

Winter 2021 / Volume 1 / #41
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ARIEL
MINISTRIES

FAITHFUL SUFFERING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Plus:

The
Messiah
in the Torah

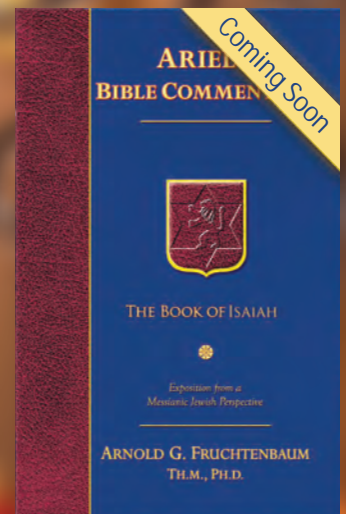
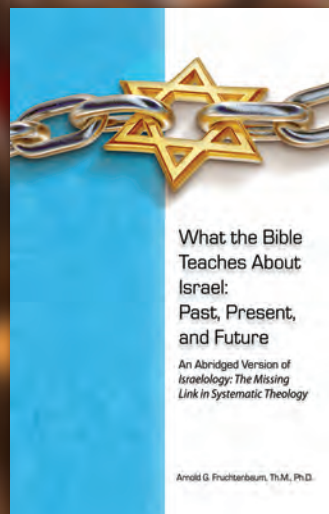
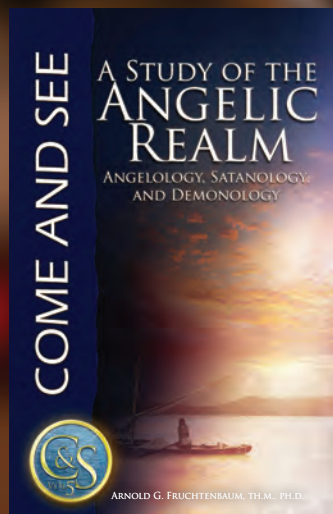
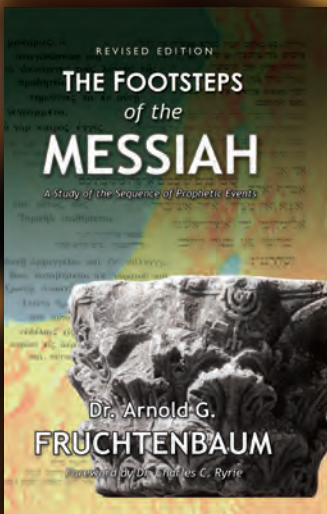
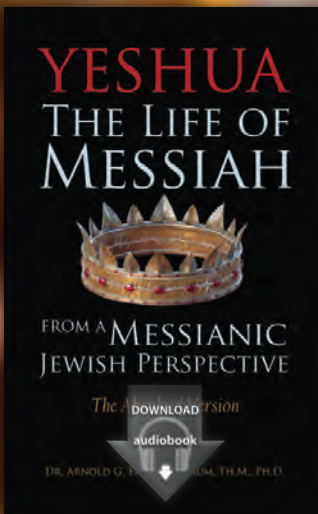
Dispensationalism and the
Protestant Reformation

The Rapture
Debate in Revelation

How to
Fulfill the
Law of Messiah

Year End Sale

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Cover Story:

In this cover story, Dr. Cory Marsh elaborates on a theme of John's Gospel that is often overlooked: In stark contrast to a theology of "comfortability," this Gospel teaches a theology of suffering. It pictures God as the ultimate sovereign and Messiah as the pinnacle expression of God who suffered in glory. The believer's union with Messiah manifests tangibly in his or her own suffering for God's glory. Because Messiah is God, suffering reveals the character of God in unexpected but glorious ways to the believer.

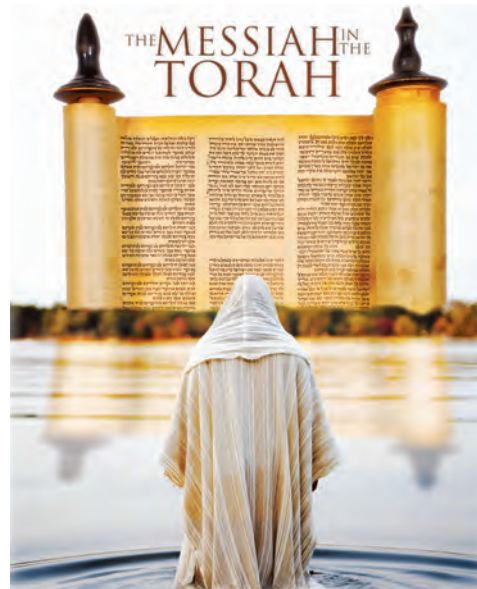
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Expertly leading the reader through the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, Dr. Gary Gromacki reveals the Messiah in the Torah, ending his article with a cry of joy: "At this 'Messiahmas' season, we can rejoice that Yeshua left heaven to be born of a virgin and fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies that predicted His first coming. Let us rejoice because we have found the Messiah, and His name is Yeshua!"



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22 Dispensationalism

How did the budding of the dispensational movement, beginning primarily in the nineteenth century, complete the revolution begun by the Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth century? The purpose of this article by Dr. Andy Woods is not only to explain this nexus but also to shed light on how dispensational theology became a fast and faithful friend to Israel and the Zionist movement.



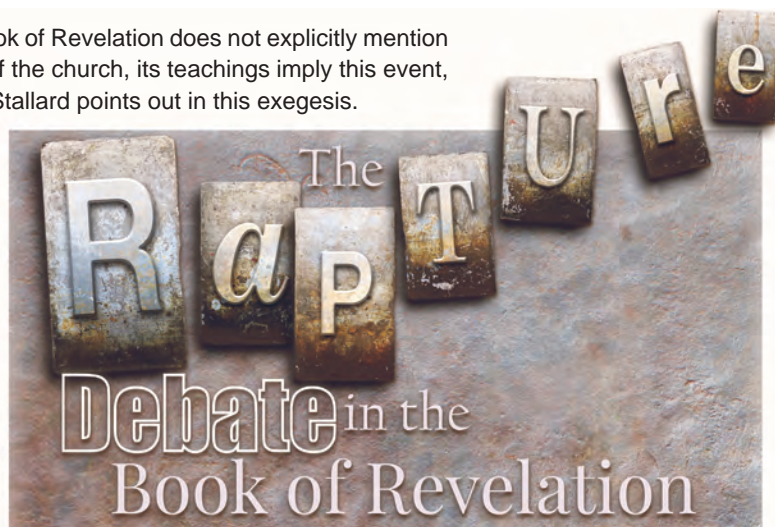
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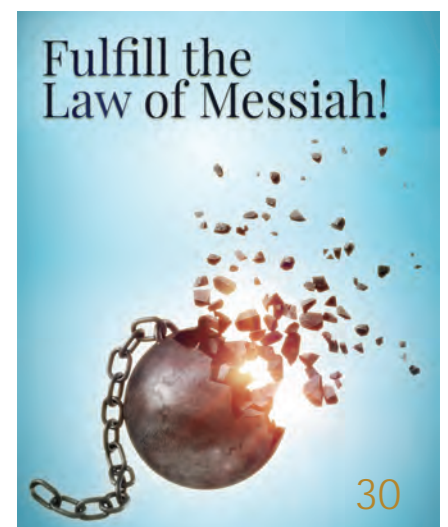
Sin in our congregations is not a hypothetical possibility but a reality. Tim Velasco encourages his readers to follow the Law of Messiah without falling into the trap of legalism.

32 Rapture

While the book of Revelation does not explicitly mention the rapture of the church, its teachings imply this event, as Dr. Mike Stallard points out in this exegesis.



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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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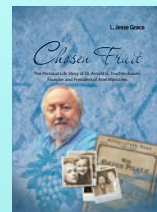
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Let us become like Ruth!

Once again, we have reached the season of Hanukkah and Christmas and New Year's. Usually, this is a joyous season, one that combines precious family traditions with promises of change. Maybe in 2022, we will finally go back to "normal." Maybe this year, the Lord will turn back the clock. Maybe. Maybe not. Here is the good news: It does not really matter what the new year will bring. Our calling has not changed. All of us are to share the good news of Messiah with a dying world, and we are to make disciples.

One of the most impressive stories of how sharing the gospel is done properly comes from Dr. Fruchtenbaum's past.¹ In 1957, Ruth Wardell was working for what today is Chosen People Ministries. She taught the children's and youth classes at the East New York branch of the ministry. The story of how she got in touch with the Fruchtenbaum family has been told in *Chosen Fruit*, Dr. Fruchtenbaum's biography. What is of importance here is that when Ruth invited 13-year-old Arnold to her class, she had no idea how unprepared she was for the searching, in-depth questions the teenager would be asking. Arnold could read Hebrew, and he had a good grasp of the Hebrew Scriptures. He was also familiar with some of the rabbinic teachings concerning Messiah. By all standards, he was a devout Jew. Ruth was caught off guard by his probing questions. She went home after their first class together and immediately pulled out her Isaac Leeser translation of the Hebrew Bible. She went through each Messianic prophecy, comparing various Bible translations to the Isaac Leeser translation. She wanted to be fully prepared for her next meeting with this knowledgeable Jewish teenager. While studying, she prayed that God would speak to Arnold's heart and that she would have the ability to properly communicate the truth to him so that he would one day come to faith in Yeshua.



God answered these prayers favorably. Through her study of the Word, He prepared Ruth's heart. Arnold, too, had been studying the Messianic claims within Scripture, and when he and Ruth met a second time, they began comparing Scriptures. That day, his heart began to soften toward the Person of Yeshua. Before going home, he prayed to receive Yeshua as his Messiah and Savior.

Here is a New Year's resolution that should be in complete agreement with God's will: In case another wave of the pandemic locks down the world, let us become like Ruth. Let us use the time wisely and prepare ourselves for the opportunity to share the gospel. These opportunities WILL come when we pray for them.

Happy Hanukkah and a blessed 2022 to us all,

Christiane Jurik

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editorarielministries@gmail.com

¹The longer version of this remarkable story may be found in Harold A. Sevener, *A Rabbi's Vision: A Century of Proclaiming Messiah* (Charlotte, NC: Chosen People Ministries, 1994), pp. 318-322.



Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

MEET THE TEAM



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ARIEL BRANCHES



Ariel Australia **Chris & Lisa Savage**

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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 & Sharon Gabizon**

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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 its material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India **Bakul N. Christian**

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Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. Using Ariel's extensive teaching material, he expounds the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in his home state. He is also responsible for the translations into the Gujarati language.



Ariel Israel **Sasha & Lilian Granovsky**

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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.



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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**

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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 **Paolo & Martina Speciale**

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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

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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.



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



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Wion and Shirley Wleh represent Ariel Ministries in Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa. The husband-and-wife team teaches the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in workshops, seminars, and weekly classes designed for pastors and laypersons alike.

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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.



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Joe is the supervisor of the Shoshanah Campus, which is the home of Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies in Keeseville, NY. Every summer, he and his wife Cindy organize and host Ariel's ten-week Bible study program on campus.



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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 – Field Representative **(Rock Hill, SC.)**

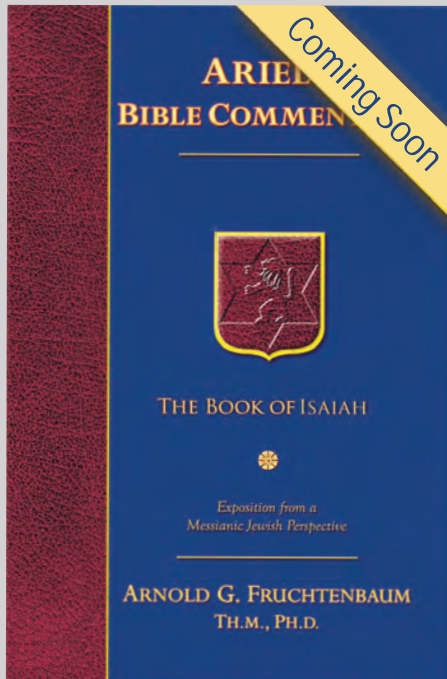
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Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



January Publication

The book of Isaiah is one of the most popular and fascinating texts of the Hebrew Scriptures. Its author, Isaiah, is often called the prince of prophets, for he wrote with extraordinary beauty and imagery. His work is full of facts about the society of Israel around the year 700 B.C. Its chief value, however, lies in its abundance of prophecy, ranging from near to far prophecies and everything in between. Like no other author



before him, Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum has dissected the various levels of prophecy and provided a meticulous exegesis of the text in a new commentary that will be released in December. He has consulted the great rabbis of the past and reproduced their viewpoints wherever appropriate. The result is a fascinating commentary that leaves no doubt that Isaiah foresaw both the first and second comings of the Jewish Messiah as well as the final restoration of Israel in preparation for the Messianic kingdom.

Mottel Baleston expresses the importance of the commentary in the following words:

“In both the mainstream Jewish community and the Christian community, the book of Isaiah is recognized as the single most important biblical text holding the key to the identity of the Messiah. For those of us in the Messianic Jewish community, it holds a central place as it also teaches that there will be a remnant of Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua in the last days. While I have heard Dr. Fruchtenbaum expertly teach through Isaiah in detail, to hold in one’s hands an expanded copy of this teaching with references is truly a treasure. This commentary is highly recommended to our Messianic Jewish community and to the Christian world as a standard for a full, conservative interpretation of the book of Isaiah. Indeed, all who value God’s Word will find it to be a true gem.”

Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s commentary on Isaiah will be released in January 2022.

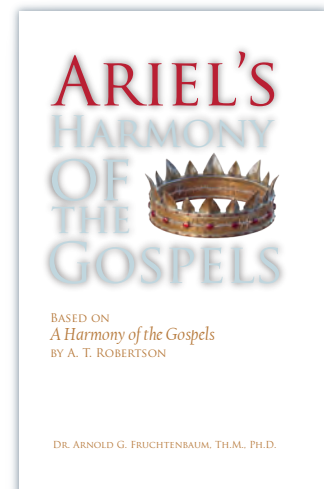


Ariel Hungary

The Importance of Ariel’s Publications

In June of this year, we started a teaching series on the book of Acts. We are using Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s commentary on Acts as the basis for our teaching. As it turns out, a study of Acts is very helpful, especially for those who come from a charismatic background. Once they understand the transitory character of the book, they get a better understanding of things such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and so on.

Another book that has helped us greatly is *Ariel’s Harmony of the Gospels*, which we have made available in Hungarian. One of our regular attendees, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, has begun reading this harmony and commented on its importance. She said that the whole story of Yeshua’s life is more embraceable when read this way. This has led to great discussions about faith and salvation.



Shoshanah Campus

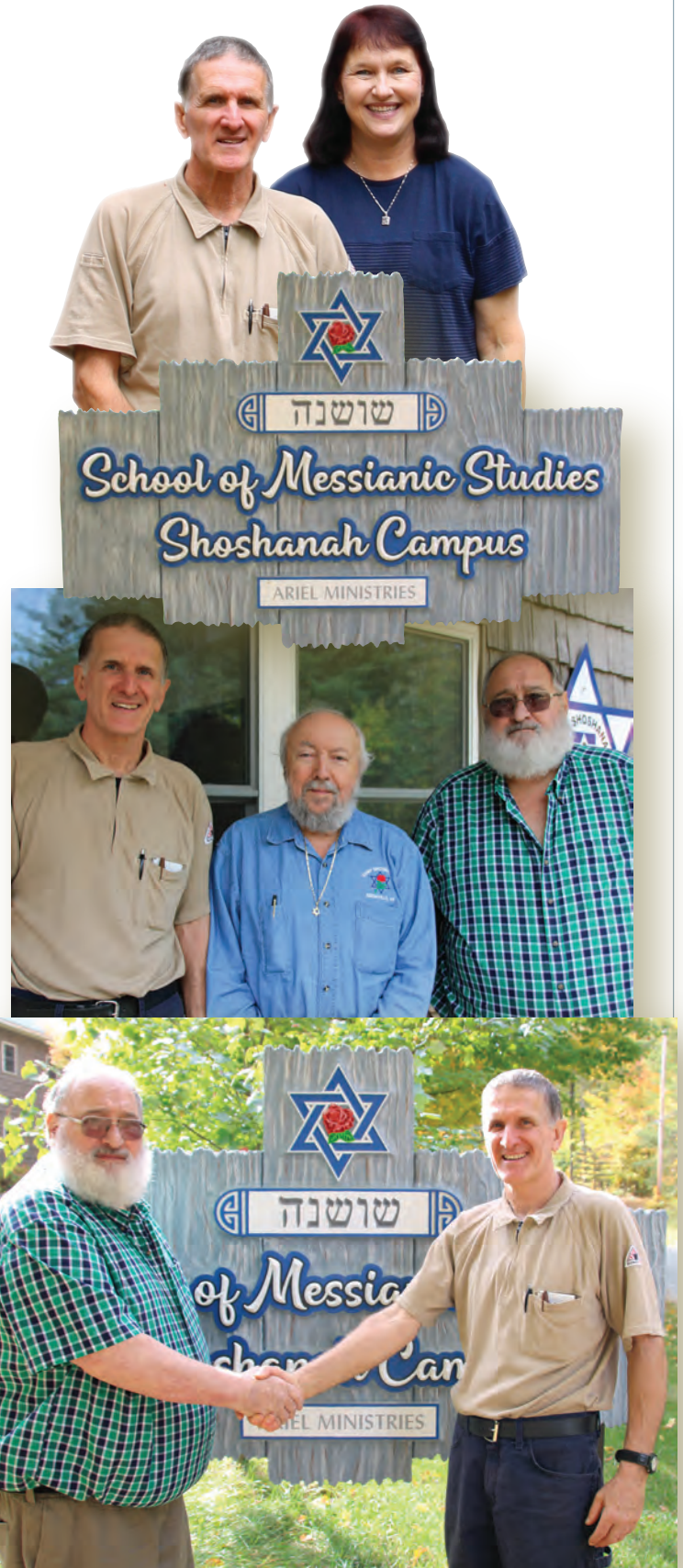
Change in Leadership

Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies consists of two elements: There is the online school, and then there is the Shoshanah Campus, a beautiful property with dorms, a lecture hall, multiple classrooms, and a large dining hall. The property is nestled in the picturesque Adirondack Mountains in Upstate New York. Over the decades, it has undergone tremendous changes that could be summed up with this simplistic slogan: from campground to college. The driving force behind this metamorphosis has certainly been Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's vision of such a school. However, the practical implementation of this vision has been accomplished by multiple faithful servants, one of whom is Gary Demers. In 1995, Ariel Ministries hired Gary, a builder by trade, as supervisor of the Shoshanah Campus. By May 1996, Gary and his family had relocated from Vermont to the dilapidated caretaker's house down the road along the campsite. Anyone who has visited the Shoshanah Campus since this time knows that the caretaker's house did not remain dilapidated for long. Gary quickly rebuilt it to its current splendor, adding a lecture hall, a stunning and spacious dining hall with adjacent classrooms, and a slew of new cabins and dorms to the campus.

Gary's wife, Melissa, affectionately known as Missy by most students, has also become an integral part of the school, diligently caring for visitors, teachers, and students alike.

After twenty-six years of service to the ministry, the Demers announced their desire to retire at the end of 2021. It will be difficult to fill their shoes, but Joe and Cindy Azevedo have accepted the challenge. The couple recently moved from Massachusetts to Keeseville, New York, in search of a way to express their love for Jewish and Gentile believers through hands-on labor. Gary has been training Joe for the past months in everything the new supervisor will need to know about the property's upkeep and the building projects that still need to be completed in the future. The Demers will stay in the caretaker's home for another three years, assisting Joe any way they can.

We at Ariel Ministries are grateful to the Lord for His provision and wish Gary and Melissa the best in their well-deserved retirement. We pray for Joe and Cindy and are looking forward to many years of fruitful ministry at the Shoshanah Campus!



Top picture: Joe and Cindy Azevedo

Middle picture (from left to right): Joe Azevedo, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, and Gary Demers

Bottom picture: Gary Demers passing the baton to his successor, Joe Azevedo



In Memory of Pearl Bono

Ariel Ministries has very good friends in Las Vegas: Peter and Kathy Perazzo.

Many times, the two have managed book tables for Dr. Fruchtenbaum during conferences in California and other places, and Kathy belongs to the team of volunteers who support our

publishing department. In July of this year, the Messianic community of Las Vegas lost its matriarch, Pearl Bono. Kathy has written the following about this great woman of God:



Pearl Bono, the matriarch of the Messianic community in Las Vegas

Pearl was raised Orthodox in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco, where she suffered much persecution from both Arabs and so-called Christians. When she got to a marriageable age, her family arranged a marriage for her, and she became the wife of Jack Bono. Eventually, life in Morocco got too difficult due to the persecutions, and Jack gave Pearl the choice of moving to Israel or to America. She chose the latter, and in 1956, they moved to Pittsburgh. Through some pretty miraculous events, both Pearl and Jack came to the Lord within a year of each other. Jack had attended Yeshiva as a young man and felt called to teach, so he began to share the good news of Messiah with his Jewish brothers and sisters as well as with Gentiles.

Eventually, the couple felt called to move to Las Vegas, where they opened *Etz Chaim*, the first Messianic congregation in this city. I met Pearl and Jack in the fall of 1987 when I was a traveling nurse and brand-new believer. Even then, I knew I was called to study the Scriptures from a Jewish perspective and to reach out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jack used Ariel's materials for Bible study and Shabbat

services, which is how I got introduced to this ministry. It is because of Jack's instruction that I have committed to memory many Old Testament Messianic prophecies.

Our congregation was a tight group. Jack and Pearl took us under their wings and were like parents to several of us. Life was not easy for them as Jack suffered with severe illness over the years, but Pearl always stood by his side. They displayed a godly marriage and supported one another through good times and bad. They also made a good team: Jack taught, and Pearl was given a visitation ministry. She loved to encourage others through the Word and was an amazing prayer warrior, probably because of the troubles she had encountered in her own life. She was persecuted both for being Jewish and for being a "Christ killer." Yet, whenever I watched her worship in song and with her tambourine, I could see joy and fervency for the Lord. I was amazed that the Lord had called her to follow Him in whose name she had been persecuted.

On the inside, Pearl was a true *Eshet Chayil* (a Proverbs 31 woman). On the outside, she was beautiful and never showed up in public without makeup and jewelry. She had high cheek bones and was a sharp dresser. She somehow reminded me of Sophia Loren. She would chuckle when I said this.

Pearl never had a driver's license, and where Jack went, Pearl accompanied him. While Jack was quite serious, Pearl had the sense of humor, and with her high-pitched voice, everything sounded funnier. I am fortunate to have been part of her family and am quite close to her daughters. When I went on to another nursing rotation in the early days, she prayed me back into town, and I have not been able to get out since! When Pearl prayed, God listened, and I feel humbled that she cared about me that much. She will always be with me and in my heart because God gives mothers to those who have none.

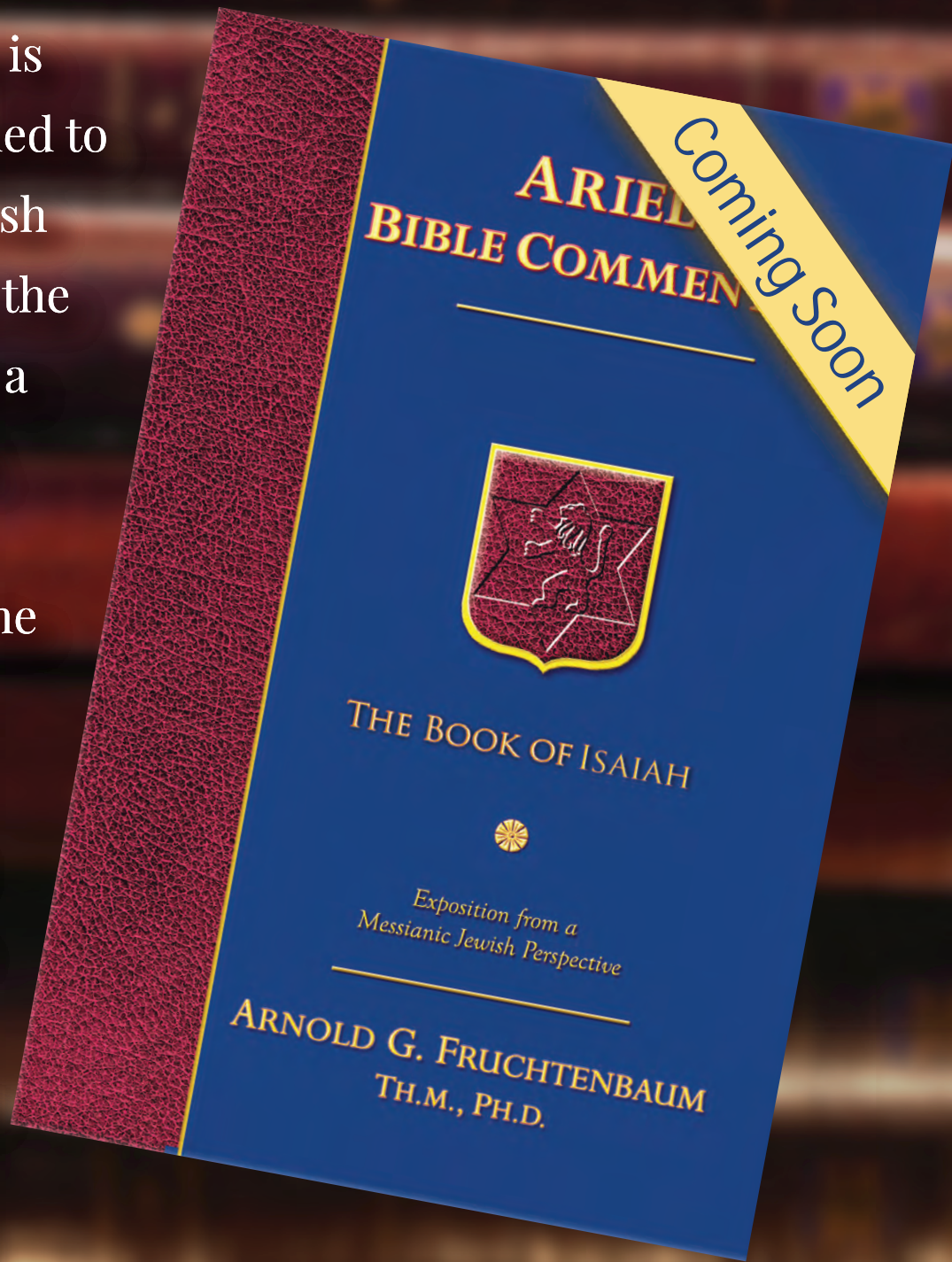


Kathy Perazzo and Pearl Bono

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

“This commentary is highly recommended to our Messianic Jewish community and to the Christian world as a standard for a full, conservative interpretation of the book of Isaiah. Indeed, all who value God's Word will find it to be a true gem.”

— Mottel Baleston



FIND THESE AND OTHER MESSIANIC JEWISH BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES AT

ARIEL.ORG



Two trends exist in scholarship devoted to the Gospel of John. The first is by conservatives who tend to appropriate an almost exclusive prism of “high Christology” as a hermeneutic to the Fourth Gospel (FG). The second is by critical scholars who focus their interpretive efforts on reconstructing the FG and its audiences. These two tendencies have unintentionally caused Johannine scholars across the spectrum to overlook significant questions raised by the text on the problem of suffering as it relates to believers.

Very few, like Paul Anderson, have recognized that John does contain a theme of suffering. In his discussion on the blind man in John 9, Anderson assessed: “Throughout John, one may detect various ways of struggling with the problem of suffering, even in the light of God’s sovereign love and goodness.”¹ If he is correct that a problem of suffering indeed exists *throughout* John, then it stands to reason that the FG as a whole offers a theology of personal affliction that, far from contradicting God’s love for His children, may even serve to amplify it.



It is worth pausing to consider an obvious fact in John's Gospel: Suffering is an antecedent to all of Yeshua's healing signs. In fact, almost all scenes underscoring one's faith are prefaced by an affliction of some sort (e.g., 4:53; 9:38; 11:14-15). Yet, too often, readers of John quickly bypass the real human trauma experienced by the sufferer, viewing them merely as props for Yeshua's healings. Unfortunate readings like this tend to overlook references to "glory" that are interspersed throughout John in relation to those who suffer (e.g., 11:4; 21:19). There is actual glory in how one suffers. Like Yeshua's suffering that exalted God (12:32-33), John views the suffering of believers as a uniquely ordained channel that exalts, glorifies, and reveals God.

Put differently, because John presents Yeshua's afflictions in terms of exaltation or glory, he equally presents afflictions for Yeshua's followers in terms of exaltation or glory. This precludes any notion of suffering for believers as dismal or purposeless in the FG. In fact, John's unique glory theme reveals an indelible link that connects themes of suffering to discipleship, highlighting a combined ensemble that reveals God in Messiah to others. Indeed, the FG lends itself to a discipleship that often promises extreme suffering and sacrifice *without* physical healing, such as in Peter's case (21:18-19). As John makes clear, such suffering for the believer is grounded only in Messiah who modeled the same.²

Driven by an emphasis of faith, glory, and affliction, a significant premise in the Johannine narrative emerges:

*God has ordained
believers to suffer, and He
has done so purposefully
to glorify Himself.*

Such is demonstrated by examples of various believers in John's Gospel who suffered trauma. These Johannine suffering believers stand as paradigms for later followers of Messiah who likewise suffer. Pushing readers of the FG to trust in Yeshua (20:31), John shows that God purposely ordains suffering, whether physical or mental trauma, to be endured by believers around the world as a catalyst for faith and glory.

Though admirable, the tendency by some to emphasize the Christology in John to the point of virtual exclusivity has unfortunately and unintentionally blinded them from seeing the *humanity* portrayed in John's Gospel.³ By reading John with a view toward not only what it teaches about Messiah but also what it teaches about believers in light of why Messiah came (1:14), it makes the FG relatable to people who are struggling with pain and suffering. Within John are real historical people who endured real historical afflictions, and their suffering was never purposeless. In every example of a sincere seeker or believer who suffers in John's Gospel, God is glorified (i.e., revealed) and the suffer-

er's faith is strengthened. This truth has a ministering effect to readers of John who are themselves struggling with personal trauma.

Questions on Suffering Raised by John

Unlike the Synoptics, in which maladies often appear within group settings (e.g., Mark 3:7-12; Luke 17:12-19), John emphasizes several key individuals who traversed life with some sort of affliction. This includes both personal physical and mental trauma, raising salient questions. What, for example, is the reader to make of John's explicit claims that a man's congenital infirmity seems to have been ordained by God or that positively confessing knowledge of Yeshua can result in being ostracized from society (John 9)? Why did Yeshua intentionally leave His "beloved friend" to fully experience a terminal disease (John 11)? What are readers to make of Yeshua predicting the torturous death of one of His closest disciples (John 21)? To these can be added questions relating to the history (and distinctions) of suffering among God's people: Why is affliction now promised specifically for believers who act *obediently* in faith, when for generations, believers were promised afflictions for their *disobedience* (John 15)?⁴ These are questions raised by John's Gospel, and their answers intertwine threads of faith and glory.

¹ Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6: With a New Introduction, Outlines, and Epilogue* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010), 158.

² Cf. Edward W. Klink III, "Discipleship in the Gospel of John," in *Following Jesus Christ: The New Testament Message of Discipleship for Today*, ed. John K. Goodrich and Mark L. Strauss (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019), 74.

³ A recent study calling attention to the 'Christocentricity' of most Johannine scholars who tend to eclipse any ecclesiological patterns in the FG is Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, SNTS Monograph Series 166 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴ This question suggests a dispensational distinction between Israel and the church through the phenomenon of suffering.



All cases of suffering believers in John revolve around both Yeshua's public and private ministries. They are presented in the literature as historical believers in Yeshua as well as paradigms for later believers in the Messianic assembly.⁵ An implication is that the afflictions endured by or promised to Yeshua's followers throughout the Johannine narrative are intended to serve followers of Messiah who are experiencing similar sufferings at any time throughout the world. Keeping with John's purpose statement in 20:31, they are meant to lead the suffering believer to a deeper faith in Yeshua.

An Overview of Faithful Suffering in John

Altogether, there are five separate movements of affliction among believers in the FG that are either endured by or promised to those exhibiting a positive relationship with Yeshua. Hence, the adjective "faithful" is used to modify "suffering" because in each case the sufferer demonstrates faith in Yeshua.⁶ These examples include: the royal official (4:46-54), the man born blind (9:1-41), Lazarus and his sisters (11:1-37), the disciples as a group (14:1-16:33), and Peter at his restoration and commission (21:15-23). As each example serves as a paradigm for later believers, today's readers can relate to and glorify God through their own bouts of affliction shared with those in the Johannine narrative: the royal

official = parental anguish (John 4); the man born blind = physical disability and alienation (John 9); the Lazarus family = disease, death, and bereavement (John 11); the disciples as a group = betrayal, grief, and persecution (John 14-16); Peter = martyrdom (John 21).

In none of these cases is there an immunity to trauma; they each relay the full brunt of the anguish described. In every case, the sufferer obeys or trusts in Yeshua and glorifies God through his or her mental or physical suffering. A Johannine logic of suffering that revolves around Messiah becomes apparent through them:

Because Messiah suffered afflictions to the glory of God, believers in Messiah are at times called to glorify God in their afflictions.

As such, suffering in John's Gospel is not something for the believer to fear or avoid; suffering is enshrined in *glory* as it reveals God in Messiah to the suffering believer and to the world around them. Contemporary implications are abundant, not the least of which are those contrasted with unbiblical responses to suffering. Modern "right to die" campaigns and prosperity gospel movements are just a few relevant examples.⁷



Two Specific Exemplars of Faithful Suffering in John

Throughout John, God is revealed in the believer's affliction, underscoring that suffering is not purposeless. Space limits a full-orbed analysis of each example above, but some comments on two of them will help. The blind man's faith and affliction in John 9 are particularly pronounced. As the narrative unfolds, the man is identified solely by his congenital blindness, a rare disability in Scripture (vv. 2, 32). His implicit faith is exhibited by his immediate obedience to Yeshua to "go wash" in verse 7, highlighting a contrast with that of the crippled man's complacency a year earlier (5:6-7). The man's unquestioned compliance to Messiah sets in motion events eventually leading to his direct confession of faith and worship of Yeshua (v. 38).

Explicit in the text is that the man's blindness from birth was always purposeful. Indeed, it was doxological. Quite literally, Yeshua explained that the man was born blind "in order that" God's work would be displayed in him (v. 3). Moreover, a dramatic irony occurs in the pericope in that it is not until *after* Yeshua opens the man's eyes that a new type of suffering begins. Following the miracle, the man who can now see endures a series of personal interrogations from the community along with the most crushing blow: betrayal from his own parents, who

⁵ Though technically the Messianic assembly or church would not be born until Pentecost in Acts 2, John does anticipate a specific messianic ecclesiology with his promises of the Holy Spirit throughout John 14-16, coupled with Yeshua's declaration of Himself as the "true vine" centered in the middle of these predictions. For more on this, see Cory M. Marsh, "Jesus as the True Vine: A Transition of Economies Announced at John 15," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2019), 103-140.

⁶ This nomenclature is meant to distinguish specific suffering ordained for *believers* in the FG as opposed to suffering described in general or that experienced by non-believers. The lame man in John 5 would represent the latter.

⁷ Though dated, a good survey of the former is C. Everette Koop, *The Right to Live; The Right to Die* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1976). As to the latter, an excellent critique of name-it-claim-it prosperity doctrine cowritten by an ex-insider is Costi W. Hinn and Anthony G. Wood, *Defining Deception: Freeing the Church from the Mystical-Miracle Movement* (El Cajon: SCS Press, 2018).



When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.

John 9:6



feared the Jewish leadership more than they loved their son (vv. 18-23). Through it all, his testimony for Messiah elevates in boldness, leading to his being cast out of the community in verse 34. The reader of the story should recall that the prophet Isaiah predicted a future time when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened” (Isa. 35:5), a forecast of what life would be like when the Messiah would be on the earth (cf. Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 7:22). In John 9, the glory of God is revealed through one man’s trials, beginning with blindness and ending with worship of the Messiah himself (v. 38).

Viewing the blind man as a paradigm for today’s believer, the reader sees

God’s sovereignty and grace in dramatic fashion. He comes to understand that God is absolutely sovereign over a believer’s handicaps or persecutions and even reveals the Messiah through such traumatic experiences. Hence, the narrative of John 9 ministers to believers who suffer from disabilities, familial abandonment, and even expulsion for one’s faith. Through infirmity, Messiah is revealed.

This story is shared in remarkably similar fashion with the Lazarus narrative in John 11. In John 9, a healed man confesses belief and worships Yeshua (9:38). In John 11, the sister of (who will be) a healed man gives a worshipful confession (11:27). It is clear in the

latter account that Yeshua’s intentional delay caused great angst in an already dismal situation.⁸ Both sisters’ reactions upon Yeshua’s return suggest as much (vv. 21, 32). The reader is to feel the full force of the trauma being experienced by this family who is grieving over a loved one dying from a fatal disease. Physical illness and bereavement provide the necessary background to see Yeshua as the ultimate healer. But the pain must first be given its due.

Through shared syntax, both the blind man and Lazarus accounts elevate God’s glory above the reported malady. Most similar between the two is the explicit language used to disclose the reason for Lazarus’s suffering. The reader is given a contrast and purpose for his sickness by use of the same language as the blind man in 9:3. That is, the affliction was not an uncontrollable act of cruel fate, “but in behalf of the glory of God, *in order that* the Son of God may be glorified through it” (11:4, emphasis added). The focus of Lazarus’s sickness is, therefore, on revealing something far beyond the present situation. Yeshua, the very Son of God, will be “glorified” or revealed for who He is through it all—Lazarus’s illness, his death, his sisters’ angst over it, and finally his resurrection.⁹

Thus, functioning as a paradigm, the Lazarus story becomes a teacher of sorts to believers everywhere. The narrative leaves little doubt that God allows even those “whom He loves” to suffer (11:3, 5). With this, the reader who may be experiencing a terminal illness (or grieving over someone expe-

⁸ It is interesting that the text simply assumes that Yeshua knew that Lazarus had died without Him ever being told (vv. 11–14). At the least, this suggests Yeshua had prophetic insight. At the most, which may go beyond what the text can bear, a subtle undercurrent of Yeshua’s omniscience and therefore deity underlies the passage.

⁹ The subjunctive δοξασθῆναι (“may be glorified”) in 11:4 is best seen as a constative aorist, referring to Yeshua’s glorification caused by the entire event: Lazarus’s sickness, his state becoming progressively worse, his death, the sisters’ dismay and bereavement, and finally Yeshua’s raising of him.



riencing a terminal illness) learns that even the most extreme trauma in no way clashes with God's perfect love for them. God is sovereign over all suffering and determines it to reach its purpose of bringing Himself glory, even drawing the sufferer closer to Him in the process (v. 4). Moreover, the story teaches that genuine suffering creates a more genuine belief in Messiah. Yeshua Himself declared that Lazarus's illness and consequent death occurred "in order that" the disciples would believe in Him afresh (v. 15).

A believer's faith is strengthened when God in Messiah is revealed through what appears to be horrific circumstances. Like the former blind man whose infirmity was never a finality, the debilitating ailment of Lazarus did not have death as its finality. It was meant to glorify God in Messiah.¹⁰ Also like the blind man pericope, the Lazarus account highlights faith throughout its episode. Suffering, faith, and glory are the major themes connecting both stories.

In addition to these two examples, all cases of believers who suffer in John's Gospel display elements of faith that

minister to suffering believers today. The entire scene of the royal official in John 4 is enveloped by the man's faith and obedience and is predicated upon his parental anguish over his son's illness and impending death. The disciples as a group experience mental trauma at the thought of Yeshua leaving them for the Father in John 14–16, brought to a peak by Yeshua's promise of their future persecution in 15:18–25.

Finally, Peter is given a vivid prediction of his future martyrdom for Messiah in 21:18–19, serving as a model for faithful deaths that currently reach six-figure numbers each year.¹¹ Remarkably, from pillar to post, the Fourth Gospel paints a portrait of mental and physical suffering for the glory of God that is intended to strengthen the reader's faith in Messiah (20:31).

Conclusion

For too long, American evangelicalism has excelled in a theology of comfortability. In stark contrast, John's Gospel teaches a theology of suffering. Its readers learn the glories of suffering and how to suffer well while growing in their faith. Johannine scholarship would

do well to give this theme more attention than it has. The relevance is obvious since followers of Messiah occupy both worship assemblies and scholarship—and they can all relate to suffering and trauma. Throughout the Gospel of John, God is pictured as the ultimate sovereign and Messiah as the pinnacle expression of God who suffered in glory. The believer's union with Messiah manifests tangibly in their own suffering for God's glory.

Because Messiah is God (John 1:1; 20:28), suffering reveals the character of God in unexpected but glorious ways to the believer.



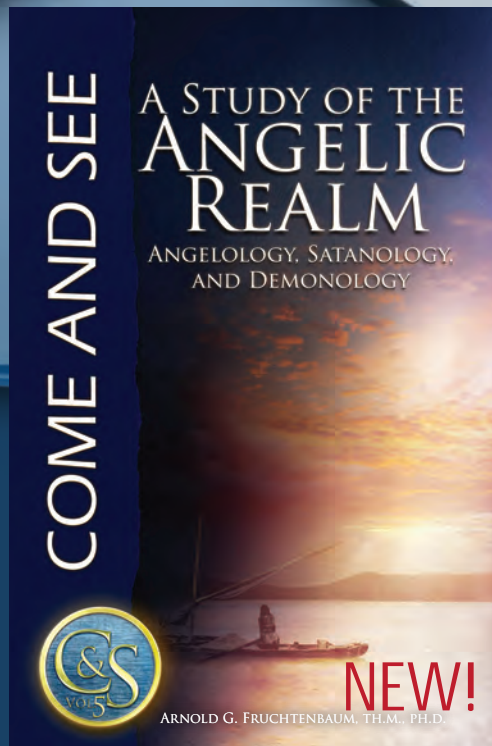
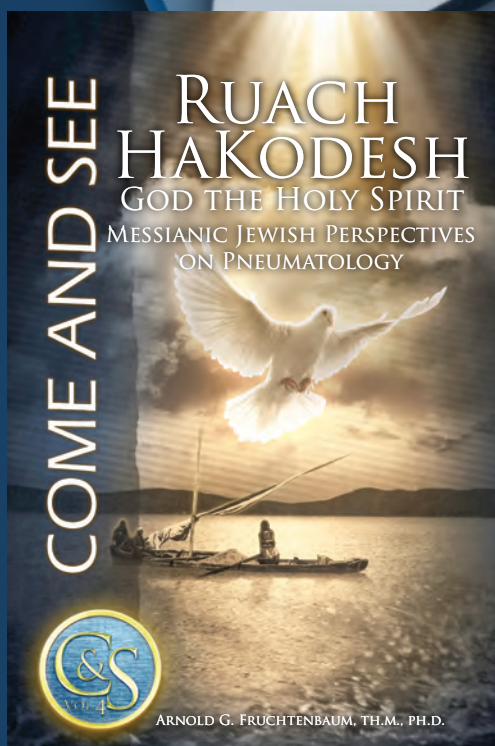
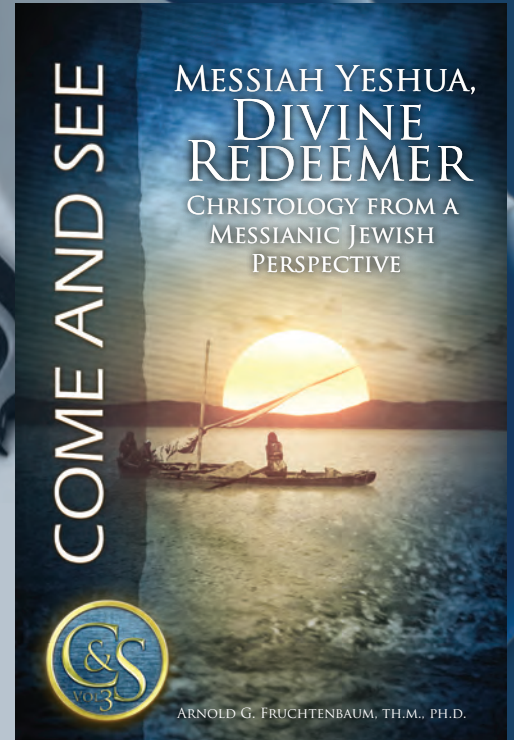
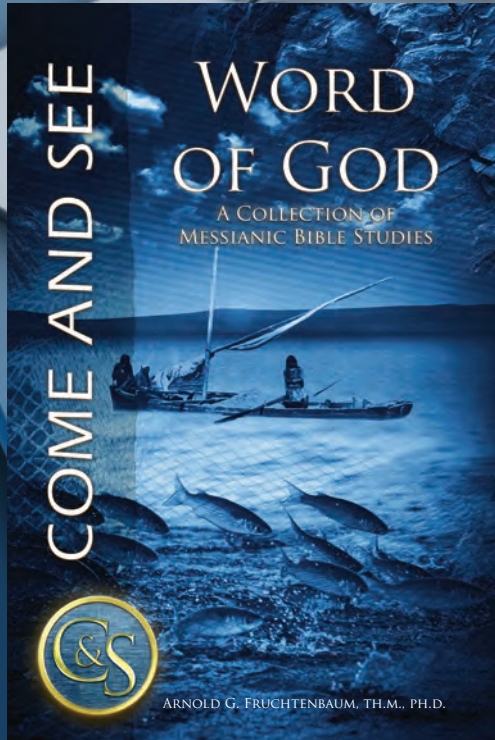
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¹⁰ Drawing parallels between Lazarus's death and resurrection and Yeshua's death and resurrection, Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament*, LNTS 515 (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 38–39, refers to the former as a "prefigure" to the latter and both "for God's glory."

¹¹ For statistics on believers' martyrdom, see *Center for the Study of Global Christianity* at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/>.

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THE MESSIAH IN THE TORAH

By Gary Gromacki, Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D.¹

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At the heart of a Jewish community is the synagogue. At the heart of the synagogue is the *Aron Ha-qodesh*, the ark. Inside it, there is a *sefer Torah* or Torah scroll. In Judaism, nothing is more precious and more treasured than a Torah scroll. Each Sabbath a portion of the Torah is read publicly. Every year, the rabbis read through the Torah in the synagogue. Even in the first century, the Jews read from the Torah each Sabbath. Luke wrote: "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21).

The Torah is the Law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the *Tanakh*. The *Tanakh* encompasses the *Torah* (the Law), the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

The Hebrew word *Torah*

תּוֹרָה

refers to instruction, teaching, or law.² The written Torah comprises the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures that were written by Moses. The term "Oral Torah" refers to the interpretation of the Torah handed down from one generation of rabbis to the next. This Oral Torah is now found in the Talmud.³

The Hebrew titles of the books of the Torah come from the first words of each book.

The Hebrew title for Genesis is

בְּרֵאשִׁית

(*Bereshit* = "In the Beginning"), which is the first word of Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

The English title *Genesis* comes from the Greek ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ, which means "creation." The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings and describes creation in Genesis 1-2.

The Hebrew title for Exodus is

שְׁמוֹת

(*Shemot* = "Names"). Exodus 1:1 says: *Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt.*

The word "Exodus" is from the Greek ΕΞΟΔΟΣ, meaning "way out." The book of Exodus describes Israel's exit from Egypt.

The Hebrew title for Leviticus is

וַיִּקְרָא

(*Vayikra* = "And He called"). Leviticus 1:1 says: *Now the LORD called to*

Moses and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting saying.

The English word "Leviticus" comes from the Greek ΛΕΥΙΤΙΚΟΝ, meaning "relating to the Levites." The book of Leviticus gives the duties for the Levites as they helped lead Israel in their worship of YHWH.

The Hebrew title for Numbers is

בְּמִדְבָּר

(*Bamidbar* = "In the wilderness"). Numbers 1:1 says: *Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting.* God told Moses to "take a census" (Num. 1:2).

The English title "Numbers" is taken from the Greek ΑΡΙΘΜΟΙ, meaning "numbers." Moses numbered all the men of Israel who were twenty years old and older, and the total number was 603,550 men (excluding the Levites; cf. Num. 2:32-33).

The Hebrew title for Deuteronomy is

דְּבָרִים

(*Devarim* = "Words"). Deuteronomy 1:1 says: *These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness in the plain.* The English title "Deuteronomy"

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² Gen. 26:5; Ex. 12:49; 13:9; 16:4, 28; 18:16, 20; 24:12; Lev. 6:2, 7, 18; 7:1, 7, 11, 37; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:2, 32, 54, 57; 15:32; 26:46; Num. 5:29, 30; 6:13, 21; 15:16, 29; 19:2, 14; 31:21; Deut. 1:5; 4:8, 44; 17:11, 18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58, 61; 29:20, 28; 30:10; 31:9, 11, 12, 24, 26; 32:46; 33:4, 10.

³ The Talmud has two components: the Mishnah (Rabbinic Judaism's Oral Torah) and the Gemara (a commentary on the Mishnah). The Talmud contains Jewish civil and ceremonial laws, including interpretations of the law by various rabbis. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud.



is taken from the Greek term ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ, meaning “Second Law.” However, Deuteronomy is not a second law. Rather, Moses reiterated the law that was given to him on Mount Sinai for the second generation of Israelites as they were about to enter the Promised Land.

The Torah begins with the account of creation in Genesis 1-2. It ends with this summary: *But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel* (Deut. 34:10-12). It is important to note that the last word of the Torah is “Israel.”

The book of Genesis tells how the Creator God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in which He promised them a land, seed, and blessing. The book of Exodus tells how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and led them to Mount Sinai, where He gave them the law. The book of Leviticus reveals how the priests and Levites were to lead the people to worship a holy God as they offered sacrifices and observed feasts. The book of Numbers explains how the nation of Israel rebelled at Kadesh Barnea and how the Exodus generation was forced to

wander in the wilderness, where most died. The book of Deuteronomy was the last message of Moses to the next generation of Israel in which he repeated the commands of the law and challenged the Israelites to love and obey YHWH, their covenant-keeping God.

YESHUA AND THE TORAH

Yeshua believed in the authority of the Torah (Mt. 4:1-11).

After His baptism in the Jordan River, Yeshua was led by the Spirit into the wilderness of Judea to be tempted by the devil. Yeshua fasted for forty days and forty nights. When He was most vulnerable, Satan tempted Him to use His power to turn stones into bread (Mt. 4:1-3), to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple (Mt. 4:5-6), and finally to bow down to worship him to receive the kingdoms of this world (Mt. 4:8-9). Three times Yeshua quoted verses from the book of Deuteronomy (Mt. 4:4 – Deut. 8:3; Mt. 4:7 – Deut. 6:16; Mt. 4:10 – Deut. 6:13). Three times Yeshua said, “It is written.” The fact that Yeshua quoted from Deuteronomy shows that He had memorized the Torah (or at least the book of Deuteronomy). Yeshua knew the Torah and recognized its authority as He obeyed it.

How did Yeshua know the written Word of God? The Jews in Nazareth were astonished at the teaching of

Yeshua in the synagogue and said, *Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?* (Mt. 13:54). The Jews in Jerusalem criticized Yeshua and asked, *How does this man know letters, having never studied?* (Jn. 7:15). This probably means that Yeshua never attended a rabbinic *yeshivah* or school. However, since the Gospels do not tell us where Yeshua was schooled, it is best not to conjecture, but if I were to guess, I would suppose that Joseph and Mary taught Yeshua the Torah and took Him as a young boy to the synagogue where He learned how to read and write Hebrew from the Torah.

Yeshua came to fulfill the Torah (Mt. 5:17-18).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua explained His relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures, saying, *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled* (Mt. 5:17-18). Yeshua believed in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the *Tanakh*. The word “jot” refers to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet: the *yod*. The word “tittle” refers to the smallest stroke of a Hebrew letter. The difference between the Hebrew letters *resh* and *dalet* is a tittle. This means that Yeshua came to fulfill all the Torah.





Yeshua believed that Moses wrote about Him in the Torah (Jn. 5:45-47).

The Jewish rulers did not accept Yeshua. They persecuted and tried to kill Him because He did many of His miracles on the Sabbath (Jn. 5:16). But Yeshua rebuked them and said, *I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?* (Jn. 5:43-47).

The protasis (“if” clause) states: “For if you believed Moses.” This is a second-class condition in Greek.⁴ In reality, the Jewish rulers did not believe Moses even though they were the teachers of the Law of Moses. The apodosis (“then” clause) is: “you would believe me for he (Moses) wrote of me.” Notice the reason why they should have believed in Yeshua. When Moses prophesied about the Messiah in the Torah, he wrote about Yeshua. This shows that Yeshua proclaimed to be the Messiah that Moses wrote about in the Torah.



The risen Yeshua explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus how the Old Testament prophecies pointed to Him (Lk. 24:25-27).

After Yeshua arose from the dead, He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They did not recognize Him. Yeshua asked them what had happened in Jerusalem over the weekend, and they explained that Yeshua of Nazareth was a *Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people* (Lk. 24:19). Yet, the chief priests and rulers of Israel delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. You can hear the disappointment in the words of these disciples: “*But we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel*” (Lk. 24:21). The disciples then recounted the story of some women who were told by angels that Yeshua was alive. Nevertheless, the two men were leaving Jerusalem, proving that they did not believe in the reports. Consequently, Yeshua rebuked them and said, *O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken? Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself* (Lk. 24:25-27). The Greek word “expounded” (διερμήνευσεν) means “to clarify,



explain, or interpret so as to make understandable.”⁵ Yeshua explained to these two disciples on the road to Emmaus how the Old Testament prophecies pointed to the Messiah. He started with the books written by Moses, the Torah. This shows that Yeshua believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Torah.

The risen Yeshua told His disciples about the necessity of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Lk. 24:44-45).

Later that night, the risen Yeshua appeared to eleven disciples who were in hiding in Jerusalem. Yeshua showed them His hands and feet (Lk. 24:40). Then He ate some broiled fish and some honeycomb to prove that He was not a ghost (Lk. 24:42). Finally, He said to the disciples, *These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures* (Lk. 24:44-45).



⁴ Wallace writes: “The second-class condition indicates the assumption of an untruth (for the sake of argument). For this reason, it is appropriately called the ‘contrary to fact’ condition (or the unreal condition). It might be better to call it presumed contrary to fact, however, since sometimes it presents a condition that is true, even though the speaker assumes it to be untrue.” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 694).

⁵ Frederick William Danker, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 244.



MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN THE TORAH

The Torah contains many important Messianic prophecies,⁶ one of which is the prophecy about the seed of Abraham. In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham: *In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed*. Yeshua is the Seed of Abraham. As a Jew, He is a physical descendant of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob. Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the King and begins with these words: *The book of the genealogy of Yeshua Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham* (Mt. 1:1). Then, the Gospel goes on to show how Messiah fulfilled the following Old Testament prophecies:

THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A VIRGIN

(Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23).

HE WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM

(Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:6).

HE WOULD COME OUT OF EGYPT

(Hos. 11:1; Mt. 2:15).

HE WOULD HAVE A FORERUNNER

(Isa. 40:3; Mt. 3:3; 11:10).

HE WOULD MINISTER IN GALILEE

(Isa. 9:1-2; Mt. 4:15-16).

HE WOULD PERFORM MIRACLES OF HEALING

(Isa. 53:4; Mt. 8:17).

HE WOULD BE HUMBLE

(Isa. 42:1-4; Mt. 12:17-18).

HE WOULD SPEAK IN PARABLES

(Isa. 6:9-10; Mt. 13:35).

HE WOULD OFFER HIMSELF AS KING

(Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5).

HE WOULD BE BETRAYED

(Zech. 11:12-13; Mt. 27:9-10).

HE WOULD EXPERIENCE SUFFERING

(Ps. 22:1; Mt. 27:35).

The Apostle Paul identified Yeshua as the Seed of Abraham when he wrote in Galatians 3:15-16: *Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Messiah*. The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional, unilateral covenant described in Genesis 12:1-3. Paul interprets the text in Genesis to teach that the covenant promise concerns not many seeds (plural) but one singular Seed (a reference to Messiah). All the nations will be blessed through Messiah. This promise will be literally fulfilled in the future millennial kingdom as Messiah sits on the throne of David and rules over the world.⁷

PROPHETIC TYPES OF MESSIAH IN THE TORAH

The Torah contains many prophetic types of Messiah. A type is a historical reality (an Old Testament person, thing, or event) that finds its antitype in the New Testament. There are many prophetic types of Messiah in the Torah, and we will look at one person, one object, and two feasts of Israel that are types of the Messiah.

Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19; Heb. 11:17-19)

Isaac was beloved by Abraham because he was the son of his old age. Yeshua is the beloved eternal Son of

⁶ For the many other Messianic prophecies, see the entire paper at:

<https://www.pre-trib.org/articles/dr-gary-gromacki>

⁷ Gary Gromacki, "A Critique of the Use of Galatians 3 in the Theological Systems of A. Pieters, D. Fuller, and A. Hoekema" Th.M thesis (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984).



His eternal Father. Isaac was offered as a sacrifice by his father Abraham on Mount Moriah. But before Abraham took the life of Isaac, Jehovah Jireh provided the lamb for Abraham to sacrifice in place of his son. God then reiterated the promise to Abraham, *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed* (Gen. 22:18).

The author of Hebrews states that Abraham had faith in God to believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead: *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense* (Heb. 11:17-19).

God the Father gave His only begotten Son to the world (Jn. 3:16). Yeshua is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed in our place. He died a substitutionary death for us on the cross and was raised to life.



Drs. Teddy Bitner and Gary Gromacki examined several Torah scrolls when they traveled to Minneapolis, MN, to receive one of those scrolls as a gift to be housed permanently at Calvary University.

The Passover Lamb (Ex. 12:43-51; Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7)

The Israelites observed the first Passover on the night before the Exodus. The Jews were to take a male lamb that was without blemish and kill it on the twilight and apply its blood to the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses. They were to roast the lamb in the fire and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex. 12:43-51). The lambs that were sacrificed at Passover were types of the Lamb of God: Yeshua the Messiah. John the Baptist pointed to Yeshua and said, *Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29). Paul wrote: *"For indeed Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us"* (1 Cor. 5:7). In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John saw a Lamb as though it had been slain, *having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth*. This Lamb took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, meaning God the Father (Rev. 5:6-7). John heard angels and others in heaven exclaim: *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing* (Rev. 5:12). The response of every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea is: *Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever* (Rev. 5:13).

The Brass Serpent on a Pole (Num. 21:4-9; Jn. 3:14)

Numbers 21:4-9 reads: *Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.*

And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water and our soul loathes this worthless bread.' So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore, the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that he take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Yeshua referenced this event when He talked to Nicodemus one night, saying: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life* (Jn. 3:14). Yeshua compared Himself to the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up on a pole. Yeshua was lifted up on a cross that whoever believes in Him will not perish in hell but have eternal life.

Pesach and Hag Hamatzot (Lev. 23)

The biblical feasts in Israel's calendar are types of Messiah as well.⁸ Two of these feasts are Pesach and Hag Hamatzot. Pesach, or the Feast of Passover, commemorates the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:43-51; Lev. 23:5;

⁸ For a detailed study of the prophetic significance of the feasts of Israel, see: Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance* (Ariel Ministries, 2019).



1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:15-19). It was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah. Yeshua is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Hag Hamatzot, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, lasts seven days. The Jews remove the leaven from their homes and only eat unleavened bread

(Lev. 23:6-8). Leaven is a type for sin in the Bible. Yeshua lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5). He did not die on the cross for His own sins but took the punishment for our sins (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:2). Hence, Hag Hamatzot is fulfilled by the sinlessness of Messiah and His offering of Himself for our sins.

CONCLUSION

John 1:35-41 records the first meeting of Yeshua with His disciples. John the Baptist looked at Yeshua as He walked by and said, *Behold the Lamb of God* (Jn. 1:35). The first two disciples, Andrew and John, began to follow Yeshua. Andrew found his brother Simon Peter and said, *We have found the Messiah* (Jn. 1:41), and he brought him to Yeshua. Yeshua found Philip and said to him, *Follow me* (Jn. 1:42). Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, *We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph* (Jn. 1:45). When Yeshua revealed to Nathaniel that He saw him under the fig tree, Nathaniel responded, *Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel* (Jn. 1:49). At this “Messiahmas” season, we can rejoice that Yeshua left heaven to be born of a virgin and fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies that predicted His first coming.

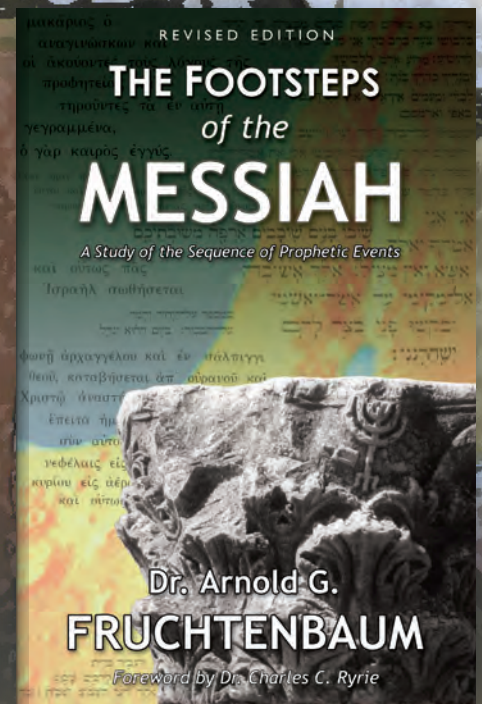
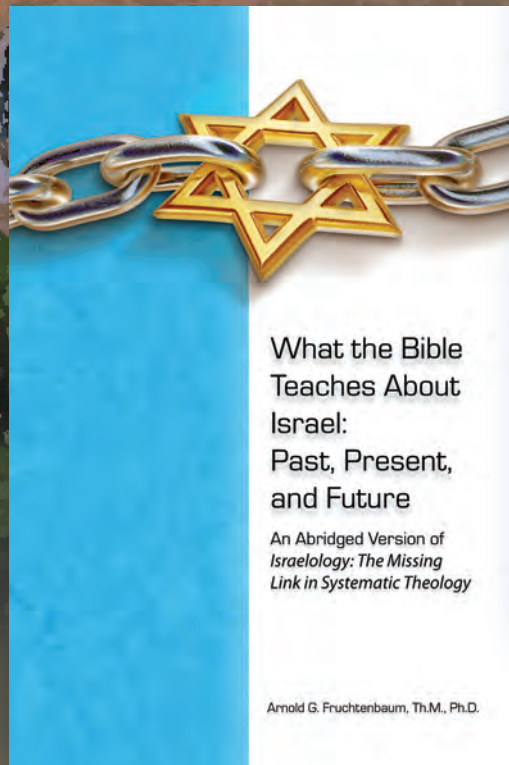
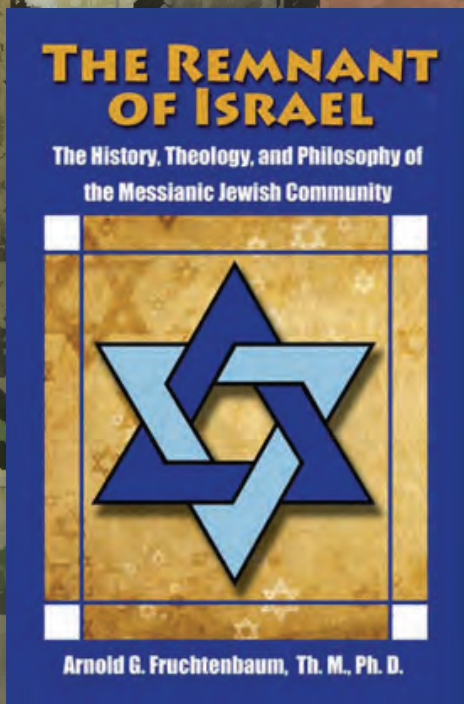
Let us rejoice because we have found the Messiah, and His name is Yeshua!



Dr. Gary Gromacki stands in front of several Torah scrolls that were gifted to Calvary University in 2019 by Ken and Barb Larson and their ministry God's Ancient Library, based in Minneapolis, MN.

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Dispensationalism and the Completion of the Protestant Reformation

By Dr. Andy Woods¹

How did the budding of the dispensational movement, beginning primarily in the nineteenth century, complete the revolution begun by the Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth century?

Satan hates the Jewish people because he knows that the kingdom is going to come to the earth through the Jewish people (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 2:2-3; Zech. 14:16-18). His strategy throughout history has been to exterminate them. Thus, the normal mode of thought in the world is anti-Semitism. The only one who has a defense against it is the Bible reader and believer who takes Scripture's declaration concerning national Israel's future literally. Yet, one of the church's biggest black eyes has come from the poor manner in which many believers have viewed and treated the Jewish people. A case in point is the Protestant Reformers.

The Protestant Reformers

The attitude of the Protestant Reformers toward the Jews was anti-Semitic, fueled by the idea from the Middle Ages that the Jews are "Christ-killers" and a cursed race. It is true that the leadership of first-century Israel was instrumental in the death of Messiah, breaking every rule of evidence that they had and

rushing Him through the justice system. Yet, we could also blame the Romans (e.g., Matt. 20:19; John 19:11). Moreover, Yeshua died for all of us—and in that sense all of us killed Him (cf. John 3:16). Hence, we cannot blame His sacrificial death on the Jews alone.

Out of this anti-Semitism developed the concept of replacement theology, which is the doctrine that the church has permanently replaced Israel in the plan and program of God and is, even now, functioning as the kingdom of God. Most of Christendom, by way of denominational affiliation in the United States and worldwide, holds to replacement theology.

What does that mean in practice? For one, prophetic subjects are often neglected completely in such circles. However, when they are taught, the idea set forth is that all of Israel's promises and blessings have been transferred to the church, which those who adhere to replacement theology call the *New Israel*, even though the word "Israel" refers to the physical descendants of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all seventy-three times that it is found in the New Testament. The Jews themselves then become the cursed race, and the curses found in the Old Testament remain with them. The blessings promised to Israel, now supposedly given to the church, must be wildly spiritualized since they are earthly in nature.

The Protestant Reformers used their literal method of interpretation to correct many fallacies of the Roman Catholic Church, but they did not use it to correct the church in the area of replacement theology. They remained Catholic in the areas of ecclesiology and eschatology. We often find them writing about the idea that the Jews have been cut off completely; there is no future for Israel in their thinking. The only good thing that can happen to a Jew is that he or she can be saved and become part of the church. While Jewish conversion in the present church age is indeed wonderful, it rules out the hope of the worldwide future kingdom through and for national Israel.

The purpose of this article is not only to explain this nexus but also to shed light on how dispensational theology became a fast and faithful friend to Israel and the Zionist movement.



The Anti-Semitism of John Calvin

John Calvin exemplifies this replacement theology line of thinking when he writes: "But by this public call, the Gentiles were not only made equal to the Jews, but seemed to be substituted into their place, as if the Jews had been dead."² In his sermon on II Samuel 24:24, Calvin further declares: "Now the Jews are cut off like rotten limbs. We have taken their place."³ Now, is Israel

broken off from God's olive tree, as he says? Yes, but Paul tells us in Romans 11:17-24 that this breaking off is only temporary. If God can do the greater miracle of grafting the *wild*, unnatural branches (Gentiles) into the olive tree, then certainly He can do the lesser miracle of grafting the *natural branches* back into their own tree. According to replacement theology, the Gentiles are not just partakers of God's blessings. They are taker-overs. They have inherited all of Israel's promises, but they leave the curses for the Jewish people. This is a carry-over from Augustine and the church of the Middle Ages. The apostle Paul leaves no room for arrogance on this subject. Yet, I am seeing arrogance in Calvin's writings.

Notice his comments on Isaiah 35:1, which speaks of the restoration of Israel in the end times: "*The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah*

will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus." Calvin says:

This passage is explained in various ways. I pass by the *dreams of the Jews*, who *apply all passages of this kind to the temporal reign of the Messiah*, which they have contrived by *their own imagination*... I willingly view this passage as referring to Judea, and afterwards *to other parts of the world*... Let us now see when this prophecy was fulfilled, or shall be fulfilled. The Lord began some kind of restoration when he brought his people out of Babylon: but that was only a foretaste, and, therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that this passage, as well as others of a similar kind, must

¹ This article is based on the author's book *Ever Reforming: Dispensational Theology and the Completion of the Protestant Reformation* (Taos, NM: Dispensational Publishing House, 2018).

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, xi, 12.

³ John Calvin, *Supplementa Calviniana*, I, 766, 12f; quoted in Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 145.



refer to the kingdom of Christ; and in no other light could it be viewed, if we compare it with other prophecies (italics added).⁴

Calvin here calls literal interpretation of this passage a *dream*, a mere fantasy. He dismisses the method of literal interpretation, even though he made his most important contributions by advocating for it in other areas. Yet, he refuses to apply it to this passage. Consequently, Calvin denies Israel's future millennial role and preeminence.

Consider this prophecy of Israel's restoration in her kingdom, never to be uprooted again, from the book of Amos: "*Behold, days are coming,*" declares the Lord, "*When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will be dissolved*" (Amos 9:13). How did Calvin handle this passage?

Here the Prophet describes the felicity which shall be under the reign of Christ: and we know that whenever the Prophets set forth promises of a happy and prosperous state to God's people, they adopt *metaphorical expressions*, and say, that abundance of all good things shall flow, that there shall be the most fruitful produce, that provisions shall be bountifully supplied; for they *accommodated* their mode of speaking to the notions of *that ancient people*; it is therefore no wonder if they sometimes *speak to them as to children*. At the

same time, the Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that *the kingdom of Christ* shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that *the Church of God*, which means *the same thing*, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign (italics added).⁵

Metaphorical expressions? Literal construction as a mere Divine accommodation to *children*? Notice again how Calvin indicates that these prophecies really apply to the present reigning church and how national Israel is consequently written out of her future kingdom role. Where is the man who stood heroically for literal interpretation? Who is the real John Calvin? I do not want Calvin the allegorizer. I want Calvin the literalist! The word "accommodated" is nothing but a fancy term indicating that God here is lying in spite of the fact that it is impossible for God to lie (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). And what about the phrase "speak to them as to children"? Is God speaking in childish terms to childish people who cannot understand real interpretation? Is this just a fantasy for people who do not know better than to believe in a literal kingdom? Calvin is saying that it only looks literal to you because you are childish, and God is speaking to you in childish terms. Calvin calls these "metaphorical expressions" and says that the church "means the same thing" as the kingdom.

Let us examine his comments on one more passage: *In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle*

from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zech. 14:4). This verse means that Yeshua will return and stand on the Mount of Olives, and it will split in half. But Calvin develops a soteriological meaning that is not at all self-evident from this passage. He is not performing accurate exegesis when he states:

For as we are dull and entangled in earthly thoughts, our minds can hardly rise up to heaven, though the Lord with a clear voice invites us to himself. The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness, adds a vivid representation, as though God stood before their eyes. Stand, he says, shall his feet on the mount of Olives. He does not here promise a miracle, such as *even the ignorant might conceive to be literal*; nor does he do this in what follows, when he says, The mount shall be rent... half... to the east and half to the west. This has never happened, that mount has never been rent: but as the Prophet could not, under those grievous trials, which might have overwhelmed the minds of the godly a hundred times, have extolled the power of God... without employing a highly figurative language, *he therefore accommodates himself, as I have said, to the capacity of our flesh* (italics added).⁶

⁴ John Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah 35:1. (2015). *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁵ John Calvin, Commentary on Amos 9:13. (2015). *Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁶ John Calvin, Commentary on Zechariah 14:4. (2015). *Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Now he is calling literal interpreters “ignorant” and again uses the expression “accommodates... to the capacity of our flesh.” This type of language is an excuse for dismissing the clear meaning of the passage. He adds that none of what Yeshua said has ever happened. The answer to this objection is simple: The verse is a prophecy of things yet future.

Sadly, such a minimization of Israel's future millennial role as a nation carried over into the various movements and institutions begun by the Reformers in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Thus, the Reformers did not make a clean break with Roman Catholicism in the area of eschatology.

On May 14, 1948, replacement theology met its match when Israel came back to life as a nation in its homeland. Replacement theologians then had to come up with a way to explain away the rebirth and existence of the modern state of Israel. In their attempts to do so, some have even gone so far in their antagonism as to engage in formal boycotts of the state of Israel.



The Anti-Semitism of Martin Luther

Not long after nailing his “95 Theses” to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517 and following his excommunication from the Catholic Church in 1521, Luther wrote a great book in 1523 called *Jesus Was Born a Jew*. It was very pro-Jewish. Here is an excerpt from it:

If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and block-heads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian. They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and monkey... If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles.⁷

Luther went on to say:

When we are inclined to boast of our position, we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are... If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.⁸

Luther is confessing that Christians' witness toward the Jews had been less than biblical and had alienated them from Christianity. But twenty years later, in 1543, Luther wrote another book called *Of the Jews and Their Lies*. Luther had labored to retrieve salvation by grace alone and had held it out to the Jewish people but had gotten no response. So his attitude began to change back to the attitude that many held during the Dark Ages. Here are some excerpts from this horrible book:

First, their synagogues should be set on fire.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Jesus Was Born a Jew*, 1523. Available at https://www.uni-due.de/collcart/es/sem/s6/txt09_1.htm; Internet; accessed 18 November 2017.

⁸ Ibid.





Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer books and Talmud.⁹

This is despicable anti-Semitism. He goes on to say:

Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more... Fifthly, passport and traveling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews... Sixthly, they ought to be stopped from usury.¹⁰

Seventhly, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the ax, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and spindle, and let them earn their bread by the sweat of their noses... We ought to drive the rascally lazy bones out of our system...¹¹

Therefore, away with them... To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden — the Jews.¹²

In that same year, Luther also wrote a pamphlet called *Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of the Messiah*. In it, he calls the Jews “little devils.” Then, in 1546, he preached his final four sermons in Eisleben, calling the Jews the enemies of Christianity

and demanding that they be kicked out of the country.

There are many who seek to look the other way or whitewash history to suppress Martin Luther’s later anti-Semitic tendencies. However, this is difficult to do because Lutheran leaders themselves have issued their own public apology for the anti-Semitic outbursts of their spiritual forebear. The Lutheran World Federation presented the following statement in 1984:

We Lutherans take our name and much of our understanding of Christianity from Martin Luther. But we cannot accept or condone the violent verbal attacks that the Reformer made against the Jews... The sins of Luther’s anti-Jewish remarks, the violence of his attacks on the Jews, must be acknowledged with deep distress. And all occasions for similar sin in the present or the future must be removed from our churches... Lutherans of today refuse to be bound by all of Luther’s utterances on the Jews.¹³

There is also a school of thought that indicates that what Luther said laid the groundwork for Nazi Germany. As we have seen, he did not invent anti-Semitism, but he did carry it over into his new Protestant Reformation from the Middle Ages. Concerning Luther’s latter remarks, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states: “Short of the Auschwitz oven and the extermination, the whole Nazi

holocaust is pre-outlined here.”¹⁴ Lucy Dawidowicz similarly states: “A line of anti-Semitic descent from Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler is easy to draw. Both Luther and Hitler were obsessed by a demonologized universe inhabited by the Jews.”¹⁵ Thomas Ice notes:

Hitler was not alone in his irrational desire to murder Jews[:]; it was embedded in the German, Austrian, and Eastern European nations. The original source for such anti-Semitism goes back to the common experience of all of Europe’s medieval Roman Catholic Jew-hatred. Most of the people throughout Europe did not have to be taught by Hitler or the Nazis to hate the Jews[:]; it was endemic in their culture for hundreds of years. When the Nazis [crystallized] their anti-Semitism into murdering the Jews as a virtue, they already had a willing mass of people ready to join their crusade. After all, Hitler quoted the founder of the Reformation three times in *Mein Kampf* and called Martin Luther one of the greatest Christians in all of history. It is not surprising (for the most part) the German clergy were great Hitler enthusiasts since almost all of them were liberal and held to replacement theology.¹⁶

The only meaningful force standing in

⁹ Martin Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies* (1852; reprint, York, SC: Liberty Bell, 2004), 37-38, 53-54.

¹⁰ Ibid., 38-40, 54-55.

¹¹ Ibid., 42-43.

¹² Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*; quoted in Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*, 14-15.

¹³ “Interreligious Documents & Statements: Luther, Lutheranism, and the Jews,” <https://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/interreligious/759-lwfjic1983>; Internet; accessed 25 November 2017.

¹⁴ “Luther, Martin,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 8, 693.

¹⁵ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975), 23.

¹⁶ Thomas Ice, “Yad Vashem and the Holocaust,” <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/yad-vashem-and-the-holocaust>; Internet; accessed 26 October 2017.



the way of anti-Semitism, even in our country today, comes from Bible-reading believers who see in the Scripture a Divine future for national Israel. So, how do we look at someone like Martin Luther? We look at him just like we do the apostle Peter—a man capable of both great spiritual highs and great spiritual lows (cf. Matt. 16:13-23). Christians, believe it or not, have the capability of saying both great things and things that are horrific or even demonically energized. This is true because of the fact that Christians possess two natures—including the old nature. Satan especially desires to tempt Christian leaders whom God has used in great ways in order to get them to fall and thus nullify the effect that they have had for good. The Reformers were just men, vessels of clay. Yet, every believer must view the Jewish people through the lens of the Abrahamic Covenant and determine to bring the gospel to them in a loving and meaningful way. Ultimately, the Reformers failed to do so. They neglected to show love to them in spite of their present state of unbelief.

The Dawning of the Dispensational Movement

Beginning in the nineteenth century, God raised up a new movement called the dispensational movement, and its leaders began to do what the Reformers and their spiritual descendants had not done consistently. They began to apply the literal method of interpretation to the whole Bible. The dispensational movement thus retrieved key doctrines from the Bible that had been lost due to allegorization. They were acting in the

same way as the Reformers who had used this same methodology to begin to retrieve doctrines from the Bible that had been lost due to allegorization. The Reformers primarily retrieved the five *solas*.¹⁷ Among the teachings that the dispensationalists retrieved were chiliasm,¹⁸ the Israel-church distinction, and pretribulationism.

The dispensationalists began to study the Abrahamic Covenant and see that it is both unconditional and unfulfilled. Therefore, they reasoned that since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), there must be a future kingdom whereby the language of the covenant will be literally fulfilled. This developed into premillennialism, which the school of Antioch had taught for the first two centuries of the church. Hence, the dispensationalists consistently reversed Alexandrianism, which had understood Bible prophecy allegorically, and took us all the way back to Antioch, which had applied literal interpretation to the entire Bible—including eschatology. They saw that the land, seed, and blessing promises of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15 are further clarified in the Land Covenant of Deuteronomy 29 and 30 (land), the Davidic Covenant in II Samuel 7:12-16 (seed), and the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (blessing).

The dispensationalists also saw Israel and the church as being two separate peoples and programs. This insight placed a curb on anti-Semitism. After all, why should we hate the Jews when a literal reading of the Bible reveals that God has a special future in store for them? Consistent literal

interpretation also hindered the types of social and political experiments that had been done in places like Geneva, as well as earlier through the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. Our method of interpretation rescued the church from those terrible social experiments, for in order to get those to work, one must take the Mosaic Law and the Old Testament and apply the Scriptures intended for Israel to the church in a metaphorical sense. Literal interpretation rules out such misapplications of biblical truth since the Mosaic Law was designed only for national Israel (cf. Ps. 147:19-20).

As another case in point, the unbelieving Jews in Israel today love dispensationalists. They recognize that we in the United States are a massive and very pro-Israel force. We believe that Israel has a purpose and a role in history and a right to her land. We derive these concepts from a consistently literal interpretation of the Bible. These emphases also keep the church focused on what it is supposed to be doing, which is carrying out the Great Commission that our Lord gave to us in Matthew 28:18-20.

Such developments in doctrine also led to a widespread understanding of the pretribulational rapture, a special aspect of the second coming of Messiah that is unique to all church-age believers. This Israel-church distinction, in turn, informs the church that she cannot be in Israel's tribulation period leading to her conversion (cf. Jer. 30:7) since this concept represents God's work through Israel rather than the church. All of this is to say that the

¹⁷ *Sola* is a Latin word meaning "by itself." Out of the Protestant Reformation came an emphasis on five major truths: *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture Alone, *Solus Christus*—Christ Alone, *Sola Fide*—Faith Alone, *Sola Gratia*—Grace Alone, *Soli Deo Gloria*—To the Glory of God Alone. Using the literal method of interpretation, the Reformers found these important concepts in the Bible.

¹⁸ The Greek term "chiliasm" is equivalent to the Latin term "millennialism," which is the doctrine of Yeshua's expected return to literally reign on earth for 1000 years.



Israel-church distinction provides a proper foundation for embracing a pretribulational rapture.

These doctrines have been and continue to be lying dormant in Reformed theology. They have begun to reemerge through the influence of the dispensationalists and their insistence upon literal interpretation, just

as the five *solas* reemerged through the influence of the Reformers who had applied literal interpretation to those areas of the Bible.

It has often been said that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. Let us therefore embrace the method of literal interpretation employed selectively by the

Reformers and consistently by the dispensationalists so that Israel can be given her proper place in the outworking of God's purposes. Only by embracing such a properly exegeted theology will we have the proper foundation necessary to resist the vicious anti-Semitism of our own day, both outside and within the church.



I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:3



Dr. Andy Woods became a believer at the age of 16. He graduated with High Honors, earning two Baccalaureate Degrees in Business Administration and Political Science (University of Redlands, CA); obtained a Juris Doctorate (Whittier Law School, CA); practiced law; taught Business and Law and related courses (Citrus Community College, CA); and served as Interim Pastor of Rivera First Baptist Church in Pico Rivera, CA (1996-1998). He earned a Master of Theology degree with High Honors (2002) and a Doctor of Philosophy in Bible Exposition (2009) at Dallas Theological Seminary. In 2005 and 2009, he received the Donald K. Campbell Award for Excellence in Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary. Formerly a professor of Bible and theology at the College of Biblical Studies, Andy now serves as president of Chafer Theological Seminary and as senior pastor of Sugar Land Bible Church. Andy has contributed to numerous theological journals and Christian books and has spoken on a variety of topics at Christian conferences. Additional presentations by Andy can be found at AndyWoodsMinistries.org, SermonAudio.com, and YouTube.



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Fulfill the Law of Messiah!

By Tim Velasco

Sin in our congregations is not a hypothetical possibility but a reality. We need look no further than the mirror. In Galatians 6:1-5, we are called to respond to sin in a spirit of gentleness and humility so as to lead the erring brother to repentance and restoration. What does it mean to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Messiah (Gal. 6:2)? To answer this question, let us first take an overview of the book of Galatians and then zero in on these verses.





The epistle was addressed to a group of predominantly Hellenized Gentile believers of Celtic background in what is now northern Turkey.¹ The Galatian believers were under the influence of teachers who came in after Paul had left the area. These teachers demanded of the Galatians obedience to the Mosaic Law as a means of salvation and sanctification. Paul addressed this problem of legalism by first establishing his credentials as one qualified to speak on this issue in light of his former life in Judaism (Gal. 1:13), his apostolic authority (Gal. 2:9), his acceptance by the other apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9), and his opposition to Peter's hypocrisy in Antioch (Gal. 2:11). He proceeded to defend the doctrine of justification by faith and to emphasize the new position of the Galatian believers as sons of God through adoption (Gal. 4:5). Having expressed his great concern for the deception they had allowed in their midst, he allegorically described in chapter 4 the story of Hagar and Sarah and the two very different children they bore: a slave child of the flesh and a free child of the promise. Paul then concluded by pointing his audience to Messiah as the One who makes both Jew and Gentile free heirs in Him.

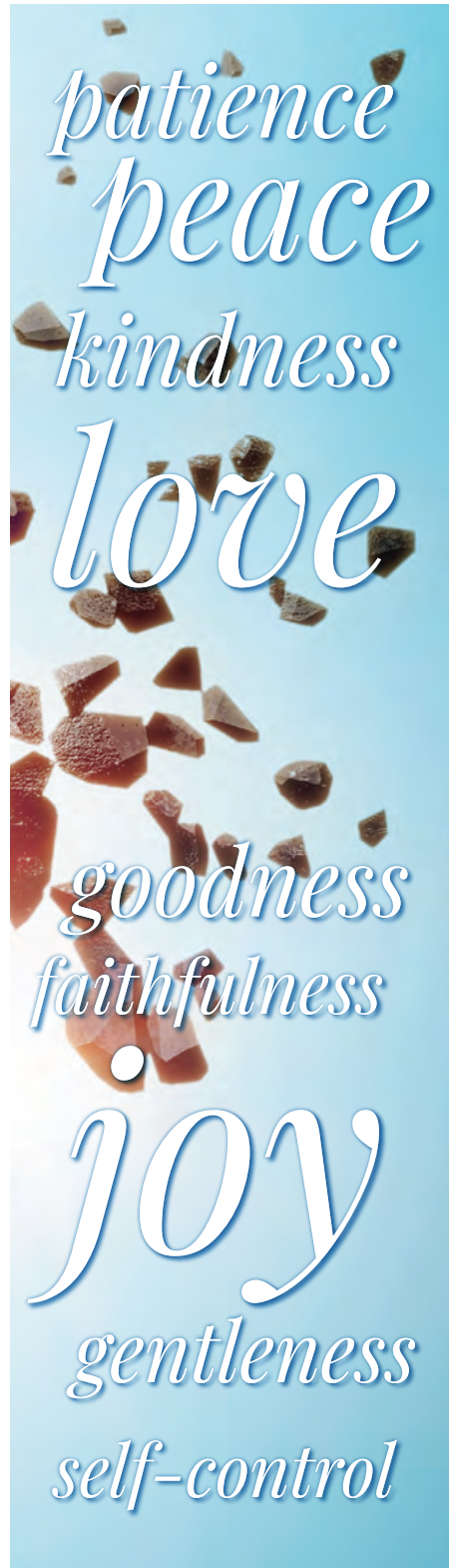
In the final section of the letter, Paul outlined the way in which we should live as free children of God by walking in the Spirit. In chapter 5, this "walking" is proved by what it produces. In the flesh, it produces *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these* (Gal. 5:19b-21a); but in the Spirit, it produces *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Gal. 5:22b-23a).

Paul did not indicate which particular sin is in view in Galatians 6:1. However, one could enumerate at least eighteen different sins from the previous verses. Paul was not concerned with the type of

sin committed but with the response we should have to the sinner: gentleness. He then warned us to humbly acknowledge that we are all vulnerable to sin ourselves. He completed his thought by instructing each of us to carry our own load.

The word rendered as "burden" in Galatians 6:2 denotes something that is too heavy for a single person to carry.² Indeed, sin in our lives is a terrible burden that inflicts great harm to ourselves and to those around us, as evidenced in the life of David the king (cf. Ps. 31:10; 2 Sam. 12:18). The legalists in the Galatian churches were actively objecting to the higher Law of Messiah given in John 13:33-35, which calls us to love one another just as Messiah has loved us. This is a higher and greater love than what the Law of Moses called us to have, and it can only be achieved through the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit and not by lawkeeping.

To fulfill the Law of Messiah in this context is to help the sinning brother carry the unbearable burden of sin. Showing them Messiah's love in this way is the mark of a true disciple.³ Together with the sinning brother, we walk in the Spirit to the cross of Messiah in prayer and in the Word. We do this while remaining keenly aware of our own failings and of *sin which so easily entangles* (Heb. 12:1), understanding that at the cross—and only there—the burden of sin is lifted.



¹ See: J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 15-16.

² Friedrich G. Kittel and G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 95.

³ See: Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Messianic Bible Study #140* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005).



The Rapture Debate in the Book of Revelation

Dr. Mike Stallard¹

Introduction

Since the writing of the book of Revelation in the last decade of the first century, its teaching has brought a mixture of fear, hope, consternation, and blessing including personal salvation to readers over the centuries. Chapters 6-22 lay out the details of an astounding future for the world sometimes using strange symbols and figures of speech. A time of great trouble and tribulation is described with 21 judgments from God arranged in various forms in chapters 6-19. This is followed by the Second Coming of Christ with its terrible judgments (19), the establishment of the millennial kingdom (20), the final judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne (20), and the glorious destiny of believers in a new heaven and new earth (21-22). However, there is no explicit teaching of the rapture of the Church as found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Nonetheless, those holding various positions on the timing of the rapture see ways that the text of the book of Revelation supports their understanding of the catching up of the Church saints to be with Christ. What follows is a brief investigation of selected issues in the rapture debate in the Apocalypse.

Revelation 3:10

The text in question is: *I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth*" (NKJV), a promise given to the church at Philadelphia in Asia Minor. A series of questions emerges when studying this wording in context. The first question is whether the hour of trial mentioned in the verse is some localized trouble or tribulation for the church at Philadelphia or a worldwide phenomenon. Two reasons support the worldwide scope of this predicted time of testing. To start with, the description of tribulation that will shortly be given in the book of Revelation (chapters 4 and 5 as introduction with chapters 6 to 19 outlining that period of time) cannot be limited to the localized situation of the Philadelphian church in the late first century. That tribulation period ends with the second coming of Messiah. It is reasonable to believe that the time of trouble depicted



in the bulk of what follows in Revelation is what Messiah has in mind in his words in Revelation 3:10. Another argument supporting a worldwide scope is the precise wording of the verse, which explicitly notes that the time of trouble is to come upon the “whole world.”

A second issue is the identification of the recipients of this time of trouble. The text declares the purpose of the tribulation to be the testing of “those who dwell upon the earth” or “earth-dwellers.” From Old Testament texts we know that the end-time tribulation has special meaning for the Jewish people as the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). However, the Old Testament also teaches us that this time of divine wrath is when God “will punish the world for its evil” (Isa. 13:11). In the Apocalypse, the term “earth-dwellers” is virtually a technical term for unbelievers (8:13; 11:10; 13:12-14). Of course, there will be those who come to faith in Messiah during the time of wrath (6:9; 7:1-17). Many of them will be martyred, but up to a point they will share in the misery of the world of that time. But in Revelation, the recipients who are the focus of God’s wrath are declared to be unbelievers.

A third question is whether “keep you from” can be translated “guard you through.” The latter expression is adopted by many posttribulationists who believe that the church is not exempt and must endure the time of testing. Thus, in their view, God promises church-age believers that He will guard them through the tribulation but not exempt them from the suffering of that time. A few issues with regard to this claim must be reviewed.

Lexical Information

Is the combination of Greek words for “guard through” a legitimate possibility relative to the Greek language of the New Testament? According to standard Greek-English lexicons, the word for *keep* (*tēreō*), can carry the meaning of keep, preserve, hold, reserve, watch, or guard. A possible understanding of the word *guard* is to guard someone from some problem so that they avoid it, which is the same idea as to keep someone from it. One finds it more difficult to sort out the term *from* (*ek*) since it is a preposition. The meanings of prepositions are numerous and require closer study. The Greek preposition here can mean the following: out of, out from, from, of, and with. The idea of “through” is a stretch in this context, and the lexicons do not readily cover this possible use with examples from the New Testament. Consequently, most English translations correctly translate the Greek words as “keep you from,” which potentially lend themselves to a pretribulationist understanding.

John 17:15

Some posttribulationist expositors point out that even if the lexical information for individual words is minimal for their view, there is one example in the New Testament (Jn. 17:15) where the words “keep...from” (*tereō...ek*) are brought together, which is a better way to discuss the meanings of the words. The connection is bolstered by the fact that the human author of John’s Gospel is the same for the book of Revelation. In John 17:15, Yeshua prays to the Father as part of his high-priestly prayer: *I do*

not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. In the posttribulationist view, this passage shows Yeshua acknowledging the continuation of believers in the world while also praying for God to “keep them from” the evil one or the devil. One could see how this position would make an analogy between Revelation 3:10 and John 17:15 in the use of the phrase.

Pretribulationist interpreters give a couple of responses: (1) they demonstrate the differences between the two passages, and (2) they give the correct understanding of the prayer of Yeshua in John 17:15. First, in John 17:15 the protection is from evil, but in Revelation 3:10 it is protection from a *period of time* in which judgment will fall on the earth. This fits much better the exemption view for Yeshua’s promise to the Philadelphian saints. Also, in John 17:15 the disciples were already in the midst of evil, but in Revelation 3:10 the time of trouble is still *future*. Second, the prayer of Yeshua in John 17:15 is better understood as “keep them from” the spiritual realm of the evil one (spiritual death) rather than protection from Satan as they live in this world. In this way, the passage teaches the truth of eternal security.² This means, once again, that the topic in John 17:15 is quite different from the topic in Revelation 3:10.

Problems with “Guard...Through”

Another issue is the precise meaning of “guard them through.” What exactly is the content of this action by God for the benefit of the Philadelphian believers? Does the promise in Revelation 3:10 mean that saints in the tribulation period

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² See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 283-90 and W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 168-72.



will not lose their salvation? If so, it is not much of a promise since that is a generalized promise for all believers in all ages. Does the promise mean that the tribulation saints will be protected from affliction? Are they kept from dying during the tribulation? The fact that there are so many who are martyred clearly refutes both notions. In other words, it is difficult to visualize precisely what the term means if the saints go through the tribulation period. If there is an exemption from the tribulation period as in pretribulationism, it is quite easy to picture the exact meaning of the words.

A second problem with assuming the interpretation “guard them through” is this: How is the promise applied to the Philadelphian believers themselves as opposed to believers in general? One would expect there to be some application of this promise to the original audience. Otherwise, Messiah’s promise would be empty and meaningless. Yet, the Philadelphian believers died many centuries before the tribulation period that is still future. They did not live long enough for the promise of “guarding through the tribulation” to actually take place during their time in

history. However, if the promise is one of exemption, application could be made to the original audience. Either by death or by rapture, believers avoid the coming tribulation period. In this way, God keeps his promise with meaning for all believers, including the Philadelphians. This understanding allows for a pretribulationist view of the rapture of the church.

Prewrath and Midtribulational Arguments from Revelation 6

There are similarities between the midtribulational rapture position as given in the writings of J. Oliver Buswell and the prewrath rapture view as found in Rosenthal, Van Kampen, and others. Especially, the three-fold outline of the tribulation is the same. Both views see the first part of the tribulation as the wrath of man through the Antichrist, the second part as the wrath of Satan, and the final part as the day of the Lord wrath of God. To be sure, there are differences. For the midtribulational view, the rapture takes place at or close to the midpoint of the tribulation. For the prewrath view, the rapture takes place somewhere within the second half of the tribulation period. In addition, although they share the three-fold outline, how they divide up the tribulation into three parts is done somewhat differently. However, the concern here is the fact that both agree that the seals of God in Revelation 6 are not the wrath of God but are an aspect of the wrath of man. To be sure, both would agree that God in His general sovereignty oversees the works of man (including Antichrist) and Satan throughout

Daniel’s seventieth week. However, in their view, God’s direct wrath is not involved in the seal judgments.³

It is relatively easy to show that the seals in Revelation 6 are the wrath of God. Five reasons will be given:⁴

1. Revelation 4, which forms part of the introduction to the seal judgments, is dominated by judgment imagery such as thunder and lightning emanating from the throne of God. This section begins to present a theodicy, which is a justification of the ways of God to man. In summary, it begins to answer the question: “What gives God the right to pour out His wrath on the world (as predicted in Revelation 3:10)?” The answer in chapter 4 is that God is the Creator and can do with His creation as He pleases (4:8-11).
2. Revelation 5, which also forms part of the introduction, demonstrates that the only One qualified to open the scroll and pour out its judging content upon the world is the Lamb of God. Only Messiah is worthy to even read the scroll and unleash the judgments (5:4-5). God can pour out such judgment because the Lamb of God (who is God) died for the sins of the world (5:6, 9).
3. The four horsemen (first four seals) are introduced by a proclamation of the four living creatures by the throne of God in heaven (6:1-7). At the opening of each seal, these angelic creatures say, “Come and see.” This heavenly announcement points to the divine



³ It is theoretically possible that one could argue that the seals are the wrath of God but not the “day of the Lord” wrath of God. In light of Revelation 3:10 in conjunction with the Old Testament prophets, that would be highly unlikely.

⁴ One excellent resource giving arguments such as these and many others is Arnold Fruchtenbaum’s *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: A Review of Marvin Rosenthal’s Book*, which can be found in the Ariel store.



purpose of the pouring out of the seals that entail wrath from God.

4. The four plagues in the fourth seal (6:8) are described in language from Ezekiel 5:12, 17 and 14:21, which clearly speak of the wrath of God: *and power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death* [pestilence?], *and by the beasts of the earth* (Rev. 6:8). In particular, in Ezekiel 14:21, God strongly voices these four aspects to be His severe judgments upon Jerusalem. The burden of proof is on those interpreters who do not see the wrath of God in the seal judgments of Revelation 6. Why would John use language from the Old Testament that is clearly wrath-of-God language to describe the fourth seal if, in fact, that seal is not the wrath of God?
5. People appear to already be hiding from the wrath of God in Revelation 6:15-17 (sixth seal). It is typical for those who do not see the seals as the wrath of God to interpret “has come” in verse 17 as a dramatic aorist rendering of the idea “has arrived and is about to be poured out.” So, the earth-dwellers are hiding (vv. 15-16) from the day of God’s wrath that is about to happen, not from a wrath that is already occurring. However, the usual meaning of the aorist fits the idea of already existing wrath. They were already hiding from the wrath of God that has been demonstrated in all of the seals of chapter 6.

Another issue in Revelation 6 involves the incorrect belief that there is

a correlation of the cosmic sign passages of Revelation 6:12-14, Joel 2:30-31, and Matthew 24:29. These are assumed to be speaking of identical events. However, this is assuming too much. First, there are many cosmic signs in various end-time passages that occur at different times (e.g., Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:30-31, 3:14-15; Ezek. 32:7-8; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-14, 8:12, 9:1-2, 16:8). Cosmic signs occur before and during the tribulation and at the second coming. Similarity does not mean identity. Second, an example of this is the fact that the *moon like blood* in Revelation 6:12 is not the same as *the moon will not give its light* (Matt. 24:29). It will not do to assume that a diminished light of any kind means the same event. A red moon is not a darkened moon giving no light. Third, some passages like Joel 2:10 cite cosmic signs that appear to be part of a duration of time and not an event like Matthew 24:29. This means that the interpreter must be cautious before he connects different cosmic sign passages. Fourth, if there is a gap between the rapture and the start of the tribulation, as many pretribulationists believe, then there is no bottleneck of events before the tribulation that cannot be handled. It is the treaty between the Roman prince and Israel that begins the seven-year period. This eliminates the complaint that there is no real way to believe the imminency of the rapture due to cosmic signs before the tribulation. There is no need to assume that one should look for cosmic signs before expecting the rapture of the church.

Revelation 11

Some interpreters argue for a midtribulational rapture based upon the account of the two witnesses in Revelation 11. In

particular, they say that the ascension of these two men to heaven after their resurrection in 11:12 coincides with or represents in some way the rapture of the church. Furthermore, in this scheme, this event is sometimes correlated with the “last trumpet” of 1 Corinthians 15:52, clearly a reference to a last trumpet for the church. Since the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation (11:15) immediately follows the ascension of the two witnesses, this last trumpet is supposed to indicate the rapture. This last trumpet in Revelation is assumed to be at or near the midpoint of the tribulation.

In response to this approach, one must note that one cannot presume that the last trumpet in the book of Revelation is the last trumpet in biblical history. Just like the cosmic signs, there are trumpets at several points of the end-time events. For example, posttribulationists and many pretribulationists see Matthew 24:31 as giving a trumpet that occurs at the end of the tribulation when Messiah returns to earth in the second advent. This would mean that there is a trumpet later in time than the seventh trumpet of Revelation. Pretribulationist rapturists would especially not correlate all the trumpet passages as the same event. In general, this moves the argument from Revelation 11 to Matthew 24.

Revelation 14

One midtribulational view asserts that Revelation 14:14 is a reference to the rapture of the church: *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle*. The use



of the word *cloud* is viewed as reflecting the gathering of the saints in Matthew 24:30-31. The previous verse (Rev. 14:13) gives a positive statement in blessing those who die in the Lord from that time forward. Thus, the encouraging nature of verse 13 lends itself to an understanding of a positive meaning to the Son of Man using a sharp sickle to bring His own to Himself. The 144,000 of 14:1-5 are then a picture of the church saints who are raptured to stand with the Lord. Additionally, some interpreters believe that there is a parallel between chapters 14-16 and 7-8. Chapter 7 shows the great multitude in heaven that, in this scheme, probably yields a picture of raptured saints.

In response to this approach, many pretribulationists emphasize the Jewishness of the 144,000 who are labeled as such in Revelation 7. That makes it difficult to make the 144,000 of 14:1-5 a picture of all raptured saints. In addition, the view that Revelation 14:13-14 gives a positive picture of Messiah coming for His own does not fit the context. Verses 6-12 actually paint a negative picture about the tormenting wrath of God and a prediction about the fall of Babylon. The following context (vv. 15-16) continues the reaping image for the *earth is ripe* (v. 15). It is described as a time of the *great winepress of the wrath of God* (v. 19). The language better fits the second coming with its overwhelming judgment events in the great supper of God (Rev. 19:11-21). The flow of the book of Revelation supports this thesis. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet in 11:15, there is an announcement of the kingdom. What takes place next describes the events leading up to the establishment of that kingdom. In chapter 12, Satan intensifies his attack upon

Israel in the second half of the tribulation. In chapter 13, Antichrist moves strongly against the entire world, including establishing the mark of the beast during that same time. Chapter 14:1-5 is best seen as a picture of the Lord with the Jewish saints from Revelation 7 standing in the coming kingdom at the Second Advent. As 14:6-20 lays out, they are saved but the world is judged.

Revelation 19:11-16

The adherent to the posttribulationist rapture argues that the rapture of the church coincides with the second coming as described in Revelation 19:11-16. This event brings judgment for the lost and salvation for the saved. Immediately following this second advent is the earthly kingdom of God. The pretribulationist and posttribulationist views are the two main views among Bible interpreters. The debate is far-ranging in several passages throughout the entire Bible. However, at this point, only two points need to be made. First, there is no rapture imagery in Revelation 19. The portrait of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is missing from this passage. This means that the rapture is assumed to be in Revelation 19 but is not proven to exist in the passage. Usually, other passages beyond the purview of this article are used to prove the timing, and it is simply correlated to this description of the second advent. Second, there is one passage that the posttribulationist view cannot seem to handle. John the apostle, who gave us the Apocalypse, also gave us the Gospel in which Yeshua teaches about His coming for His own in John 14:1-3. Interestingly, Yeshua says that He is coming to take those who believe in Him to His Father's house.

The Father's house in that passage is in heaven, where Yeshua is going to prepare a place for believers. But in the posttribulationist scheme, the earthly kingdom begins at the rapture and second advent, so there is no taking away to the Father's house in heaven. Those who hold to pretribulationist, midtribulationist, prewrath, and even amillennial views have a way to address this issue. However, the posttribulationists are left with a verse that they cannot fit into their system.

Conclusion

This brief survey of discussions about the rapture in the book of Revelation has shown that the debate is alive and well with many different views engaging in the dialog. Much more could be said. However, it appears that the actual rapture of the church is not explicitly stated in the Apocalypse as it is in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Nevertheless, the implications of the teaching of the book of Revelation allow for an understanding of the rapture from its pages. This understanding supports the view that the Lord is coming to rapture His church before the start of the future seven-year tribulation period that God is bringing upon the earth someday.



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