

THE NETWORKER



No. 6

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
RESTORATION FELLOWSHIP
INTERNATIONAL



THE NETWORKER

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INTERNATIONAL**

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Purpose of RFI

RESTORATION: The renewed interest throughout the body of Christ to rediscover and restore its biblical heritage and especially its first century roots and foundations in Christ, the apostles, and the earliest believers for faith, fellowship and practice, has prompted RFI to establish a trans-denominational association of ministers, ministries and churches to assist in bringing people together for meaningful fellowship, dialogue and cooperation. We respect, value and appreciate the efforts of all churches and wish to network with them for Christ-honoring purposes.

FELLOWSHIP: In essence RFI provides an umbrella, or forum, for ministries and congregations to be networked together for mutual promotion, support and celebration. This allows for creativity, latitude and autonomy within ministries and congregations. We believe this to be the first century New Testament model.

INTERNATIONAL: It is our purpose to build and maintain an international network of ministers, ministries and congregations that have a common interest in working together to advance the gospel of Christ and His restoration work within the church in our generation.

Vision / Mission

VISION: Our Vision Statement is three-dimensional. We seek to assist the body of Christ in —

- Restoring the individual through Christ and to growth in Christ.
- Restoring and building godly homes and marriages through the biblical model.
- Restoring, practicing and celebrating the New Testament order of the Judeo-Christian faith of Christ, the apostles and the earliest believers, through praise, worship and service.

MISSION: Our Mission is —

- To proclaim the Gospel and Lordship of Jesus Christ to all mankind.
- To provide New Testament ministry and discipleship for all believers.
- To assist in networking the body of Christ together for authentic biblical fellowship and mutual cooperation.

Business Information:

Restoration Fellowship International and its offices are officially incorporated in the State of Tennessee. RFI is also a non-profit organization with a 501 (c) (3) IRS designation.

ENLARGE THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT



Dr. John A. Looper
Executive Director

Dr. John A. Looper

The major prophets spoke eloquently and exhaustively about Israel's return from both the diaspora of the ten

tribes as well as Judah and Benjamin's return from Babylonian captivity and exile. It is not a coincidence that after the three waves of the return from Babylon—including a Messianic prophecy given by Cyrus the Great—and is the last statement of the Hebrew Scriptures, (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). Prophetically, it was speaking of the ultimate Aliyah when Messiah would go up to Jerusalem and restore David's tent that had fallen down (Amos 9:11-12).

The historic return was led by the four carpenters of Zechariah chapter one—Zerubbabel the Governor, Joshua the High Priest, Ezra the Priest and Nehemiah, the Cup Bearer. The first festival to be celebrated after they returned and rebuilt the altar, and the foundation of the temple, was the *Festival of Tab-*

ernacles. This was certainly no coincidence because Isaiah and the major prophets used this entire historic narrative to reflect, as a type and shadow, to the coming Messianic Age of Yeshua / Jesus the Messiah. Isaiah a unique prophet in that he was called the 'Messianic Prophet,' because, as no other, he covered the entire scope of Messianic History—his birth, his suffering as our propitiation, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension, his Second coming, his Millennial Kingdom, and even to the New Heaven and New Earth, ages without end. Isaiah's Hebrew name—Ye'sha'yahu—Yah has saved, is from the same Hebrew root from which we get Yahsha' or Yeshua / Jesus—God is salvation.

In Isaiah chapter fifty-four, Isaiah projects a prophecy that Israel in the First Testament never accomplished, because it contained a greater spiritual fulfillment in the Church, the Body of Messiah, among the nations under the New Testament or New Covenant age. Consider this narrative as follows. **TEXT: Isaiah 54:1-10** "Sing, barren one, who has not given birth. Burst into singing and shout, you who

have not travailed. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married one," says Adonai.

"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out your tabernacle curtains. Do not hold back—lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right hand and to the left. Your offspring will possess the nations and will resettle the desolate cities. Fear not, for you will not be ashamed. Nor cringe, for you will not be disgraced. For you will forget the shame of your youth, and you will remember the reproach of your widowhood no more. For your Maker is your husband—Adonai-Tzva'ot is His Name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He will be called God of all the earth. "For Adonai has called you back like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of one's youth that is rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I deserted you, but I will regather you with great compassion. In a surge of anger I hid My face from you a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says Adonai your Redeemer. "For this is like the

waters of Noah to Me: for as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more cover the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor will I rebuke you. Though the mountains depart, and the hills be shaken, *My love will not depart from you, nor will My covenant of peace be shaken*, says Adonai who has compassion on you.

Not in all of Jewish history have they ever possessed nations, at least not until Messiah returns to establish his literal kingdom on earth. If this is true, then there must be a greater meaning to this dimensional promise. One of the things we must consider about Bible prophecy is the dimensional fulfillments of prophecy, even three-dimensional applications of numerous Bible prophecies, in many cases. For example, First and Second Temple Judaism implies there will be a Third Temple Judaism established by Messiah upon his return to Jerusalem (Zechariah 6). The Lord often speaks of that which is to be as though it already were.

When did Israel possess nations? This promise has spiritually occurred over the past two thousand years whereby the New Covenant brought together both Jew and Gentile into the One New Man—Jesus the Messiah. In this context the possession of the nations has been through the salt and light of the Gospel, which has impacted and transformed Western Civilization, and now has turned to the Eastern World as the next epicenter of the Christian Church, as Orientals are coming to Christ in millions upon millions of new believers, including the Middle East where thousands of Jews and Muslims are quietly coming to faith in their Messiah. This is the spiritual dimension of the possession of nations.

The Lord's covenant in the passage above states that this promise of divine love for Israel and all who enter his covenant as the children of Abraham—through faith in Messiah—would be as the Covenant of the Rainbow in the days of

Noah. It is very interesting to note that Jesus included Noah in his eschatology during his Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 & 25). "As it was in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took then all away." Not because they did not hear Noah, they didn't believe Noah. Such is the state of the scoffers and skeptics, even today.

In Matthew 13 and in Revelation 14:14-20, Messiah Yeshua/Jesus revealed that the harvest is at the end of the age and that the reapers are the angels. Angel in the Greek text of the New Testament, "ang'el'os" signifies two types of angels—first human angels, as pastors, messengers of the Good News—secondly, heavenly angels as the messengers of the Lord. There are two harvests at the end of the ages. The first is the harvest of souls through the Great Commission to go into all the earth, even to the ends of the earth. According to Jesus—in his Sermon on the Mount—which is found in Matthew 5:14, the end cannot come until the Gospel reaches all of mankind. For the first time in world history this has now become possible through the world wide web and the transcendence of social media.

The second application of the harvest of the righteous is when he who sits on the cloud in Revelation 14:14-16 is instructed by the Father to cast in his sickle into the righteous harvest of the earth, receiving the dead in Christ and the living church together into himself (See: Matthew 24:30-31 & Ephesians 1:10). In this context he will send his angels to the four corners of the earth to gather his elect together.

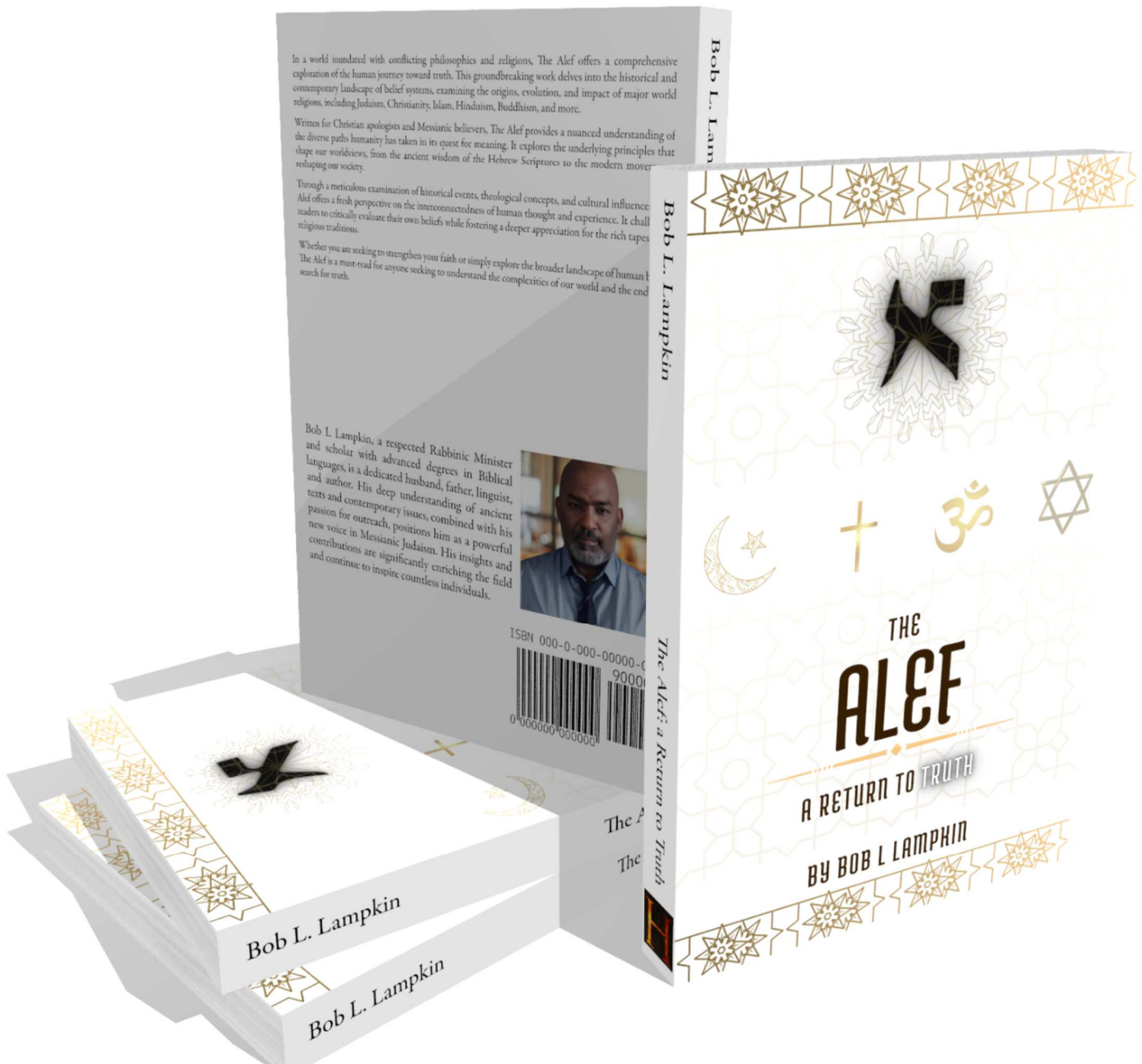
Until that time comes, however, we need to focus on the commission at hand, which is the prophetic season of the High Holy Days and the Feast of Tabernacles, also called the *Feast of Ingathering* at the end of the age. Rather than withdrawing and cloistering ourselves in the four walls of our assemblies, we are commanded to

go out into the harvest. Not only that, but *we are also told to think bigger, even before we see it. 'Enlarge the place of your tabernacle' all of you barren folks and desolate ones, because you are about to break forth on the right and on the left to possess nations for Messiah.* Strengthen your cords, secure your tent stakes. Enlarge your faith, enlarge your tent, enlarge your vision and I will fill it saith the LORD. Hallelujah!

"Abraham, come out of your tent. Abraham, look up at the stars. Abraham, look at the sand under your feet (Genesis 15:5)." I will multiply you oh barren Sarah and you oh barren Abraham like the stars of the heavens and like the sand of the sea. If God awakened the bodies of past menopausal Abraham and Sarah, to produce a promised son, he can heal and empower our lives and ministries from spiritual barrenness to fruitfulness, which we may have never dreamed of.

You may be tempted to be like Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua, who along with their small group of laborers, were very weary after nineteen years in their stymied efforts to rebuild the temple. Then the Lord appeared and showed the way forward. Notice these words from Zechariah. "Then the angel who had been speaking with me returned and *woke me—like a man who is wakened from his sleep.* He asked me, 'What do you see?' I replied, 'Behold, I see a solid gold menorah with its bowl at the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven pipes for the lamps that are on the top of it. ... Then he responded to me by saying, 'This is the word of Adonai to Zerubbabel saying: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Ruach!" says Adonai-Tzva'ot" (Zechariah 4:6).

You cannot receive anything that you do not envision! Envision it. Embrace it. Pray Into it. Make room for it. By faith release the Holy Spirit in your midst to empower and bring his prophetic promises to pass!



A comprehensive exploration of world religions for Christian apologists and Messianic believers. Delves into the historical and contemporary landscape of belief systems, offering a fresh perspective on the interconnectedness of human thought and experience.

About the Author:

Bob L Lampkin, a Rabbinic Minister of Messianic Judaism, is a husband, father, linguist and author. He holds multiple graduate degrees and is currently completing graduate studies in Biblical Linguistics in pursuit of a PhD.

Bob is a licensed minister with RFI.



Nations the world over celebrate holidays. Many are religious in nature, but few are instituted by God. God instituted the seven Biblical holidays (Holy Days) celebrated by His covenant people, Israel. These holidays are discussed throughout Scripture in both Testaments. However, the one chapter of the Bible devoted to the discussion of all seven is Leviticus 23. It is in this chapter that we discover that these annual holidays are called *"the feast of the Lord"* (Lev. 23:4). With that expression, God implies that the feasts belong to Him and are established by Him (see Lev 23: 2). Therefore, only on His terms can these times be rightly honored and at His invitation can participants enter the celebration of blessings.

These feasts are also called "Holy Convocations," which literally means a time of meeting between God and His people. Since these seven Biblical holidays are appointed times for holy purposes, they carry with them immense sacredness and solemnity (see Lev 23: 2).

These seven holidays are prophetic in nature and paint for us pictures of the events of the Lord's redemptive work. Typically, they point to Calvary, where Jesus voluntarily gave His life for the sins of the world (Passover) and climaxed at His return and the institution of the Messianic kingdom at the end of the age (Tabernacles).

These seven holidays are prophetic in nature and paint for us pictures of the events of the Lord's redemptive work.

The one festival we want to give our attention to in this article, is the one that is associated with the "Most Holy Place," the room that contained the "Ark of the Covenant." The feast is known as the "Day of Atonement," the English equivalent of the Hebrew Yom Kippur. For many Christians, the word atonement is unclear and sheds no light on the festival. The Hebrew (כִּפּוּר *kaphar*) literally means to cover, figuratively it means to expiate, to atone, to forgive, to pardon (see Strong's # H3722).

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur,) is the holiest day in Judaism, offering deep theological significance to Christians as well, symbolizing the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ for humanity's sins. The Day of Atonement occurs on the tenth day of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, falling in late September or early October. The

Day of Atonement concludes the Ten Days of Repentance that begin with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. This special "Day" is dedicated to prayer, fast-

ing, and repentance, offering individuals the opportunity to reflect on their actions over the past year, seek forgiveness from God, and make amends with those they have wronged. The ultimate goal of the Day of Atonement is to purify the soul and renew one's relationship with God.

It was on Yom Kippur that atonement was made for the sins of Israel. The atonement consisted of blood sacrifice of innocent animals, for both the priest and the people.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17: 11). By transgression, man forfeits his life to Divine justice, and he must die. However, by God's mercy He provides man a substitute. The life of an innocent animal is appointed and accepted by God as a substitute for the sinner's life (about the life of Christ, which was to be given for the life of the world); as life is in the blood. The blood is the principle of life; therefore, the blood is to be poured out upon the altar: and accordingly, the life of the animal becomes a substitute for the life of the man.

The sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ is seen in the two goats sacrificed as Atonement sacrifices (see Lev. 16: 7-10, 15-21). The blood of the first goat was sprinkled on the lid of the ark

(the Mercy Seat), ceremonially appeasing the wrath of God for another year. The second goat removed the sins of the people into the wilderness, where they were forgotten and no longer attached to the people. These two, as one sacrifice, shadowed Christ through whom sin is both propitiated and expiated by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Propitiation is the act of appeasing the wrath of God, while expiation is the act of atoning for sin and removing it from the sinner. Both together are achieved eternally by Christ. When He sacrificed Himself on the cross, He appeased God's wrath against sin, taking that wrath upon Himself: *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* (Romans 5:9). The removal of sin by the second goat was a living prophetic picture of the promise that God would remove our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (see Psalm 103:12) and that He would remember them no more (see Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

It is worthy of being said, that Christ not only died for sinners, but our redemption is everywhere attributed to His blood. The shedding of that blood on the altar of the cross and presented before God in heaven makes' atonement for the lives of believers (see Rom. 10: 9-10). He not only surrendered in submission to death but gave up the ghost to make a sacrifice (see Philp. 2: 7-8). Furthermore, His side was opened, the heart and lung obviously pierced, that His blood might be poured out from the very essence of His life. His blood, a sacred sacrifice, is the life of the Son of Man and was poured out to make an atonement for the life of mankind.

Christ not only died for sinners, but our redemption is everywhere attributed to His blood. The shedding of that blood on the altar of the cross and presented before God in heaven makes' atonement for the lives of believers (see Romans 10: 9-10).

Yom Kippur was a unique day for the priesthood of Israel. For it was on this single day of the year, the high priest was permitted to appear before God's presence in the Most Holy Place. On this day, the high priest was to wear special garments and do a number of priestly duties. The special garments of the Day of Atonement were worn only on that day and never again.

However, it was in his "golden garments," only worn by the high priest, that he began the duties on this day, and for the previous week, to offer the regular daily sacrifices and to perform the other sacerdotal duties of the sanctuary, which were usually performed by other priest. Then the Yom Kippur duties were accomplished in a different garment. When the high priest changed his dress on this day, he was required to bathe himself ceremonially. The bath was not only his flesh, but he was to bathe his clothes as well. In fact, on this day, he would bathe some five times during his duties to eliminate the

possibility of entering the Most Holy Place unclean.

It was essential to the Israelites that their high priest did not accidentally become unclean and thereby disqualify himself from performing his Yom Kippur duties. To keep this from happening the high priest was to leave his home one week prior to Yom Kippur and dwell in the temple quarters. A deputy was also appointed for the high priest in the event that something went wrong, such as the death of the high priest or the high priest, despite all efforts, disqualified himself by becoming unclean. The frantic work of the priest to remain clean was typical of Christ, who had no sin. *"For we do not*

have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb

4: 15, emphasis mine).

The biblical account seems to indicate that he (the high priest) entered four times into the Most Holy Place: (1) with the incense, while a priest continued to agitate the blood of the bull lest it should coagulate; (2) with the blood of the bull; (3) with the blood of the goat; and (4) to bring the censer, which, according to the Talmud, was done after the evening sacrifice.

The dress of white linen, which he now put on, appears to have been like the ordinary dress of the common priests, except in the substitution of a linen mitre for the bonnet (or cap), and of a plain linen girdle for the variegated one. In preparing to enter the Most Holy Place, he attired himself in spotless white as a token of the holiness without which none, in a spiritual sense, can enter the presence of God's glory. In this He became a more distinct foreshadow of the "Greater High Priest, Jesus the

Christ" (Heb. 7:26; also see 6:19-20). The high priest, being cleansed and dressed in white garments, possibly was the best shadow that a living man could cast of the pure, sinless, Holy Nature of Jesus, who alone was worthy to offer sacrifice to cleanse people from their sins.

Furthermore, the Levitical high priest also linked to Christ in his being human, who was well able to identify with the infirmities of the people and to truly have sympathy as their mediator. So also, Christ our High Priest who also abode in flesh is not without feeling. That is, we have one who is abundantly qualified to sympathize with us in our afflictions, and to whom we may look for support in our times of trouble (see Heb 4: 14-16). Still, Jesus, the WORD, is superior to Aaron and his sons in that He is indeed God. This positions Jesus as the great "Mediator of the New Covenant," He alone knows God as a Son and mankind as a brother (see Heb. 1: 5-6, Heb. 2: 14, Heb 9: 11-15).

The fact that Aaron alone appeared before the presence of God's glory beyond the vail to make atonement, points to Christ who alone appears before God for us: "*For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*" (Heb. 7: 24). The fact that no other priest could assist Aaron in this most important work, what was done was done by him alone. Again, pointing to Christ and His work of ministering before God on our behalf. The work of atonement accomplished by Jesus was His alone to do. So contrary to the belief of many ways to God, Christ is the way, the only true mediator between God and man. Not a way, but THE WAY.

Aaron being typical of Christ as it relates to the Day of Atonement is noteworthy because the Atonement

priestly work and sacrifices offer a clear picture of the nature of the redemptive work of Christ. The writer of Hebrews draws our attention to this comparison in the ninth chapter. "*Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now*

eternal redemption" (Heb. 9: 1-12).

The Aaronic priests ministered in a tabernacle that was temporary; however, it was a physical copy of the heavenly into which Christ was to come (see Heb. 8: 5, Heb. 9: 9, Heb. 9: 23-24, Heb.10: 1). Christ is not ministering in a man-made tabernacle full of earthly replications of heavenly things; He is ministering in the original heavenly sanctuary that served as a model for the First Testament types and shadows.

The ancient Levitical high priest, on the Day of Atonement, would sprinkle blood from sacrificed animals on the mercy seat (lid of the Ark of Covenant), which he did on behalf of the Jewish people. Far more impressive, Christ presents His own blood, as "*...The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1: 29).

This he does as High Priest in the true Most Holy Place in the heavens in the presence of the Father (see Rev. 5: 6).

The work of atonement accomplished by Jesus was His alone to do. So contrary to the belief of many ways to God, Christ is the way, the only true mediator between God and man. Not a way, but THE WAY.

when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained

Finally, the Leviticus sixteen description of the Day of Atonement is indeed a God-spoken *revelation* of the *divine work of Christ*—both in priestly function and sacrifice. Each animal victim clearly characterizes the sacrificial death of Christ for those who will believe. This season, take the time to read Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9, these together will bring greater appreciation for the Biblical Holidays and their Messianic applications.

Dr. Jeffery Hanm and his wife Trella reside in Pochontas, Arkansas, where they pastor Great Harvest Church. Jeff is also vice-president of Restoration Fellowship International.





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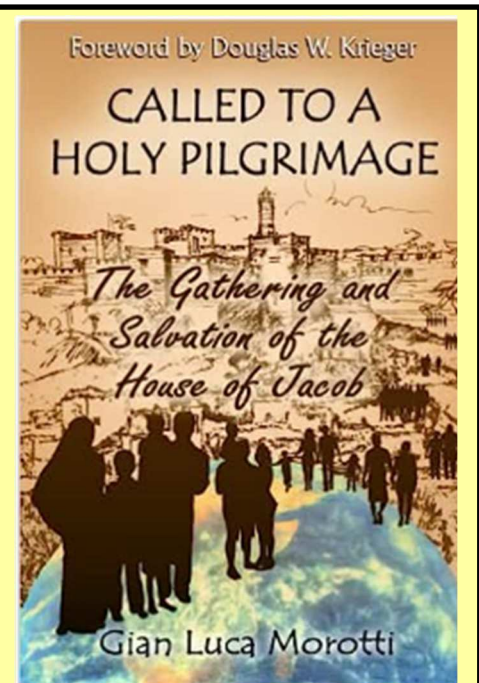
Timeless Teachings for Modern Believer

timothy bible college graduation



On Saturday August 17, 2024, the Timothy Bible College located in Puebla Mexico, on the campus of Restauracion Familiar Puebla, graduated eleven students from their program. The Timothy Bible College was founded in partnership between The Timothy Program International, under the direction of Chancellor Dr. Karl Coke, Restoration Fellowship International, under the direction of Dr. John Looper, Bishop Daniel Salamanca and Dr. Yohanan Salamanca from the Community of Family Restoration (Comunidad de Resturasion de Familia). The college has graduated over 1,000 students since its founding in 2004.

Attending the graduation by Zoom: Chanellor Dr. Karl Coke, Bishop Dr. John Looper, and Dr. Justin D. Elwell.



CALLED TO A HOLY PILGRIMAGE: THE GATHERING AND SALVATION OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB is a searing vision of the gathering of Jacob's Household in accordance with the promises of the Hebrew prophets of the Bible who saw and proclaimed as certain the regathering of the children of Israel to the Land of promise in the end times.

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The author, Gianluca Morotti, lives in Italy. He holds a degree in Security Management and a Bachelor in Biblical Studies in Hebraic Heritage. He currently serves as member of the International Board of Ebenezer Emergency Fund International (EEFI), a ministry helping Jewish people making Aliyah (returning to the Land of Israel) and as chairman of Ebenezer Operation Exodus Israel. Where invited he speaks about the purposes of God for the end-times in relation with the plan of God for Israel.

Available through Amazon in paperback for \$12.99 (311 pages).





Blue Mountain Christian Retreat and Conference Center

New Ringgold, PA

July 9th - 14th, 2024





Bishop Edwin Felicie and Rabbi Justin Elwell ministered at Blue Mountain Christian Retreat and Conference Center in New Ringgold PA from July 9th to July 14th, 2024.



During the eleven chapel services, they ministered on such topics as hosting, waiting on the Lord, remembering, the Spirit of adoption and the shepherding Lord.

Edwin and Justin were blessed to spend time in fellowship with people from around the world. Most importantly, Bishop Edwin baptized a child who accepted Christ as Savior into the faith. It was a week of blessing for all.





WOUNDED HEALER

Pastor Chris Absher

In Isaiah 52-53, the prophet Isaiah tells of a servant who will be instrumental in bringing about the Lord's salvation. The natural assumption is that this servant will bring about the Lord's salvation through strength and power, but Isaiah paints a different picture. Instead, Isaiah tells of a Suffering Servant who "was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and *with his wounds we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5, ESV).¹ Believers in Jesus know that this suffering servant is none other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth, but in what way are we healed by his wounds? Surely, his wounding on the cross has the power to heal any person from the sickness of sin, but might one also hope for physical healing because of Jesus' wounds? I believe Mark writes his gospel in such a beautiful way to show us that it is by Jesus' wounds that we are physically healed.² Let's take a look at the "wounds" Jesus endured at the hands of the Jewish council and Roman guards in Mark 14 and 15 and how those wounds brought

healing to others earlier in Mark.

A. Jesus before the Jewish Council: Mark 14:60-65

Although Jesus' mental suffering is apparent in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14, his physical suffering begins before the Jewish leaders in Mark 14:60-65.³ For the sake of clarity in commentary, the entirety of these verses is as follows:

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But *he remained silent* and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to *spit on him* and to *cover his face* and to strike him,

saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.⁴

Certainly, a major purpose of this passage is simply to mark the beginning of Jesus' suffering that will culminate in his crucifixion outside of Jerusalem. A careful reader, however, might notice that the specifics of Jesus' suffering here are reminiscent of Jesus' healings of blind men earlier in Mark. First, Jesus remains "silent" as a crowd (the Sanhedrin) accuses him. In Mark 10 a crowd demands silence from the blind man, Bartimaeus, while in Mark 14 another crowd (the Sanhedrin) demands speech from a "blind"-folded Jesus who remains silent. Bartimaeus is blind but can perceive who Jesus is (calling him the "Son of David"), while Jesus' eyes are *blindfolded* in 14:65 and his self-identification as the "Son of Man" is mocked by the Sanhedrin. Jesus suffers by remaining *silent* and being *blindfolded* so that blind Bartimaeus can *speak up* and *see*.⁵

A second story of healing for a blind man also echoes through Mark 14:60-65. In Mark 8:22-26 there is a

perplexing story in which Jesus *spits* upon a blind man and *lays his hands on him* to heal him. Adding to the strangeness of the account, Jesus seemingly heals this man in stages. The first time Jesus lays his hands on the man, he only sees partially with people looking like trees walking (8:24). Then Jesus lays his hands on the man a second time and he can see clearly (8:25).⁶

As in the story of Bartimaeus, the elements of the blind man's healing resurface in the sufferings of Jesus in Mark 14:60-65. Jesus *spits* on the blind man (8:23) to heal, while the Jewish leaders spit on Jesus to mock him. Jesus lays his hands on the blind man to heal and restore, while the Jewish leaders "receive him [Jesus] with blows" to harm him. Jesus endures being *spat upon* and *struck by the hands* of the Jewish leaders so that the blind man in Mark 8 can be healed by the *spit* and *touch* of Jesus.⁷

B. Jesus before the Roman Soldiers: Mark 15:16-20

Jesus' sufferings continue at the hands of the Roman guards in Mark 15:16-20: And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the *whole battalion*. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were *striking his head* with a reed and *spitting on him*, and *kneeling down* in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.⁸

"And they were striking his head" (15:19)

The Roman soldiers stretch out their hands to strike Jesus and to inflict physical pain. Earlier in Mark's gospel two other characters stretch out their hands to Jesus to be relieved of their physical pain. In Mark 3 the gospel writer tells the

story of a man with a withered hand (3:1). As the scribes and Pharisees look on in judgment to see if Jesus will heal on the Sabbath, Jesus calls the man over to him. Jesus asks "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? But they remained silent" (3:4). The very ones who will later question Jesus and command him to *Prophecy*" (14:65), to which Jesus responds with silence in 14:61, are now silent themselves at Jesus' own questioning. Jesus then commands the man with the withered hand to "Stretch out your hand" (3:5) and the man's hand is restored. The Roman soldiers *stretch out their hands to harm Jesus* and he patiently endures it so that the man with the withered hand can *stretch out his hand to Jesus and be healed*.

A second character in Mark's gospel finds healing by stretching out her hand to Jesus—the woman with the issue of blood.⁹ Mark 5 tells the story of a woman with an issue of blood, which makes her ritually unclean and the last person who should be near a crowd and a Rabbi. Mark tells us that "She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.' And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease" (5:27-29).¹⁰ Jesus endured the Roman soldiers stretching out their hands to deal *blood-drawing blows* so that this woman could stretch out her hand to Jesus so *her blood flow would dry up*.

"And they were . . . spitting on him" (15:19)

As in Mark 14, the theme of spitting crops up again in Mark 15 as the *Roman soldiers* cruelly mock Jesus. We saw earlier how Jesus endured being spat upon by the *Jewish leaders* to bring healing to a blind man by spitting on him in Mark 8. There is, however, another story in which Jesus uses spit to heal a deaf man in Mark 7.¹¹ A deaf man with a speech impediment is brought to

Jesus and "taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers in his ears, and *after spitting* touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, and his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly" (7:33-35).¹² Once again Jesus uses spit to heal a man, this time a deaf man. We must not assume that Jesus needed the assistance of spit because of its associations in the first century with healing properties. Jesus as the Son of God and fully divine certainly does not need the assistance of spit to heal, so why does Mark mention this detail? Mark is again demonstrating that Jesus' suffered so others could be healed. Jesus endured being *spat upon by the Jewish leaders and Roman battalion* so that the *deaf man could be spat upon and healed*.

"And they were . . . kneeling down in homage to him" (15:19)

As a final insult to his kingship, the Roman soldiers began to kneel before Jesus and mock him.¹³ Earlier in Mark there are two characters that also kneel before Jesus and in doing so find healing. First, Mark recounts the healing of a leper in Mark 1:40-45. It should be noted that the plight of a leper in first century Palestine was a terrible one. According to the Mosaic law in Leviticus 13, leprosy made one ritually unclean such that one must wear torn garments, let their hair hang loose, cover the upper lip and call out "Unclean, unclean!" (Leviticus 13:45). So long as the person had leprosy, they remained unclean and had to live outside the camp. The leper who comes to Jesus has likely been shunned from society and has no earthly means for healing and restoration to normal life. That was the life of this leper before he met Jesus.

The leprous man comes to Jesus and "*kneeling* said to him, 'If you will, you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said

to him, 'I will, be clean.' And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean" (Mark 3:40-42).¹⁴ It is important to note that the leper's first physical action upon coming to Jesus is to *kneel* before him. He recognizes Jesus as one who has the power and authority to heal, the same power and authority that the Roman guards openly mock. Jesus is moved with pity such that he touches the leper, and this touch of Jesus is likely the first human contact this leper has had in many years. The isolation of leprosy is broken by the radical action of Jesus to touch an unclean man. Jesus endured the shame of the Roman guards *kneeling* before him to mock him so that the leper could be healed by *kneeling* before Jesus in desperation and faith.

A second character kneels before Jesus in desperation for healing. In Mark 5, a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus comes to Jesus in hopes of having his daughter healed. This was a man of considerable power, authority, and respect. For such a man as this to fall down at the feet of Jesus is suggestive of his immense desperation. Mark 5:22-24 tells us, "Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him [Jesus], he *fell at his feet* and implored him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live. And he went with him.'¹⁵ While still traveling to Jairus's house, his servants say the girl is dead and not to bother the teacher further, but Jesus is unphased by such news and they continue to the house. The climactic moment of healing comes in 5:41-42, "Taking her by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha cumi,' which means, 'Little girl I say to you, arise.' And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement." It is no accident that Mark recounts Jairus's falling at Jesus' feet in desperation for the healing of his daughter. Like the leprous man, it is precisely Jairus's humility

to fall at the feet of Jesus and his faith that Jesus could do something miraculous that rouses the compassion of Jesus to act and to heal. Jesus endured the Roman soldiers *kneeling* before him to mock him so that those who would *kneel* before him in desperation for healing could be made whole.

III. Meaning for You and Me

While the scriptures were not written *to* you and me—they were written originally to the Galatians, the Jewish Diaspora, etc.—they were written *for* us such that they are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."¹⁶ I am convinced that Jesus was wounded for the healing of people in Mark's Gospel *and for those of us who put our faith in him today*. There are four meaningful things I think we should grasp from the suffering and healing ministry of Jesus in Mark's gospel.¹⁷

First, a healing from Jesus, whether for ourselves or for someone else, takes us out of our comfort zone. In Mark 8 Jesus took the blind man *out of the village*. In the village, the blind man was comfortable as things were familiar to him. Moreover, there was such a strong sense, in the first century culture in Israel, that you cared for the wounded and you cared for the sick. This blind man was probably set by a rich person's house and the wealthier family would have fed and clothed him. But Jesus, to heal him, takes him *out of the village*. Outside the village, the blind man has no point of reference. He has no idea where he is and if he will ever find his way back to the food and clothing provided by the wealthy family. Outside the village, the only thing that the blind man has to hold onto are the hands of Jesus. We often do all we can to avoid relinquishing control and to stay in our comfort zone. However, if we want to be healed physically, spiritually, emotionally, financially, or relationally, it is going to be uncomfortable. Bartimaeus had to jump up and call out for Jesus, the woman with the issue of blood had to be in the crowd, and

Jairus had to fall publicly at the feet of Jesus. God may ask us to do some uncomfortable things, but it will be for our good because He loves His children and wants to give us good gifts.¹⁹

Second, when we are wounded and then healed, our scars become our testimony. All of us have a story and can say, "I was in a terrible place and now things are totally different. The only thing that has changed is *Jesus met me where I was and changed my life*." The very fact that we were so broken and then healed is precisely the key part of our story that we can use to tell others about Jesus. Mark shows us this formula—brokenness + healing = testimony—in the healing of the leper in Mark 1. Recall that according to Leviticus 13, every time this leper went into town, he would have to cry out, "Unclean! unclean!" So, the people in this town knew what he was going to say as soon as they heard his voice. They knew he was just going to say for the hundredth time, "Unclean! Unclean! I'm still sick." How many years (or even decades) had he come into town and said the same refrain? But once he meets Jesus and is healed of his leprosy *he finds new words to shout while going into town*. Mark 1:45 tells us, "But he [the leprous man] went out and *began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news*, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town." *Because of his testimony this one healed leper makes Jesus so famous that Jesus cannot even get into a town anymore because of the crowds*. You may not know how, but God can use your healed wounds to make our savior Jesus known to those around you.

Third, Jesus wants to come near to us *before we are well*. The temptation for many Christians is to feel that they must solve their problems on their own before they bring it to Jesus. We so often feel that if there is an area of our lives that is broken into ten pieces, then we must put nine of them back together ourselves before we bring it to the Lord. But Jesus wants to draw

close to us even before we are well—even while we still have broken families, even while we’re committing that hidden sin, even while we still don’t understand how a good God would allow us to still be sick or in pain. Wherever we are in our spiritual life, Jesus wants to be near to us. Recall the leper from Mark 1. Jesus was moved with pity, stretched out His hand and touched him. The leper was still sick and ritually impure, and any good Jewish man would not have gotten near him. But Jesus comes close, even close enough to touch him even while he is still leprous. That’s who Jesus is. When we are broken, when we are hurting, and when we do not have it all together, Jesus still wants to be close, and when Jesus gets close, real-life change happens!

Fourth, we should work with desperation to bring Jesus’ healing to the world. Every Christian shares a common testimony in that we all were “called out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The brokenness that sin had caused in our lives has been healed.²⁰ It ought to be the fervent mission of our lives to share this good news of healing that Jesus freely offers to the world. The story of the healing of the blind man in Mark 8 demonstrates why it is so critical that Christians take this mission seriously. In the story, the blind man, the one who is in darkness (quite literally), the one who needs the healing so desperately from Jesus does not even ask for it. In fact, it was *other people* who brought the blind man to Jesus. Mark 8:22 tells us, “And *some people* brought to him [Jesus] a blind man and begged him to touch him.” It took other people who *knew who Jesus was* to bring this blind man to Jesus and beg Jesus to heal him. The whole world is blind and cannot even recognize that Jesus is nearby and can save and heal them. We Christians should be bringing people who are lost, who are hurting, who are broken, and who are blind to meet the one who was

wounded so that they could be healed. Let’s get after it.

FOOTNOTES

¹ All scriptural quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Emphasis is mine.

² The final section of this paper will provide some thoughts on the meaning of these things for the modern reader of Mark’s gospel.

³ While the scriptural text does not state this explicitly, most scholars would agree that Jesus is before the Sanhedrin. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 75. For a brief overview of the Sanhedrin see J. Andrew Overman, S.v. “Sanhedrin,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 677-678.

⁴ Mark 14:60-65, ESV. Emphasis is mine.

⁵ Moreover, the divestment of the high priest in the tearing of his robe (14:63) may also hearken back to the story of Bartimaeus who throws off his cloak in 10:50. Both the high priest tearing his robe and Bartimaeus throwing off his cloak are in response to direct speech from Jesus. In Bartimaeus’ case, Jesus breaks the crowd’s pleas for silence by calling Bartimaeus and he responds by throwing off his robe. In the high priest’s case, Jesus breaks his own silence by professing who he is, and the high priest divests himself. For Mark, Bartimaeus and the high priest represent opposite responses to Jesus and his readers would do well to imitate Bartimaeus.

⁶ While this story of healing seems to espouse a very low Christology, the multi-stage healing is best understood not as low Christology, but as Jesus using the healing of the blind man in stages as a lesson to the disciples about their own spiritual blindness. They do not fully “see” and they always need another touch from Jesus, another parable, another saying, another teaching, and more prayer in order to be able to see clearly.

⁷ Jesus also used spit in the healing of

a deaf man in Mark 7:31-37. While there are some extant Greco-Roman sources that demonstrate a belief during the time of Jesus that spit had healing qualities (see Ain Riistan, “Mark 8:22-26: What Do We Make of a Jesus Who Spits?,” in *When God’s Spoke: Researches and Reflections on Religious Phenomena and Artifacts*, eds. Peeter Espak, Mart Laanemets, Valdimir Sazonov (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2015), 260-271) one must be cautious in making too much of this in the case of Jesus’ healings. As the Son of God, fully divine, Jesus did not need the assistance of any physical thing with “healing properties.” It is the argument of this writer that the use of spit in Mark 8 (and Mark 7) is Mark’s deliberate attempt to connect the sufferings of Jesus at the end of the Gospel with the healing of others. For more information on spit in Second Temple Judaism see Jodi Magness, “The Impurity of Oil and Spit among the Qumran Sectarians,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism*, eds. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov (New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2011), 223-231.

⁸ Emphasis is mine.

⁹ This woman’s suffering is difficult for the modern reader to fully understand. She has been in perpetual pain and suffering for twelve years, has likely undergone many painful medical procedures, spent all she had, and has been ostracized from society because of her ritual impurity. This is a woman desperate for healing.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Mark uses variations of the same Greek word (ξηραίνω) in both healing stories above. In the healing of the man with the withered hand, the *dried-up* (ξηραρμμένην) hand is the very thing in need of healing. In the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, *drying up* (ξηρανθή) the blood flow is the *means of healing*.

¹¹ With such strong literary ties with the theme of spit, which occurs only in healings and Jesus’s sufferings, it is the opinion of this writer that Mark also intends the reader of his gospel to remember this story of healing of a deaf man in Mark 7 as one reads the sufferings of Jesus at the end of the gospel.

¹² Emphasis is mine.

¹³ It is also interesting here that Mark employs the word προσεκύνουν to describe the kneeling of the Roman

guards in verse 19. This word is commonly translated as “worship” and marks the posture appropriate for all people to have towards Jesus. The same guards who are mocking Jesus are, in a humorous twist, setting the example of the posture all people should take toward Jesus as king.

¹⁴ Emphasis is mine.

¹⁵ The narrative is then interrupted by the story of the woman with the issue of blood and the demonstration of Jesus’ miraculous power to heal her.

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16.

¹⁷ When I refer to miraculous healing this does include physical healing, but it also includes more broadly any brokenness that sin has caused. So miraculous healing may be physical, spiritual, financial, marital, relational, etc. The length of this paper does not allow for a thorough treatment of this issue. I recognize that I am assuming for the sake of the remainder of this paper that miraculous healing can in fact occur in the modern world. For further reading and various views on the issue of the miraculous see *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids, Zondervan), 1996.

¹⁸ The reader of this paper will notice a shift to first person for the remainder of the paper. I find this makes the task of speaking directly to the reader more manageable.

¹⁹ Matthew 7:11.

²⁰ Although there is an ultimate healing that will come when Christ comes back and “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Chris Absher, his wife Sydney and daughter Wessy live in Bountsville, Alabama. His ministerial interests include preaching and teaching in local churches and wants to establish credibility for continuing writing and podcast ministry. He is also working on a MA in Theology at Knox Theological Seminary.



MEET ONE OF OUR RFI MINISTERS



Hello, and many blessings!

My name is Rev. Joann Constantine. I have been serving the Lord since salvation in July 1994.

I am married to a wonderful man of God, Ron. We will be married 29 years on September 2nd. We have two children, Jessica & Noah, son-in-law Jason, and our first beautiful granddaughter Jordyn.

In 1998 the Lord called me to ministry. Currently, I am the Children’s Minister at our church, *Dwelling Place Church* in Millville, NJ. God has moved so strongly within our children’s ministry, and I love being able to bring the Word to them with Ron by my side. The Lord has anointed me to learn keyboard and minister in worship with them. To hear them worship will make your heart melt. I love how open children are to God.

Before the Children’s Ministry, I served for several years as a youth pastor in the church where I was saved. What a complete blessing it is to minister with children of all ages; and to

do it with my wonderful husband. I have also served on the worship team for many years and in many other ministries.

I received my Bachelor’s Degree in Biblical Counseling from Biblical Life College & Seminary in June 2016; and my ordination with Restoration Fellowship International in May 2018.

God has moved in my life and ministry so strongly. Over the past several years, I have counseled many individuals of all ages. I am a firm believer in receiving biblical knowledge and pursuing trainings & certifications in counseling and ministry.

In 2022, the Lord changed my profession from teaching kindergarten to becoming an accounting manager with EPAC Property Management. Even though I’m not in a “church” ministry full-time, my work environment has been a ministry.

God has brought Ron & me a very long way and continues to use us in whatever area He needs to; and we are so blessed for it.

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LOS GENTILES Y LAS FIESTAS BÍBLICAS

YOHANAN SALAMANCA, PH.D.

Esta escrito que los gentiles comparten una rica herencia con Israel. ¿Hay alguna evidencia histórica de la cual podamos obtener revelación al respecto para esta pregunta?

En Restauración Familiar, promovemos la observancia del Shabat, de las Fiestas, y los Tiempos establecidos prescritos en la Torá. Ya sea que el creyente fuere gentil o judío, tiene una rica herencia en el calendario bíblico. Celebrar los días santos judíos es parte de la restauración de nuestra fe. Creemos en guardar las fiestas por obediencia a la Palabra de Dios y buscamos imitar la fe de los primeros creyentes y seguidores de Yeshua en el primer siglo.

Sin embargo, muchos cristianos hacen la pregunta de si un gentil debe de celebrar estos festivales. Otros van más lejos y preguntan si alguna vez algún creyente gentil participó de estos. Naturalmente, los creyentes judíos guardaban el calendario bíblico, pero, ¿cómo sabemos que los gentiles también lo hicieron?

El Concilio de Jerusalén enfrentó la interrogante, ¿Qué se les debería

requerir a los creyentes gentiles en el Mesías? Los apóstoles decidieron “no imponer ninguna carga” sobre los gentiles sino solo los cuatro esenciales: “de lo sacrificado a ídolos, de sangre, de ahogado y de fornicación” (Hchs 15:28-29). Los cuatro esenciales son el mínimo de las preocupaciones ceremoniales, pero no necesariamente un fin en ellos mismos. Por ejemplo, uno puede asumir que los creyentes gentiles participaron en las fiestas de Israel.

En Honor al Señor

Hechos 15 no hace mención de las fiestas, pero si encontramos varias referencias de creyentes gentiles celebrando los festivales judíos en los escritos de Pablo. En la Epístola a los Colosenses, Pablo es claro al decir que los gentiles no deben ser juzgados o condenados si deciden celebrar estas fiestas y celebraciones.

Colosenses 2:16

Por tanto, nadie os juzgue en comida o en bebida, o en cuanto a días de fiesta, luna nueva o días de reposo.

Las instrucciones de Pablo, sin embargo, no deben de ser vistas como si prohibieran a un gentil celebrar los tiempos establecidos de la Torá. En su ensayo, *cristianos observando los festivales judíos de otoño*, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra señala que Pablo “no prohíbe observar los festivales judíos sino habla de ejercer coerción sobre ellos para que los observen.”¹ La instrucción de Pablo prohíbe obligar a los gentiles a celebrar estas fiestas, pero también prohíbe juzgarlo si decide hacerlo. Stöck Ben Ezra observa la misma preocupación de la observancia gentil en la carta de Pablo a Los Romanos:

“Uno hace diferencia entre día y día; otro juzga iguales todos los días. Cada uno esté plenamente convencido en su propia mente. El que hace caso del día, lo hace para el Señor; y el que no hace caso del día, para el Señor no lo hace.”

Romanos 14:5-6

Stökl ben Ezra interpreta que estas instrucciones fueron dirigidas a los creyentes gentiles en Roma y no a los creyentes judíos. En Romanos

14, Pablo agrega, que el que quiere observar el día lo hace en honor a Dios. También Stökl comenta:

Pablo asume que algunos miembros de las comunidades romanas observan las fiestas judías y les da libertad para hacerlo. Pablo aún respalda la observancia de Yom Kippur y otros días de adoración si ellos son celebrados en honor al Señor.²

Así que mientras Pablo, buscó que los Gentiles no fueran forzados a observar estos festivales, al mismo tiempo, les dio permiso y libertad para hacerlo como un acto de adoración, honrando a Hashem.

Festivales Paganos

Para los apóstoles, la preocupación mayor no era si obligaban a los gentiles a guardar los festivales o no, sino, si los gentiles habían cesado de participar en las prácticas paganas a las que estaban acostumbrados, y que incluían idolatría. Uno de los cuatro esenciales dados a los gentiles era “abstenerse de todo lo sacrificado a los ídolos” (Hchs 15:29), lo cual en esencia incluía todas las formas de práctica pagana. Pablo instruye a los gentiles de Corinto a “huir de la idolatría.”³

Idolatría en hebreo es llamada *avodah zarah*, y literalmente significa “adoración extraña.” Esta incluye tanto, la adoración de ídolos e imágenes, así como participar e imitar las prácticas de religiones paganas. La vida fuera del judaísmo del primer siglo estaba entregada a la idolatría. Muchos creyentes gentiles probablemente encontraron que romper por completo con la idolatría en su tiempo era algo muy difícil. Su nueva fe requería que se removieran así mismos de todo lo que consideraban familiar. Pablo explícitamente prohíbe la participación en fiestas paganas en su carta a los Gálatas.

Ciertamente, en otro tiempo, no conociendo a Dios, servíais a los que por naturaleza no son dioses; mas ahora, conociendo a Dios, o más bien, siendo conocidos por Dios, ¿cómo es que os

volvéis de nuevo a los débiles y pobres rudimentos, a los cuales os queréis volver a esclavizar? Guardáis los días, los meses, los tiempos y los años. Gálatas 4:8-10.

Mientras que algunos comentaristas interpretan este pasaje como si se refiriera a las fiestas judías, esta interpretación crea dificultades. Por ejemplo, Pablo le está hablando a gentiles que antes eran paganos.⁴ Mark Nanos escribe:

Esta interpretación de la referencia de Pablo a los tiempos paganos se refiere a la observancia local e imperial de cultos y tiene sentido en el hecho de que Pablo ha identificado a los que escribe como ex idolatras en este contexto, y no como ex gentiles justos o judíos.⁵

Si los gentiles de Galacia estaban regresando a algo, debió de haber sido a las celebraciones paganas, las cuales habían dejado recientemente y no los festivales bíblicos con los cuales no tenían mucha familiaridad. Pero, ¿por qué querían regresar a las formas paganas? Nanos señala que debido a que estos gentiles no eran prosélitos ni candidatos para la conversión, no estaban protegidos ni relevados de sus responsabilidades cívicas y paganas por la autoridad judía comunal de identidad.⁶ Por lo tanto, tenían que enfrentar las consecuencias, frecuentemente duras, por no participar en estos festivales paganos. Más que solo la práctica de la religión, la participación en los días feriados paganos era su deber civil para el estado. Así que, en lugar de sufrir por la cruz, los Gálatas se vieron tentados ya sea por un lado, a convertirse, tomando un estatus legal de protección como judíos, o simplemente a cumplir con su deber al ir a través de todos estos rituales paganos para no ser castigados.

En la ausencia de cualquiera de sus fiestas y ocasiones especiales antiguas, los creyentes gentiles buscarían de forma natural participar con el resto de Israel en las fiestas de la Tora. La ausencia de cualquier fiesta o días santos, habría creado un vacío espiritual serio.⁷ Si ellos no

celebraban los festivales bíblicos, entonces ¿qué celebrarían? Los gentiles en el Mesías “han sido acercados” a los pactos y a las promesas de Israel lo cual incluye su calendario festivo.⁸ Como es evidenciado por el libro de los Hechos, estos creyentes gentiles se congregaban en la sinagoga y celebraban de alguna forma los días santos, tal vez solo hacían acto de presencia, pero estaban ahí, queriendo ser parte. Encontramos evidencia de esta participación a través de los escritos apostólicos, así como en la historia de la Iglesia. Veremos algunos ejemplos de Pascua, Shavuot, Yom Kippur y Sukkot.

Pascua

Pablo escribió 1 Corintios a una audiencia predominantemente gentil que se congregaba en la sinagoga. Adicionalmente, el momento de la carta parece haber sido en algún momento al comienzo de la primavera, antes de que la temporada de Pascua comenzara. Muchas porciones en esta carta hacen alusión a esta fiesta y parecen instrucciones sobre cómo observarla propiamente con una buena actitud.

No es buena vuestra jactancia. ¿No sabéis que un poco de levadura leuda toda la masa? Limpios, pues, de la vieja levadura, para que seáis nueva masa, sin levadura como sois; porque nuestra pascua, que es Cristo, ya fue sacrificada por nosotros. Así que celebremos la fiesta, no con la vieja levadura, ni con la levadura de malicia y de maldad, sino con panes sin levadura, de sinceridad y de verdad. 1 Corintios 5:6-8.

Aunque la frase “celebremos la fiesta” es claramente metafórica, puede ser únicamente entendida por aquellos que estaban realmente celebrando Pascua y la fiesta de los Panes sin Levadura con la abstención en algún nivel de la levadura. Aparentemente, los creyentes gentiles en Corinto

estaban celebrando Pascua en Memoria del Mesías.

Los creyentes gentiles originalmente celebraban Pascua, y esto está respaldado por la controversia Cuartodecimana en los inicios del cristianismo. Cuando la Iglesia romana buscó limitar la celebración de la Pascua para el primer domingo después de Pascua, otros cristianos, especialmente en Asia menor, insistieron en celebrar el festival de acuerdo a la práctica judía el 14 de Abib como siempre se había hecho. El venerable Obispo Policarpo, un discípulo del apóstol Juan, insistió que la observancia judía de Pascua había sido transmitida a ellos a través de los apóstoles.⁹ Cuando la Iglesia cristiana en su mayoría adoptó la práctica de celebrarla en domingo, los cuartodecimanos (aquellos que observaban la fiesta el 14 de abib) se separaron y formaron su propio grupo. Sobrevivieron hasta el siglo quinto.

En el Leccionario Siriaco (siglo quinto EC), la semana antes de Pascua es llamada la semana de los panes sin levadura.¹⁰ Los Canones de Hipólito (tercer siglo al quinto EC) instruyen:

La semana durante la cual los judíos celebran Pascua debe ser observada por los cristianos con gran interés, deben de tener cuidado de abstenerse de todo afán.

Aunque este texto no está defendiendo la observancia de la Pascua per se, sí indica que la Iglesia primitiva retuvo las tradiciones de la Pascua que se encuentran en la Tora. Indica que, en algún momento, la Iglesia observaba esta fiesta bíblica de forma hebrea.

Shavuot

Los escritos apostólicos resaltan la festividad de Shavuot como el tiempo del derramamiento del Espíritu Santo en Hechos 2, pero otra referencia en Hechos 20 nos da más evidencia sobre creyentes gentiles celebrando las fiestas de la Tora:

Hechos 20:16

Porque Pablo se había propuesto pasar de largo a Éfeso, para no detenerse en Asia, pues se apresuraba por estar el día de Pentecostés, si le fuese posible, en Jerusalén.

Pablo quería llegar a Jerusalén para Pentecostés porque la Tora requiere que todos los israelitas suban al Templo en Jerusalén para Shavuot. Mientras que esto nos da clara evidencia de que Pablo mismo observaba Shavuot (Pentecostés), podemos también especular sobre que esta es evidencia de que Lucas, el escritor de Hechos, lo hacía también. Lucas era gentil.¹² De acuerdo a Stökl Ben Ezra y otros eruditos, los lectores de Lucas eran “Cristianos temerosos de Dios,” es decir, creyentes gentiles en Yeshua.¹³ Sería extraño que Lucas mencione el viaje a Jerusalén para la fiesta de Shavuot, si esta fiesta no significa nada para él o sus lectores. Lo mismo puede ser dicho sobre la declaración de Pablo en 1 Corintios 16:8: “Pero estaré en Éfeso hasta Pentecostés.” Como lo mencionamos antes, la carta a los Corintios fue escrita para un grupo mixto de judíos y gentiles.

Adicionalmente, en el contexto de Hechos 20:16, vemos a Pablo trayendo creyentes gentiles con él a Jerusalén para la fiesta de Shavuot. Por ejemplo, fue durante esta ocasión que él fue acusado de traer griegos incircuncisos al Templo, debido a que fue visto con Trofimo de Éfeso en la ciudad.¹⁴ Al traer gentiles con él a Jerusalén para Shavuot, Pablo estaba motivándolos a celebrar el día santo en la ciudad santa.

La historia de la Iglesia contiene testimonios abundantes de la celebración de Shavuot, aún hasta el día de hoy. Una de las primeras referencias se encuentra en el libro apócrifo de *Hechos de Pablo* (Segundo siglo EC):

Mientras que estaba en prisión, los hermanos, debido a que era Pentecostés, ni lloraron ni se arrodillaron, sino permanecieron de pie y oraron.¹⁵

Irineo también menciona Pentecos-

tés como un día especial, igual en santidad que el día del Señor;¹⁶ mientras que Tertuliano lo registra como uno de los tiempos más gozosos.¹⁷ Ciertamente la celebración cristiana de este día era diferente a la costumbre en el Judaísmo, pero es obvio que la práctica cristiana se desarrolló de la fiesta de las semanas en el Judaísmo

Los Días Muy Sagrados

Yom Teruah y Yom Kippur son considerados en el judaísmo, los días más sagrados del año.¹ Es posible que un judío no sea frecuente en sus visitas a la sinagoga, pero en estos días no puede faltar. Yom Kippur es un día de ayuno marcado por la Tora. Por lo tanto, no debería de sorprendernos ver referencias a ello en el Nuevo Testamento:

Y habiendo pasado mucho tiempo, y siendo ya peligrosa la navegación, por haber pasado ya el ayuno, Pablo les amonestaba, diciéndoles: Varones, veo que la navegación va a ser con perjuicio y mucha pérdida, no sólo del cargamento y de la nave, sino también de nuestras personas. Hechos 27:9-10.

“El ayuno” que se menciona aquí, es Yom Kippur. Stökl Ben Ezra asume que la frase “el ayuno” es una referencia a que el mismo Lucas estaba guardando el ayuno y asumió que sus lectores también:

*No puedo evitar la conclusión de que Lucas mismo y sus lectores observaban Yom Kippur. ¿Por qué otra razón Lucas utilizaría una referencia del calendario judío para un problema secular? Él claramente presume que sus lectores entenderán a lo que él se está refiriendo.*¹⁸

Los eruditos especulan sobre si los lectores del libro de los Hechos eran gentiles como Lucas. Para que los lectores de Lucas entendieran tal referencia, ellos debían de observar la fiesta de Yom Kippur.

Evidencia indirecta puede ser

encontrada en el libro de Apocalipsis. El libro de Apocalipsis está repleto de alusiones a los rituales y temas de estos días sagrados. Las imágenes apocalípticas del día del juicio, los libros del juicio, el sonido de las trompetas, los escenarios del Templo y muchas cosas más, son imágenes que fueron tomadas directamente de la observancia tradicional de Rosh Hashana y Yom Kippur. Juan dirige el libro de Apocalipsis a las siete comunidades en Asia menor, que estaba constituida principalmente por gentiles. Si esas comunidades no estaban celebrando o no habían celebrado estas fiestas, el mensaje de este libro hubiese estado tan escondido, como lo está para muchos cristianos hoy.

Registros sobre creyentes gentiles celebrando Yom Kippur aparecen en la literatura tardía de la Iglesia. La Epístola de Diogneto del segundo siglo habla contra cristianos que observan leyes judías tales como “el ayuno.”¹⁹ Orígenes menciona a cristianos ayudando en Yom Kippur:

De donde también debemos decir algo ahora a aquellos que piensan que, en virtud de los mandamientos de la ley, ellos deben practicar el ayuno de los judíos. (Homilía sobre Levítico 12:2 [Barkley])

El menciona otro caso, que ahora envuelve cristianos de Cesárea, en sus Homilías sobre Jeremías, probando así, que este no es un caso aislado; debió de haber varios grupos de gentiles cristianos en el tercer siglo que aún celebraban esta festividad hebrea.²⁰ A finales del cuarto siglo, Juan Crisóstomo estaba aún denunciando a aquellos que “se unen con los judíos para guardar sus festivales y observar sus ayunos.”²¹

Mas evidencia a este fenómeno puede ser encontrada en la Iglesia medieval del quinto siglo, la cual practicaba el ayuno del séptimo mes. Este ayuno formaba parte de los días Quator tempora y era uno de los días más solemnes del año litúrgico de la Iglesia.

Los eruditos ven este ayuno como resultado de la cristianización de Yom Kippur.²² En otras palabras, debido a que muchos cristianos estaban guardando Yom Kippur y mientras la Iglesia continuaba separándose del Judaísmo, el Cristianismo poco a poco transformó este ayuno en una práctica cristiana en el mes de Septiembre. Esto es muy similar con lo que pasó con la transformación de Pascua a Santa Cena.

En el siglo quinto, el teólogo Leo el Grande escribió:

Proclamamos el ayuno santo del séptimo mes, queridos y amados, para el ejercicio de devociones comunes, confidencialmente incitándoles con exhortaciones paternales a hacer cristiano por observancia, aquello que al principio era judío. (Sermón 90:1 [Fletoe])

En esto vemos una vez más que muchos creyentes gentiles, celebraban Yom Kippur, al punto, que el ayuno permaneció aún después de que partieran caminos judaísmo y cristianismo.

Sukkot

La observancia gentil de Sukkot se asume simplemente en el libro de Apocalipsis. El Capítulo siete describe una escena donde todas las naciones aparecen delante del Mesías:

Después de esto miré, y he aquí una gran multitud, la cual nadie podía contar, de todas naciones y tribus y pueblos y lenguas, que estaban delante del trono y en la presencia del Cordero, vestidos de ropas blancas, y con palmas en las manos; y clamaban a gran voz, diciendo: La salvación pertenece a nuestro Dios que está sentado en el trono, y al Cordero...Por esto están delante del trono de Dios, y le sirven día y noche en su templo; y el que está sentado sobre el trono extenderá su tabernáculo sobre ellos. Apocalipsis 7:9-10, 15.

El motivo claramente evoca las declaraciones proféticas de Zaca-

rías en las cuales, todas las naciones subirán a Jerusalén “a celebrar la fiesta de los tabernáculos.”²³ Aquí, en Apocalipsis, las naciones suben al trono de Dios en el Templo con palmas en sus manos los cuales son *lulavim*, y que la Torá ordena que se muevan en Sukkot.²⁴ Más adelante en el versículo 17 encontramos la mención sobre “fuentes de aguas de vida,” lo cual parece ser una referencia a la ceremonia de derramamiento de agua que ocurría en el Templo cada mañana durante Sukkot,²⁵ mostrando así, una imagen más completa de la fiesta.

Los símbolos de Sukkot en Apocalipsis solo son relevantes, si fueron escritos para una comunidad de creyentes que participaba en las fiestas de Israel. Las comunidades que leyeron Apocalipsis seguramente eran comunidades mixtas formadas por judíos y gentiles, quienes celebraban juntos esta festividad, con la mentalidad de que algún día, el mundo entero participaría en la era mesiánica. De hecho, los gentiles que celebran esta fiesta, son por así decirlo, la primicia de ese momento profético glorioso.

Algunos eruditos también ven una conexión entre Sukkot y la fiesta de Encaneia (“La Iglesia de la Dedicación”), ambas son celebradas en la misma temporada, duran 8 días y son un tiempo de peregrinaje a Jerusalén (en Sukkot hacia el Templo y Encaneia a la Iglesia del Santo Sepulcro). Goudoever escribe que “desde el cuarto siglo, la fiesta de la Dedicación es guardada como una continuación de la tercer gran fiesta israelita [Sukkot].”²⁶ Parece haber también una referencia de gentiles observando Sukkot en la reprensión de Juan Crisóstomo a aquellos que junto a los judíos tienen “tiendas...y acampan junto a ellos.”²⁷

Conclusión

El historiador de la Iglesia Jean Danielou señala que antiguos documentos cristianos no contie-

nen referencias a un nuevo calendario litúrgico o nuevas festividades. Sino más bien, los primeros cristianos guardaban los tiempos establecidos de la Torá como sus días santos:

El año litúrgico judío claramente tenía un lugar importante en sus ojos. El Nuevo Testamento registra la vida de Cristo en el escenario de las fiestas judías, y la importancia atribuida a este escenario nos guía a suponer que ello tenía importancia para las comunidades a las cuales los Evangelios fueron dirigidos.²⁸

Así que la evidencia parece mostrar, que los primeros creyentes gentiles celebraban junto a los judíos, las fiestas de Israel.

Aunque los creyentes gentiles no deben ser juzgados con respecto de las fiestas de la Torá, hay mucho fundamento para creer que, en la primera comunidad gentil de creyentes, había una gran participación en estas fiestas y estos días santos fueron extendidos ampliamente en la comunidad gentil. A diferencia de hoy, el Judaísmo era su única oportunidad, y si los creyentes gentiles decidían no celebrar estas fiestas señaladas por Dios junto con el resto de Israel, no les hubiesen quedado días especiales de celebración y gozo.²⁹ Louis Feldmen señala que de hecho, la mayor atracción para muchos gentiles hacia el Judaísmo eran sus celebraciones.

El día de hoy, el cristianismo separado de sus raíces hebreas y al sentirse sin festividades, ha lamentablemente absorbido celebraciones mundanas y solo las ha disfrazado de cristianismo. Hemos caído, en el temor que los apóstoles tenían al principio, y que era ser absorbidos por una cultura pagana e idólatra que ofende el corazón de nuestro Dios.

Para aquellos que estamos regresando a la fe que Yeshua y los apóstoles celebraron, la Iglesia del primer siglo es un gran ejemplo. Los creyentes gentiles del primer siglo participaron en las fiestas bíblicas por amor al Dios de Israel, a

su Hijo Yeshua y por un deseo de unirse con el pueblo amado de Dios, el pueblo de Israel, en los tiempos señalados por el Padre mismo.

Haremos bien en considerar, celebrar estos tiempos que son parte de la rica herencia que Dios nos ha dado.

¡Jag Sameaj Jagim!

FOOTNOTES

¹ Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "Christians Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," in *The Image of Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 53–73.

² Ibid., 60.

³ 1 Corintios 10:14

⁴ Stökl Ben Ezra also states, "Es difícil explicar la observancia de 'tiempos especiales' en la Diaspora ya que el Jubileo y el año sabático son válidos solo para la tierra de Israel" ("Christians Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," 59).

⁵ Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 268.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Además, Rambam en su *Mishneh Torah* escribe, "[Los Gentiles] no tienen permitido originar una nueva religión o crear nuevos mitzvot basados en sus propias decisiones" (*Melachim* 10:9 [Touger]). Aunque no podemos estar seguros, parece que un sentimiento similar debió estar presente en la era del Segundo Templo y que los apóstoles debieron prohibir a los gentiles el crear nuevos festivales.

⁸ Efesios 2:12-13

⁹ "Cuartodecimanismo" Diccionario Oxford de la Iglesia cristiana 1364-1365.

¹⁰ Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 176–181.

¹¹ Éxodo 34:23; Deuteronomio 16:16.

¹² Compare Colosenses 4:10-11 y 4:14

¹³ Ibid, 63.

¹⁴ Hechos 21:27-29.

¹⁵ Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 182.

¹⁶ Fragmentos de Irineo 7.

¹⁷ *On Baptism* 19.

¹⁸ Stökl Ben Ezra, "Christians Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," 62.

¹⁹ Epístola de Diogneto 4.

²⁰ Stökl Ben Ezra, "Christians Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," 69.

²¹ Contra los Judíos 1:5.

²² Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "¿De quién es este ayuno? Los días Ember de Septiembre y Yom Kippur," en *Los caminos que nunca se separaron* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 259–282.

²³ Zacarías 14:16-19

²⁴ Levítico 23:40.

²⁵ M.Sukkah 4:9.

²⁶ Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 214, ver también 210–213.

²⁷ Contra los judíos 9:2.

²⁸ Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (John A. Baker, trans.; Philadelphia, PA:

Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 343.

²⁹ Louis Feldmen, *Judío y Gentil en el mundo antiguo*: Princeton University Press, 1993.

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THE ONE NEW MAN

God's End Time Purpose for His Covenant Community Part 1

Dr. Clifford Denton

Discerning God's Current Prophetic Purpose

Throughout history God's covenant purposes move forward as one generation succeeds another. His purposes are to be discerned *behind* the day-to-day news that is prominent in our world. What He is doing would not normally make the headlines. For example, while the entire world of sin that was about to be judged by God consumed a generation, one man, Noah, built a boat at the command of God. Likewise, Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan involved one family, obscure from most of the then world. And so on through all the years of human activity.

The Lord Jesus Himself had little to do with the great kingdoms of the world of His day, ministering to the poor for a few years before ultimately becoming our Sacrifice, something that was barely understood at the time even by His own disciples.

One needs prophetic insight to discern what God is doing in any age – what His priorities are as the next stage of covenant history unfolds. That is not to say that God is only

doing *one* thing but that, through the present world system, God's overall covenant purposes are moving forward to the next main objective.

Eyes to See and Ears that Hear Correctly

Mistakes can be made in our perceptions. For example, when God took Judah to captivity in Babylon for 70 years it was for reasons that were not understood by other nations. The Prophets, including Jeremiah and Ezekiel pronounced judgement on surrounding nations including Moab, Edom and Ammon, who had gloated at Judah's fall. God was disciplining His covenant people but not punishing them in the ways that surrounding kingdoms would desire. Babylon itself was to be judged after Judah returned from captivity because the Babylonians did not discern their part. As Jeremiah prophesied (Jeremiah 50:11), destruction would come, *because you were glad, because you rejoiced, you destroyers of My heritage.*

Just as in those days, there are eternal purposes behind the scenes now, which most of the world does

not perceive. So, what do we perceive is God's intent for His covenant family as the days move forward in our generation? Can we too be so preoccupied with the world around us that we miss His prophetic purposes?

The Time came for the Return of the Jews to their Land

During the early part of the Twentieth Century a move began among Jewish leaders that it was time to seek a homeland after many centuries of exile. Zionism took root, the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate in Palestine began an enabling of the return to the Land that God gave to Abraham. Pressure on Jews in Tsarist Russia in the form of pogroms was a factor, but then the rise of Nazism in the 1930s brought greater tensions. Other historic tensions between Arabs and Jews also became a factor in the struggle for Israel to be reborn as a nation, as it finally was in 1948. Yet, despite some political activity to support the cause of Zionism in the 1930s, the preoccupation of the world turned more fully to the necessary defeat of Hitler in the Second World War. It took prophetic

understanding to discern behind the headlines what God was doing through all these events, moving forward to the next stage of covenant history. This, despite clear prophecies concerning what one day would happen, for example Ezekiel 36:24-28. Those who understood God's purpose turned to prayer for the establishment of the nation of Israel, while the majority of the world were preoccupied with other world events.

From the present ongoing tensions in Middle East and continuing controversy as to Israel's right to the Land, even in some branches of the Christian Church, it is clear that the world neither was, nor is, ready for this particular fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Will we be ready for the next?

What Next?

We are in a world moving forward into yet another phase. The news media is filled with the tensions that beset our present world and our individual lives. Localised wars are rising up that could point to another *world war*. Pressure continues to rise in the Middle East with Israel at the centre but with other conflicts in various parts of the world to draw our attention too. It is getting clearer to many of us that the prophecies of the end times are being fulfilled in greater intensity than before.

Yet, our most fundamental question should concern what God is now doing in *covenant terms*.

Compared with the signs at the time of the Balfour Declaration and what followed, we can assess our understanding of these signs in the present day and learn from the past. In the 1920s and 30s, there was partial understanding of what would eventually result in the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 but hardly anyone was prepared for the depth of horror of the holocaust just before it. It took prophetic understanding which also led to intercessory prayer. The most well-known witness for this was the Bible College of Wales in Swansea, where it was perceived that under-

lying all the turmoil in the world, God was preparing to open the way for Israel to return to their Land. It has been far from easy. If the entire world were Bible believing, especially in the Christian Church, looking for prophetic signs, then Israel would be welcomed home, and the Lord's return anticipated. But, typically, just as at the time of the Babylonian captivity and other times since, other motives exist among the nations, as well as preoccupations with other priorities.

Some Signs

Following the establishment of the State of Israel there has been a rapid growth in the number of Messianic Jews and also a growing interest among Christians to return to the roots of the faith of the First Century. What do these signs mean, with tensions arising across the world, wars in Ukraine and in Israel, with antisemitism growing and a world war becoming increasingly possible with weaponry far more powerful than ever before? With the falling away into ungodliness and the potential for a one world central control increasing, these are surely times of preparation for the return of the Lord. There is growing belief that this is also the time for the fulfilment of Haggai's prophecy, repeated in Hebrews, that God is shaking the nations (Haggai 2:6-7, Hebrews 12:26-27). Are we ready for the return of the Lord? Has the Bride made herself ready?

Times for Preparation

One can refer to this as the time for the preparation of the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7). However, there is another way to look at this. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, used the metaphor of *The One New Man* (Ephesians 2:15-16). In the first century, this was easily understood as the expansion of the covenant community of those who lived by faith in Yeshua to include believing Gentiles. Unity and brotherhood in the faith was assumed.

In our day, we have to consider carefully the division between the

Christian Church and Israel which has left lukewarmness to what Paul was describing to the Ephesians, so much so that Christianity is perceived by many as a religion distinct from the Jews, even Messianic Jews.

Prophetic Insight Needed

God's prophetic purpose in our day is surely, therefore, that the One New Man becomes a vital reality, this being the next important step in covenant history. If this is so, we might find that it is as much a struggle as any other aspect of God's covenant plan throughout history, to see this become a reality. Eyes and hearts may yet need to be opened so that we move together towards what God has expressed that He is wanting – unity in the faith between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. indeed unity among *all* disciples of Yeshua (Jesus). Is not this the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17? Is not this the reason for Christians to rediscover the original roots of their faith along with the growing number of Messianic Jews – a time to grow again together?

This is of course to be tested. In anticipation of this, a second article will be used to propose some matters we can address together.

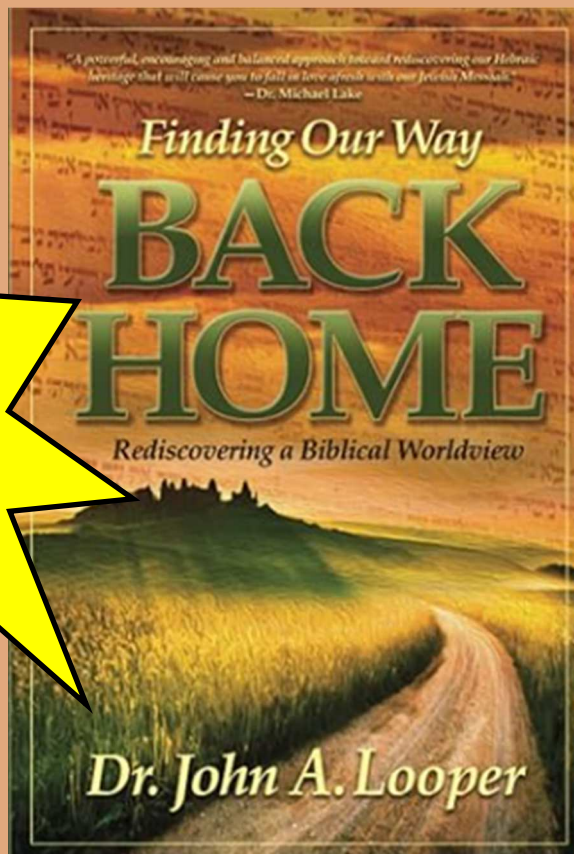
Dr. Clifford and Sally Denton reside in Kent, UK. Since the mid-1980s, he has been in full-time Christian work. It has taken him overseas, first in Islamic countries, then later researching the challenge of the new age move-



ment. The ministry of Tishrei was the result of this. Clifford was ordained by the Restoration Fellowship International in Cleveland, Tennessee, on whose board he serves as an advisor.

Through extensive personal search, including traveling overseas, Sally has focused on seeking God's ways in education, spending much of her life working this out through teaching at The Cedars School. From different paths of walking with God, Clifford and Sally have come to the same understanding of God's priorities in education, particularly in relation to the importance of building strong families.

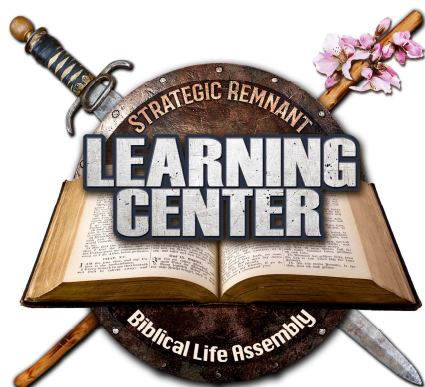
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Biblical Life Assembly, directed by Dr. Michael Lake, is a growing faith community of Spirit-filled believers (both locally and internationally) that believe God is restoring the powerful truths of our Hebraic heritage to the Body of Messiah. Therefore our emphasis is a balanced approach of blending the Hebraic heritage of the Church with the present day charismatic truths that are founded solely on the Word of God.

Our desire is to walk in the ways of God (as demonstrated by Jesus) and to walk in the power of God (as demonstrated by Jesus and declared by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:4). This walk requires us to continue the reformation started in the sixteenth century: Our cry is "only scripture!" For the Bride of Messiah to be without spot or wrinkle, she must throw off all traces of paganism, return to Word of God (from Genesis to Revelation) and the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

We encourage those of likeminded faith to join in this continuing journey of restoration to maturity in Messiah.

A dramatic, low-key photograph of a shepherd and a sheep silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The shepherd, wearing a long robe and holding a crook, stands on the edge of a dark, rocky cliff. A single sheep stands beside him, facing the shepherd. The sky is filled with soft, glowing clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and pink, with rays of light breaking through. Below the cliff, the dark silhouettes of more rocks are visible in the foreground.

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them,
and they follow Me.” John 10:27*

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