbolically. This method of interpretation came into the church right after the departure of the last Jewish teacher, the Apostle John. It began with Origen (A.D. 184-253), who was deemed one of the greatest Christian theologians. But how great was he? He began the allegorical method of Bible interpretation, departing from centuries of properly reading the Scriptures. Then came Augustine (A.D. 354-425), who is considered the father of Catholicism and who followed the same allegorical method of hermeneutics. Today, it is the majority view in Christianity. 2

² For a thorough explanation and analysis of the history of these false doctrines, see: Andrew D. Robinson, *Israel Betrayed – Volume 1: The History of Replacement Theology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2019).



On a personal note, I have to say that if someone had come to me with this type of thinking and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures when I was an unbeliever, I would probably never have believed that Yeshua was the Messiah. If one part of the Bible may be reinterpreted in this allegorical way, what guarantee is there that Yeshua was really to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that He would really have His hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16; Isa. 53:5; Zech. 12:10), or that He will really take away my sins (Isa. 43:25)? If all the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures were fulfilled literally, why are they changing today?

Those who believe in amillennialism or postmillennialism often also believe that they are the new Israel. Unfortunately, often these same people take on an anti-Israel and anti-Semitic position, as the two-thousand-year history of the church shows. With this, we come of the sixth denial of the end times.





Augustine, with his new allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures, was relatively nice toward the Jews. He taught that they should be allowed to live among Christians because their wretched circumstances were an evidence of the truthfulness of the Old Testament prophecies. He added that they should always be humiliated.3 His position was somewhat civil compared to what others said and did before and after him, but it was a clear departure from the inspired words of Paul, who had continual sorrows for Israel for he understood their plight and even said, For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Messiah for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:3). Who in Christianity today speaks similar words?

After Augustine came many other theologians, one of whom was Martin Luther, "the Father of the Reformation." Luther did not hide his hatred of the Jewish people, and his words would greatly influence Hitler and Nazism. The prominent Nazi Julius Streicher argued during his trial in Nuremberg

after World War II that if he should be standing there arraigned on such charges, so should Martin Luther.4

In Zechariah 12:3, God proclaimed that He will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. In a sense, they already are in Jerusalem! They have sent their religious representatives, with each claiming ownership of God's city and denying Israel. Jerusalem is the only city in the world where some 15 different Christian communities live next to each other, all claiming it for themselves. There are over 160 churches and 117 Christian institutions in Jerusalem. Many of these representatives of Christendom think they are in the millennium, and many of them express a dislike of the Jewish people.5



How can the believer protect himself or herself from falling into the trap of these six denials? Second Timothy was Paul's last letter, and in this epistle, he gave his best advice to the church. He began his last chapter, his last words, by expressing his great desire to see Timothy-and by appli-

³ See: Robinson, *Israel Betrayed*, pp. 5-6.

⁴ For more information, see: William Nicholls, Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), pp. 271-272.

⁵ For an analysis of modern Christian anti-Semitism and what is going on in Israel, see: Paul R. Wilkinson, Israel Betrayed - Volume 2: The Rise of Christian Palestinianism (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2019).



cation all believers-succeed and keep strong until the coming of the Lord: I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Messiah Yeshua, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom. Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Paul made a solemn declaration in matters of extraordinary importance and appealed to God and His Son. After reminding the believers that the Messiah will judge all things at the end, he gave a command consisting of several points.

The believer is to preach the Word, declare it, announce it, and make known what God has written in His book. The Greek word for "preach" is $k\bar{e}ryxon$. Some believe that the term is borrowed from the Sanskrit word karu, which means "to sing." This translation would be very appropriate because the Word of God is like a song of bene-

diction. All facets have the aim of bringing us closer to God. So Paul's command is to "Go and sing the Word of God to the world!" The believer is called to sing God's Word through his or her actions, words, prayers, and thoughts.

Paul continued by stating that the believer should do this in season and out of season. On the surface, this phrase could be read in two ways: "Preach the Word whether you feel inclined to preach or not" or "Preach the Word whether people want to hear it or not." This does not mean that the believer is to constantly proclaim the Scriptures without any regard to the situation, like a machine repeating verses. Rather, it means that the believer is to always be ready to proclaim the precious Word of God, a responsibility that requires work and discipline.

Reading the Bible, praying, and attending worship services and Bible studies and prayer meetings are not matters of feeling. They should be parts of our everyday lives for it is a commandment of the Law of the Messiah. Prayer is not meant to happen only when one feels like praying or when a need arises; prayer is the believer's sanctification "oxygen." So, while being ready in season and out of season does not mean that one is to preach the Word without considering the circumstances, it does mean that whenever the time, whoever the people, we ought to sing God's mighty Word throughout our entire beings. There is really no "season" for the Word of God. Yeshua said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). There is no particular season for bread. There is no particular season for eating. Just so, the believer is to be ready to present God's good news of redemption at all times because time is short and Yeshua is coming soon.

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PART ONE

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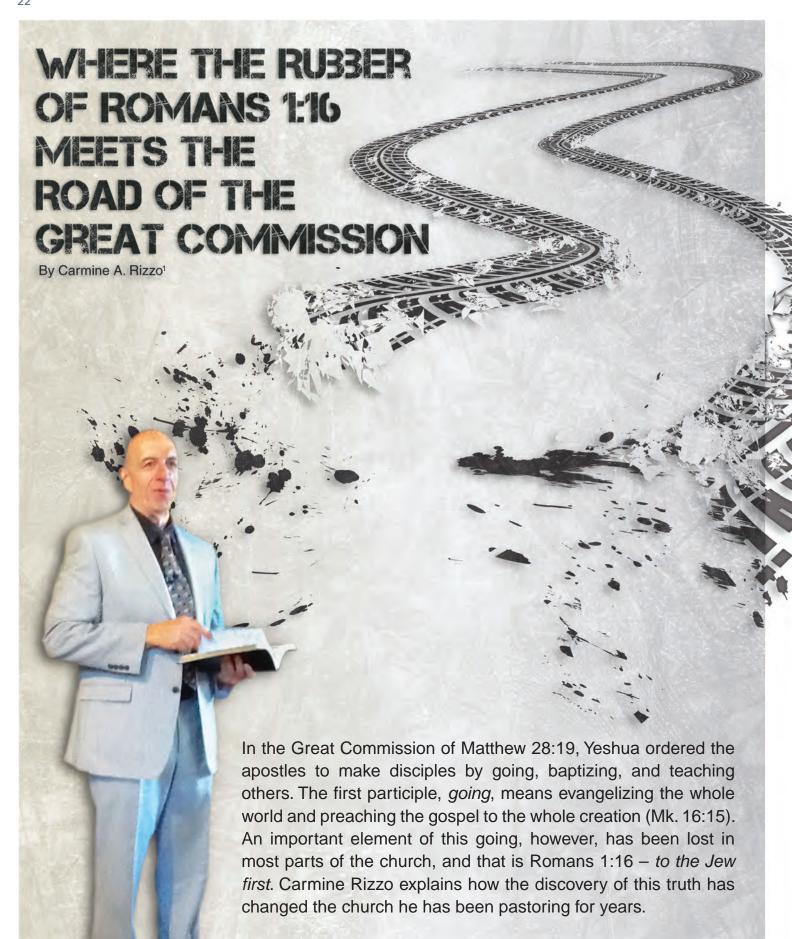
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A bedrock assumption central to the dispensationalist view is the status of God's chosen nation Israel and the unilateral nature of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15). Promises that God has made to the physical descendants of Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled. A key component in the fruition of these promises involves God's extending mercy to the Gentiles. This mercy was mediated through the initial, providential rejection of the

dential rejection of the offer of the gospel by the Jews. Through their rejection, God has extended mercy to the Gentiles. In turn, at God's appointed time and season, the net effect of this extension of mercy to the Gentiles will be to provoke the Jews to jealousy (Rom. 11:11).

We know that historically the dispensational position was not held by the majority of churches, as the discipline of hermeneutics shifted within the first few centuries of the church's founding from a literal, grammatical dominance to an allegorical dominance in the method of interpretation. Through this shift in hermeneutics, the heresy of "replacement theology" was born. The rest, as they say, is history.

As senior pastor of a local church, it has been my responsibility to ensure our church ministries were modeled as closely as possible to New Testament examples and thus bring honor to God and strength to His people, both Jew and Gentile. In preparing our missions program for the coming year under the "Faith Promise" system, it

occurred to me that we had not provided mission support for the gospel to the Jewish people. We as a church were fulfilling the Great Commission by funding missions, but was our missions program aligned with New Testament examples and the "blessing" promise of Genesis 12:3? In my mind, the answer to this question hinged on the correct interpretation of Romans 1:16, specifically the word "first." The long-running debate has been whether this word indicates a historical, chronological method or is to be understood as procedural priority—that is, whenever and wherever the gospel is preached, it must always be a matter of procedural priority to reach out to the local Jewish population first. Dr. Fruchtenbaum's paper on this issue, titled "To the Jew First in the New Millennium,"² gave me the clearest direction as to how to investigate and decide upon the correct application of the word "first" as it is used in Romans 1:16. Dr. Fruchtenbaum concludes his paper with the following statement: "The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant available to the local congregation are conditional upon the congregation's blessing the Jews, by presenting the gospel to the Jew first. Then the local church can appropriate the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, blessings that cannot be obtained any other wav."

In response to reading this statement, I launched a series of sermons to the church examining the data presented on this issue in the New Testament to determine the correct understanding of Romans 1:16. It was a daunting but fruitful endeavor. It took ten sermons to cover the ground. Here are just a few highlights:

In Acts 13:46, Paul used the word "necessary" in reference to the Word of God being first spoken to the local Jewish population. The Greek word for "necessary" means "constrained." It was not by choice that believers were to share the gospel with the Jews first, but by mandate. In fact, we find no change in pattern after the confrontation with this local Jewish population. Whenever Paul went to a new city or town, he continued to go first to the local Jewish population when they were present.

In Acts 17:2, Luke stated that it was Paul's "custom" or habit to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath and reason with the Jews. The verse provides further proof that there was no change in pattern after the confrontation of Acts 13:46.

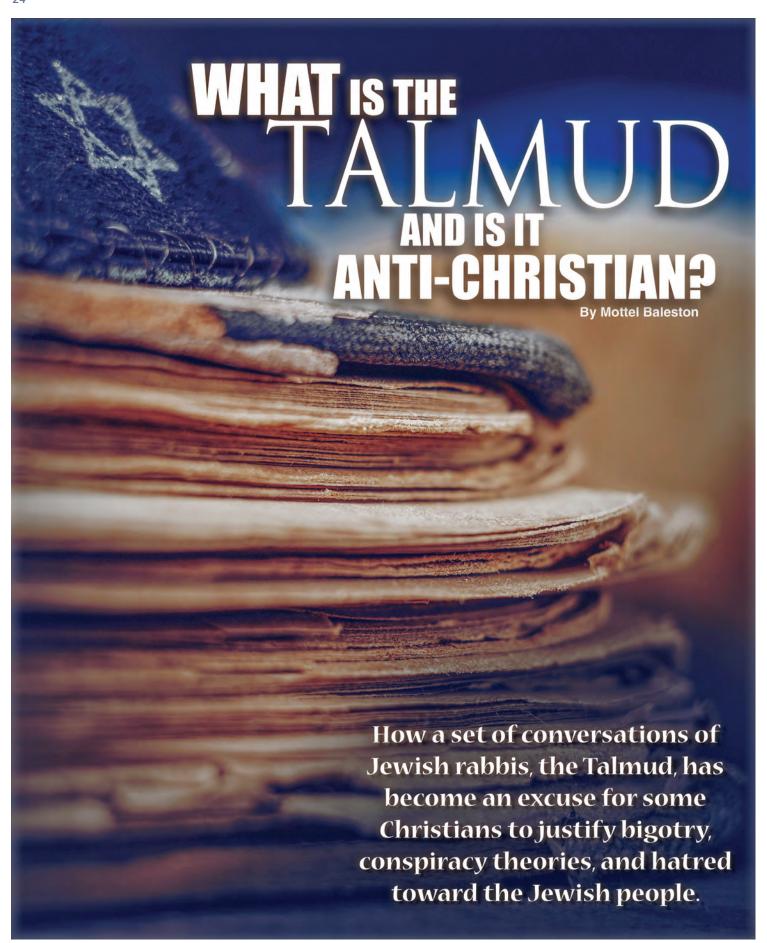
In Acts 28, Paul arrived in Rome. After three days, he called for the leaders of the Jews to come to him.

The evidence was clear! The word "first" in Romans 1:16 deals with procedural priority. As a result, we restructured our missions program to ensure that giving to Jewish missions was a priority. We also surveyed the curriculum of our Christian school for conformity to this priority.

For me and for our church, this is where the rubber of Romans 1:16 meets the road of the Great Commission.

¹ Carmine Rizzo retired as Senior Pastor of Sovereign Grace Church of Springfield, MA, in July 2019. He founded Grace Academy Christian School in Springfield and served as chaplain in the Springfield Police Department. After graduating from Heritage Bible Institute in MA, he taught NT Greek and Church History at this institute. Married with three grown children and four grandchildren, Reverend Rizzo is currently working as an airline technician with over 40 years of experience.

² Available at https://voice.dts.edu/article/to-the-jew-first-in-the-new-millennium-dr-arnoldfruchtenbaum/.







Here is one of the oddest illustrations you will ever read. But take a moment to understand it and you will grasp the core issue of this article.

Imagine that one thousand years ago a group of your ancestors has assembled for a

family reunion. It lasts for a full year, and someone writes down every word that is uttered. Ninety-nine percent of the conversations are ordinary and forgettable. But sometimes there is false gossip, slander against others, exaggerated arguments, and tall tales. The relatives debate. They propose impossible scenarios just for the sake of argument and then attack and dismiss each other's points as being offensive and worthless. The set of bound transcripts fills shelf after shelf. You have heard about the set and laugh it off because it has nothing to do with you, even

though you know of a few family members who take them seriously. However, some individuals who do not like your family come across these books and see every single argument by your long-forgotten family members and all the points that the others have dismissed and ridiculed. But because they hate you, they spend time searching only for any negative word—even those that all the others dismissed and mocked—and then compile them all and present them to the world as the character of your family today and why people should hate you.

That sounds far-fetched, doesn't it? But it is exactly what is happening on an increasing number of websites and online videos by people who claim to be Christians. They accuse all Jews today of being members of a conspiracy to attack Christians and take over the world. They will assure you that the conspiracy was hatched by the rabbis in a large set of books called the Talmud.

WHAT IS THE TALMUD?

Simply put (and nothing is simple about the Talmud), in its full printed form, the Talmud is a set of 63 bound volumes, each about 14 inches high, that can take up nearly eight feet along a bookshelf. It contains about two million words, most of them written in Aramaic, and it is primarily the written transcript of conversations among several dozen rabbis over hundreds of years. Those conversations concern one topic: Halacha, a Hebrew word meaning "the way to go" or "rules for everyday living out the Torah." Strictly speaking, the Torah is the first five books of the Bible, the books written by Moses. The Talmud is not a commentary on the Bible in a strict sense but rather has an older section, the Mishnah, which is a short, terse list of rules on how to carry out the Mosaic Law. Then there is the huge Gemara commentary of conversations on how to carry out the Mishnah. The entire text was finally compiled by the rabbis in Persia around the year A.D. 500. Orthodox Jews can devote 50 years to studying it and still not have a mastery of it. For that reason, the set of books is called "The Ocean of Talmud."

HOW DID THE TALMUD COME ABOUT?

In 586 B.C., God allowed the pagan Babylonians to defeat the kingdom of Judah—the last vestige of Jewish government in the land—and destroy the Temple, taking the Jewish people captive. During the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, the Jewish community was given the opportunity to conduct religious schooling for its people, and they were taught the Holy Scriptures and the 613 commandments of the

Torah. This occurred centuries before the birth of Messiah, and there were many genuine believers within the Jewish nation. As always, they were saved by faith, but the "rule of life" for Jewish people during that dispensation was the Mosaic Law.

With the destruction of the Temple, a new institution arose within the Jewish community to ensure biblical instruction, the "House of Study." Spiritual men knowledgeable in Scripture were the teachers. This was a good thing—as long as the teachers were faithful to Scripture and did not make additions. However, over time the preferences of men, local traditions, and legalism were added to the teaching, and the institution of Rabbinical Judaism and the Pharisees were born, centered around enlarging the body of traditions. In time, those additions became the only way that the rabbis felt would allow the text of Scripture to be understood. By the time of the New Testament, these oral 26

additions so captivated Rabbinical Judaism that in Matthew 15:6, Messiah Yeshua accused the rabbis of elevating the traditions over the Word of Scripture.

CONTENT OF A PAGE OF TALMUD

The 63 subject divisions of the Talmud concern themselves with practical ways to carry out the Mosaic Law. For instance, the law forbids work on the Sabbath, as the Sabbath is to be a day of rest. For over one hundred pages, the rabbis of the Talmud discuss and debate what that verse means. What exactly is work? What activities are allowed on the Sabbath? What recreation is appropriate? To all these questions, various rabbis give various answers. The old axiom "Whenever there are two Jews, there are three opinions" is clearly seen on the pages of the Talmud. A single page of discussion and debate finds various rabbis proposing answers and other rabbis responding to show the weakness of the other man's opinion. That is why it is often said, "You can prove anything you want on a single page of Talmud." For the average reader looking at an English translation, the legal analysis appears to be very tedious and difficult to follow, and often it is. On occasion, though, there are gems of wisdom that all would agree with. This should not surprise us, as the rabbis did originally start with a biblical base.

Here is an example of a statement in the Talmud that has a biblical basis and with which most Christians would agree: "To break a verbal agreement that is not legally binding is morally wrong." (Tractate *Bava Metzia* 44).

A careful study reveals dozens of examples like this one that show a strong similarity between many of the moral dictates of the Talmud and Scripture, even many that seem to bear a striking resemblance to the words of Messiah Yeshua. Because the Gospels were written before even the earliest parts of Talmud, some scholars have argued that the source of these Talmudic maxims are the very words of Yeshua Himself, who had an influence on the Judaism of His day.

ARE THERE ANTI-CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS IN THE TALMUD?

This is the current issue causing controversy on the Internet. For years the main sources for these sorts of accusations against the Talmud were from cheap, privately printed booklets distributed by white supremacist racist groups. Some of these were reprints from Nazi fascist literature in English that were distributed in America in the 1930s. By the 1970s, extremist black groups like the Nation of Islam picked up on these conspiracy theories and used them for their own purposes to denounce Jewish people. With the start of the Internet, these charges gained a wider audience among the young, impressionable, and often uneducated. Some of the websites claimed to be written by Christians and used the material to make various claims: that there was a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world and destroy Christianity or that the Talmud is full of insults against Jesus and Mary. Today, anyone with an agenda can make a video that is full of lies and easily upload it to the Internet.

So, how do the discussions in the Talmud make reference to Yeshua? Here is an example: "The head Rabbi said: 'For example, Yeshu the Nazarene because he practiced magic." (Tractate Sotah 47a). The context was a discussion of what to do when fellow Jews had sinned and what would be the evidence that their sin had led to full apostasy. Several examples were cited, among them the example of Yeshu (their name for Yeshua), whom they acknowledged had been able to perform miracles—magic in their eyes—and they saw that as proof that He had apostatized. Nothing further is said of Him. The passage simply reveals the negative view of Yeshua by mainstream rabbis in the Talmud. There is no call to act against Christians, no threat against them or their churches. Rather, this attempt to slander Yeshua confirms that His miracles were unquestioned. While the findings of various scholars differ slightly, the consensus is that there are approximately 15 clear or veiled negative references to "Yeshu" in the Talmud, the majority citing Him as one who practiced magic.

In a similar way, there are statements about Mary that reveal a negative view of her. Two rabbis expressed their opinion that her reputation was that of a prostitute and that her son was the product of such a union. These statements were made in the midst of a discussion giving various examples of Jewish people who had left the rabbinic interpretation of the faith.

No threat against Christians was made in the Talmud. Rather, the



slanderous remarks were internal warnings to other Jews. In all, there are about one thousand words that can be considered as references to Yeshua, and several Jewish and Christian scholars have said the actual total is half of that. In a two-million-word set of writings, one thousand words are 0.05 percent.

WHAT IS THE MOTIVE NTI-SEMI1

It is clear from the above that one has to strain to find words in the Talmud that refer to Yeshua. Even then, there is no threat. However, when individuals have set their feet on a path of racism and bigotry toward one group or another, the principles of fairness, truth, and logic are not their goal, but rather they desire to present the group they oppose in a bad light. In essence, they do not begin with the facts, but instead they start with their irrational, sinful hatred. They work backwards from there and attempt to find any stray word or statement by some odd forgotten rabbis expressing their opinions against Yeshua. These racists then present these statements as the standard, overall view held by Jewish people. That is a full, unmitigated lie.

Primarily, the Talmud is studied by Orthodox Jewish men. The vast majority of Jewish people today are not Orthodox, do not live their lives according to Jewish law, and have never opened up a volume of Talmud or read a single line from it. They reject its strict rules and are living their lives according to modern liberty. The largest and fastest-growing segment of Judaism today is the liberal movement called Reform Judaism. In their formative documents of 1843, the founders of this movement wrote: "The Talmud possesses for us no authority, from either the dogmatic or the practical standpoint." So, the Talmud is not a fixed set of rules and regulations that are accepted without question, but the main section of Talmud-the Gemara-is actually the record of debates between rabbis. Sometimes, the weird opinion of one rabbi is dismissed and ridiculed by the other rabbis, but the minority rabbi still has his opinion recorded in the Talmud. What the racist websites do is only quote the opinion of the one minority rabbi. These anti-Semitic websites are dishonest, as they do not tell their readers that the majority of rabbis rejected the minority view. This is very, very important for every Christian to understand because anti-Semitic websites are multiplying on the Internet as people with dishonest agendas spread misinformation and lies.

This has not been an easy article to write. I have spoken with other Jewish believers in Messiah, including two who are pastors, and all of us are exasperated with how easily some Christians believe lies and fables about the Jewish people. We are not here to defend the Talmud, and if that is your impression, you have not read the article carefully. As believers, we reject the idea that the Talmud has authority, and we mourn the hold it has on some of our own Jewish people in blinding them to the light of Messiah Yeshua, our only Savior. In reality, the Talmud is a jumbled collection of writings on the minutia of how an Orthodox Jew should keep Jewish

tradition. Most of it is mundane, but occasionally there are gems of wisdom. On rare occasions an odd rabbi or two lashes out against the Christendom of that day (A.D. 500), which was often unscriptural and had become violent toward the Jewish people.

In contrast to rare negative statements about Yeshua in the Talmud, individuals with church membership have actually carried out 1,800 years of real violence and persecution toward the Jewish people. The Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Pogroms of Eastern Europe—where four of my grandmothers' cousins were hacked to death by church members—are examples of this. Of course, the planned killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children in Europe during the Holocaust is the ultimate example. That is why it is so sickening for those of us who have committed our lives to the Messiah of the New Testament to see "Christians" stir up hatred and bigotry against our own Jewish people.

This article can only touch on the main points of this argument. In reality, there is much more that can be said, but those additional details when read accurately will support the summary here. May each of us have the same attitude as the Apostle Paul, who patiently and compassionately reached out to the Jewish people and said in Romans 10:1,

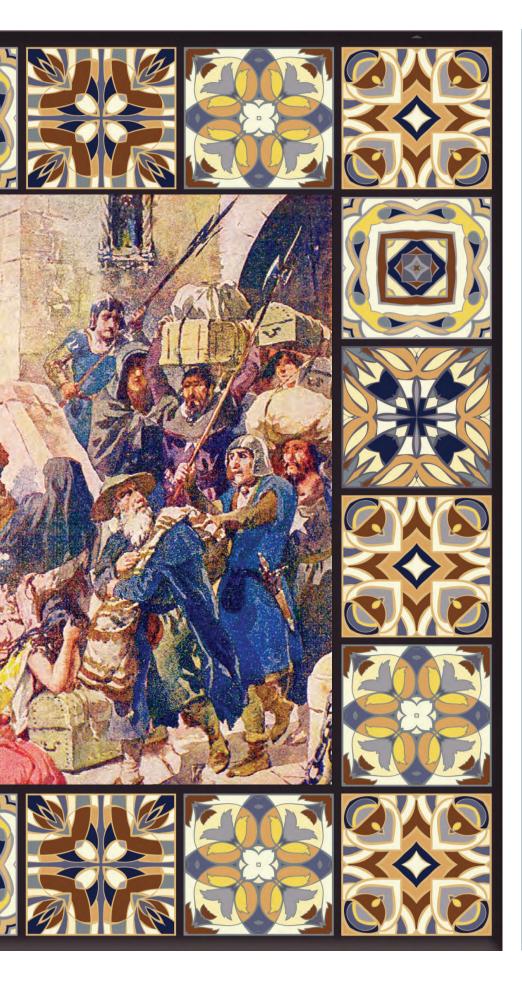












OPPORTUNITIES ARISE

In the spring of 1490, ten years into Torquemada's inquisition of Spain, an unsuspecting wool-comber named Benito Garcia rested from his travels at an inn in the northern village town of Astorga. A baptized converso, sixtyyear-old Garcia was relaxing in the common room of the tavern when a group of drunken men approached him and began rummaging through his knapsack. They discovered some herbs and a wafer, which they concluded must be a consecrated Eucharist host that no layman should possess. The drunkards instantly felt it their Christian duty to gang up on Garcia, beat him, fling a rope around his neck, and drag him to the soon-to-be inquisitor of Astorga, Dr. Pedro de Villada. Villada subsequently beat the poor man some more and subjected him to water torture until Garcia disclosed where and how he had acquired the wafer and his "wicked" purpose for possessing it. This no-small incident in the history of the Spanish Inquisition led to what has become known to this day as the bone-chilling legend of El Santo Niño de La Guardia, The Holy Child of La Guardia.

Our journey in the past articles examined nearly one hundred years of history on the Iberian Peninsula and how the now indigenous Jewish people of Spain were given a choice in the year 1391 to convert to the national religion of Catholicism or die. Those who did convert created a new class of people known as conversos. Over the next decades, some conversos flourished in their new-found religion while others refused to relinguish their Jewish past. Those who clung to their ancestral





rituals were soon to be considered "heretical," which necessitated the established Roman Inquisition to make its way into the kingdoms of Spain under the reluctant authorization of Queen Isabella. Her trusted spiritual adviser, Thomas Torquemada, schemed against the Jewish conversos of Spain in order to bring the inquisition there. He soon found himself Grand Inquisitor, with complete control, unhindered even from the pope, to bring the "heretical" conversos back into the fold of Catholicism or die.

After nearly a decade of torturous submission, the conversos had not borne the fruit Thomas Torquemada had anticipated. His dream of a united Christian Spain was becoming less of a reality and more of a hopeless cause. Torquemada's abandonment of his ambition was due to his belief that a Christianized Spain would be impossible as long as the accursed race inhabited the land and cast its "poisonous web of lies" upon the conversos. In Torquemada's thinking,

newly converted Catholics were constantly bombarded with seduction on the part of the Jewish people to return to the Mosaic Law. "Relapsed" conversos were becoming more common, and conversions were down due to many Jews in Spain gaining more and more respect for those who resisted conversion. Torquemada saw no choice but to formulate a plan that would convince Ferdinand and Isabella to expel the "abominable" race. This would not be an easy task, however, given that Ferdinand—being no fool—saw the great financial benefit in keeping Jewish commerce in his land. In order to succeed, Torquemada would need to persuade the king beyond all doubt that Spain would never achieve its "Christian goal" with the Jewish people in the land. A plan soon took shape that would instill the necessary fear and anger into Ferdinand and the Catholics of Spain.

It was not hard for the Grand Inquisitor to find actions by Jews that could be exaggerated into great threats to Catholic Spain and the Crown, and although there may have been many acts that ultimately led to the expulsion of the Jewish people from Spain, I will focus on three events. They are examples of the rage, horror, and suspicion against the Jewish people that Torquemada impressed upon the citizens of Spain as well as upon the king and the gueen. Separately these events were significant, but collectively they were devastating.

THE CRUCIFIX AT CASAR DE PALOMERO—RAGE

This first incident, as documented by the historian Llorenete,1 was likely no more than a raucous party at an inappropriate time. On Holy Thursday in a small village in Seville, several young Jewish men were having a good time in an orchard rather than being behind closed doors as the Christian law required for a holy day. This caught the attention of a neighbor, Juan Caletrido, who rounded up some local Spaniards to end this "abomination." The mob stormed the party, and all the Jewish youngsters returned to their homes. This is where the reality of the story likely ended. However, the next day—Good Friday—while the faithful Catholics were in church celebrating the Passion, it was reported that a certain number of Jewish men, including the local rabbi, savagely destroyed a large crucifix that stood not far away in a field at Puerto del Gamo. A witness who was in the church relayed what he had "seen" to the congregation. Subsequently, the townspeople sought the rabbi and the young Jewish men of the night before

¹ Raphael Sabatini, Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition (McAllister Editions, 2015), p. 131, quoting Juan Antonio Llorenete, Annals, vol. I, p. 168.



and stoned three of them to death on the spot. They severed the hands of two others and seized the rabbi, who was instantly handed over to the local inquisitors to extract what he knew of this "crime against the faith." The rabbi was put to the rack but knew nothing of which to confess. His abuse was so great that he died by the torturous hands of the inquisitors. Death during torture was an unintended consequence of the evening and made it necessary for each inquisitor to seek absolution from the hands of the others—a paradoxical event indeed.

THE HOLY CHILD OF LA GUARDIA— HORROR

The next circumstance that benefited Torquemada's sordid plan was one that had been rehashed over and over since its origin in twelfth century England: the blood libel. This most recent tale of absurdity was again being used to instill fear and horror to non-Jews. As if following the prescribed method for blood libel accusations of centuries past, this pathetic farce could not have been any more predictable. Just like all other blood libel accusations, this one had no facts behind it, but for the anti-Semitic nation, any opportunity to fan the flames was welcomed. If it were not for records of the case discovered in the nineteenth century, prompting a book on the subject in the year 1887 by historian M. Fidel Fita, the tale would likely have died out. I will only broadly outline the events but would encourage the reader to further look into this great miscarriage of justice.2

As stated above, Benito Garcia was found to have in his possession a consecrated host. For centuries, it had been asserted that a consecrated host was used to either protect oneself or to cast spells on others.3 Hosts were believed to be ingredients used by witches, who



would grind them into powder and mix them with the blood of children in order to cast spells and inflict harm.4 These superstitions carried over to the Jewish people as well. Under interrogation, Garcia confessed that he was a convert to Catholicism but had renounced the faith and returned to his native religion five years earlier. Feeling there was more to be learned, the inquisitor ordered 200 lashes upon Garcia along with water

torture, which consisted of stuffing a rag in his mouth and pouring water onto the rag. Garcia immediately confessed to Judaizing, and as was the insisted expectation of the Inquisition, the helpless victim gave up other Judaizing offenders and associates. These included a twenty-year-old Jewish man named Yuce Franco, Yuce's father, and others from the town.

Garcia's torture further continued, causing yet another confession, no doubt under delirium, with regards to the consecrated host and its intended use. He confessed that the host in his possession was indeed to be used, along with a child's heart, in a sorcerous way to poison the wells and cause all Christians to turn mad in hopes of returning Judaism to the proper dominance it deserved. While there is no record of the questioning that led to this odd confession,5 there were most likely a fair number of leading questions by the inquisitor in order to arrive at such an admission. Garcia's is not the only implausible discovery of this saga. We also find one in the only complete documented records that have been discovered, those of the trial of Yuce Franco.

Upon the admission of Judaizing made by Garcia to the inquisitor, Yuce Franco was immediately imprisoned without being told why. Franco and his family were not conversos, so they did not fall under the umbrella of the inquisitors. However, anyone causing a converso to return back to Judaism was a criminal under Spanish law, which gave the inquisitors full permission to interrogate at will.

² For opposing views of the legend, see: Sabatini, Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition, chapters 19-24; William Thomas Walsh, Isabella of Spain, chapter 25. Sabatini dismisses the legend; Walsh upholds it.

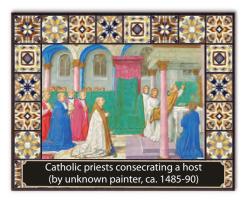
³ R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder* (Yale University Press, London 1988), p. 10.

⁵ What is known of Garcia is recorded in the trial records of Yuce Franco, which are the only surviving record.



In sum, while in prison, Yuce fell ill and requested to his doctor that he be allowed to speak with a rabbi in order to pray with him. An opportunity now presented itself to the inquisitors. Following the advice given by an earlier inquisitor, Nicolas Eymerich, in his Directorum, a Dominican spy was sent to Yuce posing as a rabbi. As yet, the only "crime" Yuce was guilty of was provoking Garcia to re-Judaize. The Dominican spy probed Yuce with questions. Unbeknownst to Yuce, his answers to the spy's questions ultimately caused the execution of nine men, including Yuce himself. One question, undoubtedly, must have been about the reason for Yuce's arrest, as we have in the records an odd and cryptic confession made by Yuce to the Dominican spy: "mita of a nahar, which had been after the manner of Otohavs."6 These words, left untranslated, were deduced by the Dominican spy to mean that Yuce was involved in the killing (mita) of a boy (nahar) in the way of "that Man" (Otohays). In the mind of the spy, Yuce had thus confessed to involvement in the crucifixion murder of a child, in the manner of Yeshua, in order to extract the child's heart for the sorcerous deed already confessed by Garcia.

In learning of this confession, Torquemada had all involved moved to Avila where he could oversee the happenings. After a lengthy trial (likely meant for prolonging the spectacle), nine men in total were handed over to the secular arm of the government to be burned at the stake without so much as the alleged victim's body having ever been found and no report of a missing child having ever been made. Although Garcia vowed to die in his Jewish faith, he confessed to his "heresy" as the flames surrounded



him, and in doing so he was promptly strangled from behind out of mercy for the "penitent."

The reports of this trial were widely spread throughout the kingdoms and read from every pulpit, which did not escape the sovereigns. The coveted horror and outrage of this grand hoax were achieved by Torquemada as his web was well in form. It wasn't enough to create one-time events of rage and horror, however. Torquemada needed a lasting effect—one that would create a lasting mistrust.

THE LETTER FROM CONSTANTINOPLE —SUSPICION

The last item on Torquemada's anti-Semitic campaign was to create such palpable suspicion and fear of the unknown that there would be no choice but for Ferdinand and Isabella to expel the Jewish people from their land. He received help from Cardinal-Archbishop Juan Martinez Siliceo, who recovered an alleged correspondence written fifty years earlier by the Jewish people of Spain and the Jewish people of Constantinople. In the letter, the Spanish Jews sought the advice of those in Constantinople with regards to the constant pressure in Spain to convert to the Catholic faith. The advice given by the Jewish leaders of Constantinople was what sent public opinion over the brink and swayed King Ferdinand to draft his order of expulsion. The contents of the reply were no doubt forged, but the cast of suspicion had been set. The recommendation supposedly given by the Jewish people of Constantinople was such:

The opinion of the Rabbis is that since the King of Spain attempts to make you Christians you should become Christians; since he deprives you of your goods and property, you should make your children merchants, that they may deprive the Christians of theirs; since you say that they deprive you of your lives, make your sons apothecaries and physicians to deprive the Christians of theirs; since they destroy your synagogues, make your sons clerics that they may destroy the Christian temples; since you say that you suffer other wrongs, make your sons enter public offices that thus they may render the Christians subject to them. Do not depart from these orders, and you will see that from oppressed you will come to be held of great account.7

The Constantinople reply was well circulated throughout the kingdoms and caused all Jewish people and recent conversos to be looked upon with tremendous suspicion—the last remaining element to Torquemada's scheme. The fabrication of the letter lay the final

⁶ Sabatini p. 139.

⁷ Sabatini, *Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition*, p. 174.



groundwork for the expulsion of the Jewish people from Spain. With rage, horror, and suspicion circulating among their subjects, there was only one option for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. On March 31, 1492, the edict of expulsion (the Alhambra Decree) was signed by King Ferdinand, ordering that all of the Jewish people of Spain must convert to the Catholic faith or leave the land by the end of July that same year—a decree that would not be reversed until 1968.8

It was a cruel twist of irony, given that the Jewish people of Spain had only three months earlier assisted the monarchy in defeating the Muslim Moors in Granada, the last piece of the reconquest. Despite sacrifice of life, financial capital, and even national pride in defeating the Moors, the Jewish people were faced with bigotry, leading yet again to the choice of conversion, flight, or death. The nation they had called home for a millennium had become the next great diaspora in Jewish history.

CONCLUSION

Jewish expulsion is nothing new in the annals of their history. Dozens upon dozens of nations had earlier expelled what they deemed the accursed race, and dozens more would follow suit in the years to come. The existence of the Jewish people in a certain nation is rarely viewed as it should be: "God has blessed our nation because we have blessed the Jewish people" (Gen. 12:3). The "Final Solution" is always viewed through satanic lenses: "The Jewish people have grown greater and mightier than we; therefore they must go or die."

As we will see in the fifth and final installment, the expulsion was only the beginning of Jewish plight. The evil act inflicted upon the Jewish people of Spain created great hardship for them; disaster and misery lay around every

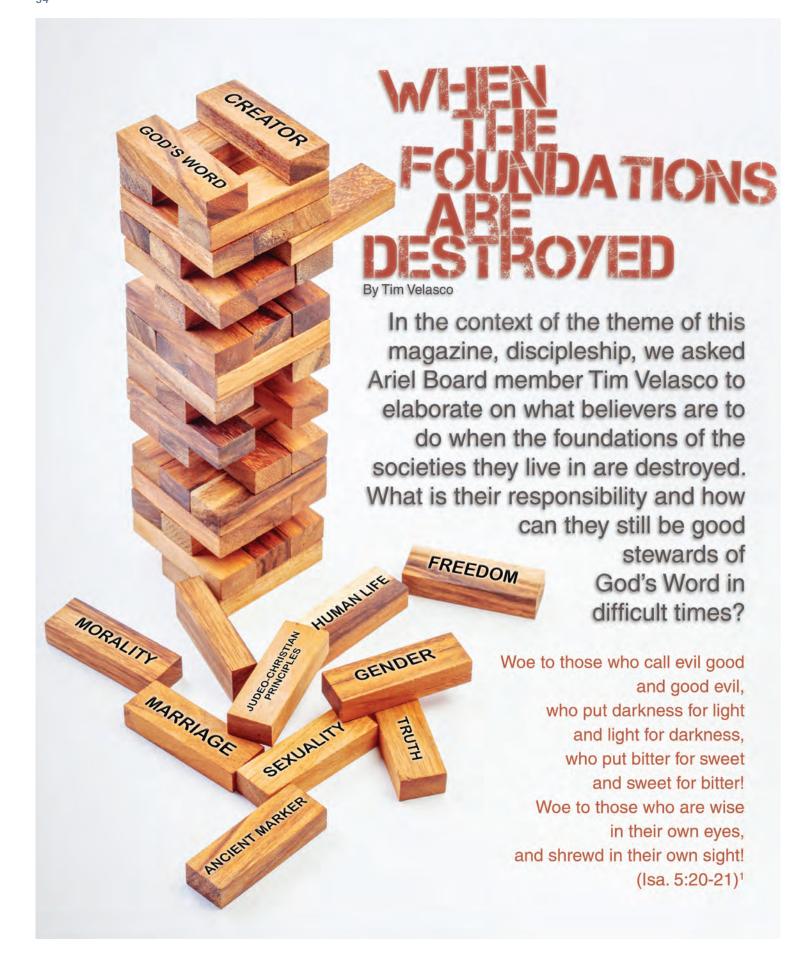
corner. Torquemada's wickedness only increased as the Jewish people made their way toward other lands. But out of the midst of suffering came great triumph, as we shall see next time. Until then, be blessed.





Stuart Wallis is an ordained pastor in Canby, Oregon, where he lives with his wife of 29 years and three of their five children. He received his bachelor's degree in Messianic Studies from Tyndale Biblical Institute and Seminary as well as an extensive education in Jewish Studies through Friends of Israel in New Jersey. This sought-after speaker may be contacted at stuartwallisministries@gmail.com.

⁸ See: David Hatchwell, "The Reconnection of the Hispanic and Jewish Peoples." *JNS.org*, Russel Pergament, Joshua Katzen, 29 July 2020, www.jns.org/spot-light/the-reconnection-of-the-hispanic-and-jewish-peoples/. It is remarkable that it took until the 20th century to undo this wrong.



One need only glance at the daily headlines to see that the words of the Prophet Isaiah, penned over two millennia ago, describe our current culture perfectly. The ancient marker has been moved, and the foundations of law and order are being altered, sometimes violently and irreparably. The question asked of King David in Psalm 11:3 is asked of us today: If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

FÖUNDATIONS UNITED STATES AMÉRICA

The foundations of our society in these United States are rooted in Judeo-Christian principles of law and order and on the ideals of liberty and freedom derived from these fundamental concepts. These, in turn, find their source and are nurtured in the fruitful soil of God's Word, the Bible. The Declaration of Independence makes this abundantly clear when it states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (emphasis added). There is an explicit acknowledgment in this extraordinary document that truth, life, and liberty

derive from God, who is the creator of all ²

The founding fathers knew and understood the importance of liberty and freedom as foundational truths derived from God. This is evident in that the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights guarantees the freedom of religion. As Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. states in his excellent book The Gathering Storm,3 "Religious liberty is the first freedom, the foundational liberty, upon which every other enumerated liberty depends."4 When freedom of religion is denied, it takes extreme courage to stand up as Martin Luther did at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and state: "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other."

It is this freedom of religion later codified into law in the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights that became the principle attractant of so many religious minorities to our shores. The Pilgrims of the Plymouth Colony, through their biblical convictions, were the first to seek freedom from the State Church of England. They were followed by twenty-three Jews from the Dutch colony of Recife, Brazil, who left for Manhattan Island on April 26,1654, on the Dutch ship *Valk* after

the reconquest of the Brazilian Dutch territories by the Catholic Portuguese.⁵ In pre-Independence America, Jew and Gentile were free to separately pursue their faith and enjoy freedoms that did not exist in Europe. Years later, Jew and Gentile joined by faith in Yeshua found the freedom to worship together in Messianic congregations throughout Manhattan and later all over the United States.⁶

PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Yet, in the United States today, espousing biblical views on morality, sexuality, marriage, gender, and human life in the womb that run counter to what one may call "the State Church of Secularism" can get you fired, ostracized, and canceled.7 These secularizing forces have not stopped at the doors of the church of Yeshua, but they have in fact infiltrated many denominations and institutions, causing them to lean away from the Bible and the absolute truth it contains. What then follows is a predictable path of compromise with the current world system. The words of James, the half-brother of our Lord, should ring loud and clear: You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are retrieved from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² One may rightly argue that the founding fathers did not fully understand what they stated because of the evils of slavery, but they were correct in their statement nonetheless because their source was rooted in God's Word.

³ This author is grateful for the full, clear, scholarly, and yet accessible treatment of the topic of secularism found in this book, and this article is heavily indebted to the work of Dr. Mohler found here: https://albertmohler.com/2020/06/23/the-gathering-storm-over-western-civilization.

⁴ R. Albert Mohler, *The Gathering Storm* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2020), p. 165.

⁵ For more information, see: Daniela Levy, De Recife para Manhattan (San Paulo, Brazil: Planeta, 2018).

⁶ See Leopold Cohen's testimony for further information: https://www.jewishtestimonies.com/en/leopold-cohn-the-quest-of-a-young-rabbi/.

⁷ For an example of this statement, see: https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/atlanta-fire-chief-i-was-fired-because-of-my-christian-faith.

a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4). Yet, these words hardly ring at all because fewer than nine percent of Americans read the Bible regularly!⁸

It should be no surprise that so many believers can be easily confused and led astray and are unable to discern that we are called to be friends of sinners—as Yeshua was—and not friends of the world.

It is clear that the foundations of our nation, particularly the freedom of religion, are under attack by the secularizing forces of a new state church that demands absolute allegiance.

WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?

First, we must grasp the fact that the foundations *are* being eroded, and now at an accelerated pace. "The first task of faithfulness lies in understanding reality. Understanding the storm and seeing it for what it is." As Jews and Gentiles who know the Messiah and have a proper understanding of the value of His Word, we must not compromise our integrity and join this "state church." We must realize that we are at war with a world system run by one who seeks to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8).

Second, we must take refuge in God and His Word, as King David stated in Psalm 11:1. How do we do

this? We must spend time in prayer and in the Scriptures. We cannot afford to be part of the 91% of people in this nation who are not reading and studying the Bible daily.10 We must make full use of the grace available to us in daily living bought through the precious blood of the Messiah, a reality that can only be fully understood through the Scriptures. This means that when we fail to do what is right, we do not waste precious time wallowing in guilt. Instead, we repent, confess, stand up clean (1 Jn. 1:8-9), and keep going forward toward the prize (Phil. 3:14)! As the pastor of Midvalley Bible Church in Bluffdale, Utah, Douglas Hornok said in a recent sermon on this topic, "We keep on being righteous!" 11

Third, we must not succumb to the temptation when the foundations are being destroyed to "flee like a bird." There are times in which Yeshua avoided conflicts (Jn. 7:1), but there were many times He faced them head on. So, how do we know when to flee and when to stay? Again, the answer is in the Word of God. When the foundations are being destroyed, we are not to flee. This means that we must know, preach, teach, and, most importantly, live out the Word of God for the whole world to see, even if it involves conflict. We have, after all, been sent into the world as a sanctifying force (Jn. 17:16-19).

Finally, we must remember that the upright shall behold his face (Ps.

11:7). God is on His throne, and He closely watches all that transpires in this world and is surprised by absolutely nothing and no one. He tests the righteous, but hates—yes *hates*—the wicked; remember that. The church of Yeshua the Messiah is in *no* danger of having its foundation destroyed (1 Cor. 3:11) because our Messiah promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Mt. 16:18). However, we as believers are in danger of unfaithfulness. Mohler puts it this way:

The great threat we face is not to the church's existence, but to its faithfulness. Nothing in the cosmos, not even the gale and torrent of a secular tide will negate the promise of Christ for his church. But the church's faithfulness is always at stake, and that is particularly true in a secular age. We must be aware, discerning, and careful in our thinking, our preaching, and how we raise our children. If people can be secularized within our churches, they can also be secularized while living in our homes—if we are not marked by conviction and faithfulness.12

My prayer for us is that we will be captive to the Word of God as we live as exiles on this earth and that we will live our lives fully (Jer. 29:5-7), not seeking conflict, but ready to take our stand if need be. After all, like Luther, we can do no other.

⁸ Brammer, Bryan. "2020 'State of the Bible' Report Reveals Only 9% of Americans Read Bible Daily." *Disrn.com*, Adam Ford; Seth Dillon, 27 July 2020, disrn.com/news/new-state-of-the-bible-report-reveals-only-9-of-americans-read-bible-daily/.

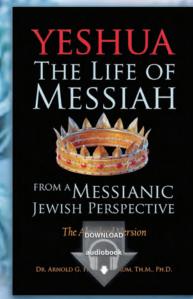
⁹ Mohler, The Gathering Storm, p. xii.

¹⁰ Ariel Ministries offers 50 free Bible studies, available here: https://www.ariel.org/resources/come-and-see/studies?navid=2390956. These manuscripts can help set a strong foundation in the Word of God. Furthermore, Ariel Ministries has an online school that may be accessed here: https://www.ariel-courses.com.

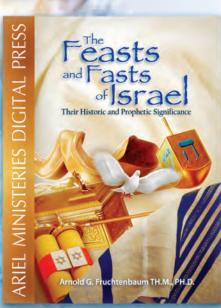
¹¹ For his full sermon, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8P3h7RmNbY.

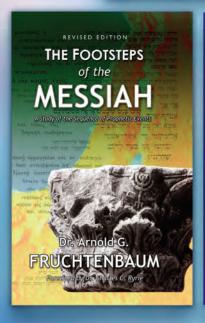
¹² Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 21-22.

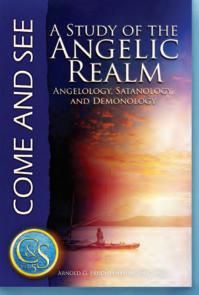
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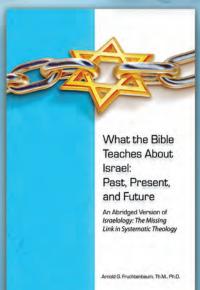


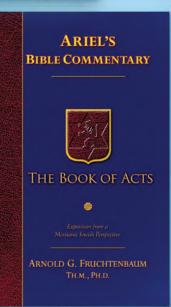
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