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COMPRENDIENDO PURIM

WAS JESUS CREATED OR IS
HE GOD?

NETWORKER NEWS

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THE NETWORKER

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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.

The Kinsman Redeemer

Dr. John A. Looper



Dr. John A. Looper
Executive Director

Hebrews 2:5-18 is the New Testament reflection of the First Testament Law of the Kinsman Redeemer,

fulfilled in perfection by Christ Jesus as humankind's Kinsman Redeemer. Because of the language construct of Hebrews chapter ten, I have personally come to believe that the Book of Hebrews was most likely authored by the Apostle Paul, with his most excellent apostolic anointing and ingenious abilities of weaving together and contrasting the Old Testament covenant and the New Testament covenant reality in Jesus the Messiah. When taken within the context of Leviticus 25 and the Book of Ruth, the verses in Hebrews chapter two are written masterfully.

The question demands a clear answer: what did Christ fully redeem for us? I propose that he accomplished five significant things for his adamic near kinsmen. **1.) Sin; 2.) Land; 3.) Marriage; 4.) Children; 5.) Eternity.** You might ask, why these five things? The answer is that these were the requirements of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Father in Heaven. These things were explicitly set forth as the redemptive vision for the Adamic Race, created in Elohim's image and likeness, whom the Father loved! Redemption is always about buying back something that

The DNA mapping of the races of humanity, by means of the Genome Project, anthropologists have now surmised that the history books will have to be rewritten—stating there is only one race (with various distinctions), because all humans are 99.9% identical. One premier scientist has now publicly intimated that all humans may have come from one just one set of original parents. The more men research the natural origins of mankind and the natural world, the more they come face to face with the eternal power of God our Creator.

Redemption is always about buying back something that has been leveraged, lost, or left hopeless. Such things always necessitate a redeemer with the legal right to do so. In other words, the redeemer had to have two types of authority—both judicial right and divine right.

has been leveraged, lost, or left hopeless. Such things always necessitate a redeemer with the legal right to do so. In other words, the redeemer had to have two types of authority—both judicial right and divine right.

be overlooked. Let's follow closely the words of this passage, beginning with verse five, which are referenced to passages from the TeNaKh. "For He did not put the coming world under angels, about which we speak, but one fully testified somewhere, saying,

In Hebrews chapter two, the subtle transition between the first Adam and his progeny and that of the second man Adam, Messiah, can easily

'What is man, that You are mindful of him; or the son of man, that You look upon him? You made him a little less than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor; and 'You set him over the works of Your hands. You subjected all things under his feet.' *Psa. 8:4-6* For in order to subject all things under him, He left nothing not subjected to him. **But now we do not yet see all things being subject to him.**" (LITV)

It is very clear from Genesis 1:26-28, that he gave dominion over all things on earth to Adam (male and female created he Adam) who he created lower than the angels. Why, after the fall of Adam and Eve, did their descendants no longer possess all things fully subject to them? The answer is sin and the death that came by sin and the rulership of the earth--**sin, death, land.** *Psa. 19; Psa. 37:1.* These things mankind could never conquer without a perfect kinsman redeemer to satisfy God's justice and freedom from the capital offence of sin and death. The Lord did not designate angels as heirs of the age to come, but humanity itself. **In my personal view, the LORD Elohim, through Messiah, would redeem a remnant of Jews and Gentiles to replace the one-third of the angels that fell from heaven in Lucifer's rebellion.** *Revelation 12*

"... but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death was made a little less than the angels, so that by the grace of God He might taste of death for all. For it was fitting for Him, because of whom are all things, and through whom are all things, having brought many sons to glory, to perfect *Him* as the Author of their salvation through sufferings. **For both the One sanctifying and the ones being sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call the brothers, saying, "I will announce Your name to My**

brothers; I will hymn to You in the midst of the assembly." *Psa. 22:22* And again, "I will be trusting on Him." *Isa. 8:17* And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God gave to Me." *Isa. 8:18*

Let's follow the transition, the Messiah was to come as the elder brother of humanity, that through his efficacious atonement, he might be the means whereby the Father would adopt many sons and daughters into the family of heaven and earth. So the one who redeems humankind sanctifies us as being one with him and the Father as his children. *John 17* We are set apart from our sins and consecrated unto the Lord as his adopted children and heirs according

Messiah Jesus was resurrected to redeem by the marriage of the "New Birth" and a "New Covenant" both Jew and Gentile into "One New Man" *Romans 7:1-4; Ephesians 2:11-22.* Most Christians are unaware that the New Testament is a judicial marriage covenant, as **part one, which will be consummated when we put on immortality to be with him and like him for ever as his bride, part two!**

to the promise *Gal. 3:29* **We are the heirs of salvation, eternity, the earth and of a new heaven and new earth** where time will be no more. You see, the Father could have killed us all and started over, but his incomprehensible love would not allow him to do so in that he was willing to allow his one and only Son to take on humanity and reconcile Adam unto himself. **This is too great for me!**

Since the children have partaken of flesh and blood, **in like manner He Himself also shared the same things, that through death He might cause to cease the one having the power of death, that is, the devil; and might set these free, as many as by fear of death were subject to slavery through all the lifetime to live.** For indeed He does not take hold of angels, "but He takes hold of" **"the seed of Abraham."** *Isa. 41:8, 9* For this reason **He**

should by all means to become like His brothers, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things respecting God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of *His* people. For in what He has suffered, being tried, He is able to help those being tried. **Jesus the Messiah was not a phantom, an angel or the highest order of some created being, he was both fully God and fully man at the same time.** He had a human will and a divine will. He had a human spirit and the divine Spirit conjointly. In every way and every thing was he tempted and tested like as we. He tasted the human maladies of every kind—sickness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, yet without sin. Before his death he declared--"for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." *John 14:30.* He did this so that as our Mediator in heaven he could be a compassionate High Priest, after the Order of Melchizedek. *Psa. 110*

Since the spiritual and the mortal death of Adam severed his covenant with the Father, also, Abraham's seed, Israel (who were married to God the Father at Sinai) became severed from their marriage covenant by the death of Christ on the cross. Messiah Jesus was resurrected to redeem by the marriage of the "New Birth" and a "New Covenant" both Jew and Gentile into "One New Man" *Romans 7:1-4; Ephesians 2:11-22.* **Most Christians are unaware that the New Testament is a judicial marriage covenant, as part one, which will be consummated when we put on immortality to be with him and like him for ever as his bride, part two!**

We find in Leviticus 25, and in the great story of Boaz and Ruth, as recorded in the Book of Ruth, why Jesus had to become a near kinsman to have the divine right to redeem the Adamic Race. **This is the Lord's incomprehensible love!**



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WAS JESUS CREATED OR IS HE GOD?

Jeffery Hamm, Ph.D.

The question of whether Jesus was a created being has been a topic of theological debate for centuries. According to mainstream Christian doctrine, Jesus is not a created being. Instead, He is considered to be fully divine and eternal, co-existing with God the Father and the Holy Spirit as part of the Holy Trinity.

However, there was a historical belief known as Arianism, named after Arius, a priest from the early fourth century. Arius taught that Jesus was created by God as the first act of creation and that He was not eternal or divine in the same way as God the Father. This view was eventually denounced as heresy by the early Christian church.

In contrast, the orthodox Christian belief is that Jesus is both fully God and fully human. This belief is based on biblical references and the understanding that Jesus' human limitations do not affect His divine nature or eternity.

The Apostle John, in his writings, is clearly convinced of the deity of Messiah. He opens his account of the Messiah with clear evidence of his conviction, which is significant, he was a close companion, personal friend and servant of Christ. He wrote his convictions and skillfully explained the divinity of Christ: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,*

and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

John repeats himself in John 1: 2, *"He was in the beginning with God"*—While this would seem to be a repeat of what was said in the previous verse; John in a classical Jewish mode of writing stated it over again to avert the possibility of a misunderstanding and to put emphasis on the importance of the statement. John had previously said that He existed before the creation, and that He was *"with God,"* by repeating in this verse he emphasizes the concept that a divine union existed within God—confirming in this union the Word existed, John further expresses this concept by say, *"No one has seen God at any time.*

The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1: 18, emphasis mine).

John's expressions develop the concept of the *complex unity of the Godhead* and assures us that this union was not one which was inaugurated in time, like that between any other beings, but was one which existed in eternity, and which was therefore a union of the divine nature.

John had good reason to believe this, the Messianic prophecies pointed to a part of the complex unity becoming human, especially those from Isaiah. Mathew, also a writer of the divine revelation, had the same understanding of the Immanuel concept, *"So all this was done that it*

might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,' which is translated, 'God with us.'" (Matt. 1: 22-23). What we might term the Holy Trinity is a statement of the one God. The word trinity does not appear in the Bible, the most informative Name of God is the Hebrew word for God—Yahweh. Yahweh is clearly seen as a complex unity with distinct workings (manifestations) of the Godhead sharing one divine nature. It is important to remain careful not to fall into the false notion of tri-theist—the idea of three different Gods. In the beginning, the one God (Yahweh) Creates the Universe.

In John 1: 3, we have an expression of the divine authority and power of the Person of the WORD: *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."* This statement settles forever the argument that Christ was a created being like the angels or humans. The false doctrine of Arianism is clearly dismantled in the statement that "all things" were made through Christ. The Divine nature and eternal existence of the Word, is evident from His efficacy in the creation of "all things" including the world: what the Apostle John here calls *"all things,"* the author in Hebrews

1:2, calls “*the worlds*,” and Paul in Colossians 1:16, stresses the same by saying, “*all things that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible*,” and what Moses calls, “*the heaven and the earth...*” These were all made through the “*Word*” (see Psa. 33: 6; 1Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2, Heb. 1:10-12, Heb. 11: 3; 2Pet. 3: 5).

What Did Jesus Say Concerning Himself

It is obvious that Jesus sees Himself in a divine connection with God the Father in John 10:30, “*I and the Father are one.*” We simply need to look at the Jewish leaders response to His statement to know He was claiming to be God. They desired to stone Him for this very reason: “*...you, being a Man, make Yourself God.*” (John 10:33). These Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus was claiming—He was deity. When Jesus declared, “*I and the Father are one,*” He was stating that He and the Father are of one nature and essence. John 8:58 is another example—Jesus declared, “*I tell you the truth ... before Abraham was born, I am!*” This is a reference to Exodus 3:14 when God revealed Himself as the “*I AM.*” Additionally, Jesus in His priestly prayer said, “*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*” (John 17: 5).

The Divine Nature of the Messiah according to Prophecy

“*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this*” (Isa. 9:6-7).

Isaiah, the messianic prophet, offered this written prophecy some seven hundred years before Jesus was born. In agreement with other First Testament prophecies, the recurring theme of the Messiah’s kingly rule is reiterated here, ‘the government shall rest upon his shoulders.... There will be no end to the increase of his government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom....’ The ancient rabbis also interpreted this passage as messianic:

“The prophet saith to the house of David, A child has been born to us, a son has been given to us; and he has taken the law upon himself to keep it, and his name has been called from of old, Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, He who lives forever, the Anointed one (or Messiah), in whose days peace shall increase upon us” (The Targum of Isaiah, J.F. Stenning, Editor and Translator (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), p. 32).

Indeed, this prophecy reveals another astounding fact concerning the *identity and nature of the Messiah*. Though human—“*a child is born, a son is given*”—He would also be God Himself. One of his names, “the Mighty God,” indicates that he would have a divine nature. The term “mighty God” is the Hebrew phrase *El gibbor*. It is a direct title of deity attributed to the Messiah.

This prophecy additionally teaches us that the Messiah would be called *Wonderful Counsellor, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace*. The Messiah would be the most unique man to ever live, possessing two natures—one human and one divine—all in one extraordinary person. This sets the Messiah apart from all created beings.

The Principle of the First Born

The New Testament uses the principle of the “First Born” to describes Christ on several occasions. Indeed, in an earthly sense, Jesus is the firstborn son (see Luke 2:7), and He was dedicated according to the law (see Luke 2:22–24). Spiritually, Jesus is the “*firstborn among many brothers and sisters*” in the body of Christ (Romans 8:29). The apostle Paul writes, “*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation*” (Col. 1:15). This use of the title “*firstborn*” for Christ is in the spirit of the wording of Psalm 89:27–29, where God says of King David, “*And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure.*” While David was the seventh born son of his family, God announced the principle of the “*Firstborn*” on him, which allows special authority and privilege in the sight of God.

In the book of Hebrews, this principle is well established, Christ is “*heir of all things*” (see Hebrews 1:2) and God’s “*firstborn into the world*” (Hebrews 1:6).

Just as King David received the position of the firstborn son is head over his earthly family, Jesus Christ is head of the body of Christ—the church (see Ephesians 1:20–23; Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 2:10–12). Just as the firstborn son receives the greatest inheritance from his father, Jesus Christ receives the world as His inheritance. God says to His Son, “*Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession*” (Psalm 2:8).

As a point of clearing up any misunderstanding, the term “*firstborn*” in relation to Jesus does not suggest in any form or way that He is a created being. The Son of God has existed for all eternity along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus existed before any act of creation and is fully God (John 1:1–3). Jesus “*being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*” He took on the “*form of a bondservant,*” that is a human for the purpose of sacrifice (Philp. 2:5-11) so that He could become our Savior and to serve as the Mediator between humankind and God (see 1 Timothy 2:5). When Scripture refers to Christ as the “*firstborn,*” the message is that Christ’s supremacy, sovereignty, and priority extend over all things and all other beings.

Final Thought

While Jesus may be regarded in high esteem by Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other theological beliefs, those religious groups hold the position that Jesus was a created being. It is Christianity’s affirmation of the complete deity of Christ, the Jewish Messiah, and His uncreated divine nature that makes Christianity distinctive from other religions and philosophies. Assorted world religions may agree on some issues concerning the Jewish Messiah, the answer to the question “who is Jesus Christ?” quickly separates those who adhere to biblical truths from those who do not.

Jeffery D. Hamm, Ph.D., and his wife Trella live in Pocahontas, Arkansas, where he pastors Great Harvest Church in Pocahontas, Arkansas. He is also Vice-President of Restoration Fellowship International.



COMPRENDIENDO PURIM

Yohanán Salamanca, Ph.D.



Una de mis fiestas bíblicas favoritas es Purim, porque la historia detrás de esta celebración es verdaderamente colorida y cautivante. De hecho, podría ser el guión para una gran película de acción y suspenso que mantendría al público sentado a orillas de su silla hasta la última escena.

Para aquellos que quizás no estén muy familiarizados con los detalles de Purim, voy a resumirles la historia, y luego haré unas aplicaciones para nuestra vida diaria. Sin embargo, sería mucho más provechoso para usted si leyese la historia directamente de la Biblia – no será decepcionado.

Hace 2,500 años, el rey Asuero (Jerjes) reinaba sobre el vasto imperio antiguo de Persia. El imperio constaba de 127 provincias, y se extendía desde lo que es hoy día India hasta Etiopía. Durante el tercer año de su reinado, decidió hacer un gran banquete de 180 días en la ciudad capital de Susa, e invitó a todos sus príncipes, nobles, oficiales y líderes militares. Extendiendo la fiesta otra semana más, hizo luego llamar a su reina Vasti para que apareciera con su corona y ropa real delante del

pueblo. Ella rehusó ir, y el rey entonces la expulsó del reino.

Deseando el rey otra reina, sus ayudantes decidieron buscar a la mujer más bella de entre el reino en sustitución a Vasti. Trabajaba en el palacio un hombre judío de nombre Mardoqueo, el cual había sido llevado cautivo a Babilonia por el anterior rey Nabuco donosor. Mardoqueo tenía una prima de nombre Hadasa, quien había quedado huérfana, y la había criado como a su propia hija. Hadasa, o Ester, era extremadamente bella, y cuando Mardoqueo supo que estaban buscando una reina, le sugirió que compitiera en el gran “concurso de belleza.” Ella fue aceptada como candidata, además de otras tantas, y a cada una le brindaron 12 meses de tratamiento especial con perfumes y aceites de belleza. Ester era la favorita de todos, y cuando fue llevada ante el rey, ella también halló gracia delante de sus ojos, y la seleccionó como su nueva reina. Poco tiempo después, dos de los guardas reales planeaban asesinar al rey, pero el plan fue descubierto por Mardoqueo, y avisó al rey por medio de Ester.

Confirmaron que era cierto, ejecutaron a ambos guardias, y el asunto quedó registrado en los anales del

rey. Durante ese tiempo, el rey Asuero nombró a Amán, un amalecita, como jefe de todos los príncipes. Éste exigía que todos le hicieran reverencia, pero día tras día Mardoqueo rehusaba rendirle homenaje, lo cual llenó de ira a Amán. Le informaron que Mardoqueo era judío, y decidió no sólo destruirlo a él, sino al pueblo judío completo que se encontraba en Persia.

Amán convenció al rey de que había un pueblo en su reino que era obstinado y peligroso, y que tenía que ser destruido. Sin decir cuál era ese pueblo, Amán ofreció diez mil talentos de plata a la tesorería

El rey dio su permiso, y echaron suertes (o ‘purim’ en el idioma de ellos) para saber en qué mes y año deberían poner en acción el funesto plan de exterminar a todos los judíos. La suerte cayó en el día 13 del mes de Adar, y Amán promulgó un decreto para que ese día todo ciudadano en el imperio matara a sus vecinos judíos.

Cuando Mardoqueo supo del plan, se vistió de cilicio y ceniza en señal de luto por la sentencia que amenazaba a su pueblo. Ester se enteró del luto que llevaba Mardoqueo,

y envió preguntarle la razón por su llanto y dolor.

Mardoqueo le contó lo que estaba a punto de acontecer, y le pidió que intercediera por el pueblo delante del rey. Pero ver al rey no era cosa sencilla. Aún la esposa tenía que esperar a que el rey la mandase a buscar. Si se aparecía ante el rey sin su permiso, le esperaba una muerte inmediata, a menos que el rey levantara su cetro en señal de aceptación. Pero Mardoqueo le exhortó que lo intentara, diciéndole: “¿quién sabe que si para esta hora has llegado al reino?” (Est. 4:14). Ester decidió correr el riesgo, y pidió que todo el pueblo judío estuviese orando y ayudando por ella.

Al tercer día fue a ver al rey. Cuando la vio, levantó su cetro en indicación de que podía acercarse. Ella lo invitó a una cena especial, junto a Amán, quien se sintió enormemente alagado por haber sido invitado a una cena privada con el rey y la reina. Luego del banquete, el rey estaba tan contento que le ofreció a Ester hasta la mitad de su reino. Sin embargo, Ester simplemente invitó al rey y a Amán para otra cena la próxima noche, y le dijo que entonces le respondería.

Mientras Amán salía del palacio esa noche, vio al despreciado Mardoqueo que no le quería rendir homenaje. Se sintió tan enfurecido, que cuando llegó a su casa construyó una horca para colgarlo allí al día siguiente. No quería tener que verlo otro día más.

Sin embargo, esa misma noche el rey no podía dormir, y pidió que le trajesen sus anales reales. Descubrió que nunca había recompensado a Mardoqueo por haberle advertido del complot para asesinarlo. Al día siguiente, el rey llamó a Amán. Sin decirle a quién pensaba honrar, le preguntó qué podía hacer para demostrar su aprecio y favor especial. Amán creía que se refería a él, y le respondió: “Para el varón cuya honra desea el rey, traigan el vestido real de que el rey se viste, y el caballo en que el rey cabalga, y la corona real que está puesta en su cabeza; y den el vestido y el caballo en mano de alguno de los príncipes más nobles del rey, y vistan a aquel varón cuya honra desea el rey, y llévenlo en el

caballo por la plaza de la ciudad, y pregonen delante de él: Así se hará al varón cuya honra desea el rey” (Ester 6: 7-9).

Le agradó la sugerencia al rey, y ordenó que hiciera eso mismo con Mardoqueo. ¡Cuánta humillación sintió al tener que honrar al hombre que tanto odiaba! Esa noche en el banquete, Ester le contó al rey que alguien planeaba destruirla junto con todo el pueblo judío del imperio, inclusive Mardoqueo. El rey se enojó grandemente, y le preguntó quién era ese hombre. Ester le contestó: “...El enemigo y adversario es este malvado Amán” (Ester 7:6). El rey salió apresurado de la sala del banquete para pensar qué debería hacer con Amán. Cuando regresó, halló a Amán sobre la reina Ester implorando su piedad, y pensó que la estaba atacando. En ese momento, uno de los asistentes informó al rey acerca de la horca que Amán había preparado para Mardoqueo, y el rey ordenó colgar allí a Amán.

Aunque el rey no podía revocar el primer edicto, dio permiso para que el pueblo judío se defendiera de sus enemigos a nivel de todo el reino. Entregó todas las propiedades de Amán a Ester, y elevó a Mardoqueo a la posición de Amán en su corte. El 14 del mes de Adar, “...en cada provincia y en cada ciudad donde llegó el mandamiento del rey, los judíos tuvieron alegría y gozo, banquete y día de placer” (Ester 8:17).

Purim no es simplemente una historia vieja de más de 2,500 años. Tiene relevancia hoy día, aún para los cristianos. Veamos qué podemos aprender los cristianos:

LECCIÓN #1: EL ANTISEMITISMO SE ENCUENTRA EN TODAS PARTES

La primera lección que podemos aprender de la fiesta de Purim es que existe una tendencia inherente en los seres humanos para odiar y confabularse contra el pueblo judío. Éste es uno de los males más extraños y persistentes de la humanidad, y es tan antiguo como la Biblia misma. Casi todas las civilizaciones han sido infectadas con el nefasto anti-judaísmo o antisemitismo, tanto antiguas como modernas. Se ha manifestado a través de incontables fa-

raones egipcios, desquiciados reyes como Herodes y crueles déspotas como Hitler. ¡Se puede observar en países donde ni siquiera existen los judíos!

Parece que el pecado del antisemitismo, el espíritu de Amalec, es una condición creada en las mismas entrañas del infierno, y se difunde en cada sociedad de todas las épocas. La razón para este odio sobrenatural hacia los judíos es la relación especial que tienen con Dios. Pero el diablo no ha logrado destruir al pueblo judío. Si lo hubiese hecho hace 2000 años, hubiera evitado la llegada de Jesús el Mesías como Salvador del mundo. Aún hoy, dado que todavía son especial ante los ojos de Dios (Zac. 2:8), son objeto de ataque extraordinario, al igual que lo son muchos cristianos en ciertas partes del mundo. Las fuerzas satánicas siempre procuran destruir la obra de Dios.

Sin embargo, el brazo de Dios no se ha acortado, y finalmente ejecutará Su juicio contra aquellos que persiguen a Su pueblo. Cuando Dios hizo Su pacto con Abraham, lo que incluía la tierra de Israel, le dijo: “Bendeciré a los que te bendijeren, y a los que te maldijeren maldeciré” (Gén. 12:3).

Muchas naciones se han encontrado en las páginas del olvido por haber perseguido a Israel. Uno de esos primeros protagonistas fue la antigua nación de Amalec, quien fue inimicorrecorde con los israelitas mientras atravesaban el desierto. El Señor ordenó a Moisés que borrara totalmente la memoria de Amalec una vez se establecieran en la tierra: “Acuérdate de lo que hizo Amalec contigo en el camino, cuando salías de Egipto; de cómo te salió al encuentro en el camino, y te desbarató la retaguardia de todos los débiles que iban detrás de ti, cuando tú estabas cansado y trabajado; y no tuvo ningún temor de Dios. Por tanto, cuando Jehová tu Dios te dé descanso de todos tus enemigos alrededor, en la tierra que Jehová tu Dios te da por heredad para que la poseas, borrarás la memoria de Amalec de debajo del cielo; no lo olvides” (Deut. 25: 17-19).

En otras palabras, los israelitas debieron haber destruido esa malvada

nación por completo, pero no lo hicieron. Tristemente, la semilla física y espiritual de Amalec parece haber sobrevivido hasta hoy día. Todavía arde en los amalecitas el antiguo odio hacia el Pueblo del Pacto, y constantemente están tratando de tornar la opinión mundial en su contra.

Algunos años más tarde, el rey Saúl también fue dado esa encomienda, pero desobedeció, y Amalec (descendiente del primero) sobrevivió. Leemos en 1 Samuel 15:17b-19: "...Aunque eras pequeño en tus propios ojos, ¿no has sido hecho jefe de las tribus de Israel, y Jehová te ha ungido por rey sobre Israel? Y Jehová te envió en misión y dijo: Ve, destruye a los pecadores de Amalec, y hazles guerra hasta que los acabes. ¿Por qué, pues, no has oído la voz de Jehová, sino que vuelto al botín has hecho lo malo ante los ojos de Jehová?" (1 Sam. 17-19).

De hecho, fue un amalecita quien mató a Saúl luego de haber fracasado en su esfuerzo por suicidarse. Leemos en 2 Samuel que un prisionero del campamento de Saúl llegó a donde David para darle la noticia.

Cuando David le preguntó cómo había sucedido todo, le hizo el siguiente relato: "Casualmente vine al monte de Gilboa, y hallé a Saúl que se apoyaba sobre su lanza, y venían tras él carros y gente de a caballo. Y mirando él hacia atrás, me vio y me llamó; y yo dije: Heme aquí. Y me preguntó: ¿Quién eres tú? Y yo le respondí: Soy amalecita. El me volvió a decir: Te ruego que te pongas sobre mí y me mates, porque se ha apoderado de mí la angustia; pues mi vida está aún toda en mí. Yo entonces me puse sobre él y le maté..." (2 Sam. 1: 6-10a).

Más adelante, en 1 Samuel 30:18, leemos que "libró David todo lo que los amalecitas habían tomado, y asimismo libertó David a sus dos mujeres" (1 Sam. 30:18). Cientos de años después de la desobediencia de Saúl, Amán el amalecita se levantó para oprimir a los judíos en Persia (Ester 3:1).

Como mencionamos anteriormente, Hitler no fue el primero en venir con la idea de una "solución final." La furia de Amán no sólo fue contra

Mardoqueo, quien rehusaba arrodillarse ante él, sino también contra su pueblo, todos los judíos en el reino de Asuero, incluyendo los de la tierra de Israel (Ester 3:6). El odio de Amán no tenía límites. Por medio de un sistema de suertes ('purim'), determinó la fecha exacta en que iba a realizar su exterminio.

El plan de Amán pudo haber funcionado si Ester no hubiese arriesgado su vida, acercándose al rey de una manera astuta para ponerle fin a su maquinación. Este alocado amalecita fue colgado en la misma horca que había preparado para Mardoqueo, y los judíos pudieron defenderse en ese fatídico día 13 de Adar.

Las comunidades judías alrededor del mundo conmemoran la forma en que Dios los libró de su destrucción por medio de la fiesta de Purim. Por encima de la risa y el jolgorio de la gente casi se oye la risa de Dios mismo, como si Dios se estuviese burlando de Amán y de tantos otros hombres y naciones que se han atrevido ir en contra del amado pueblo de Dios.

El Salmo 2: 1-4 dice así: "¿Por qué se amotinan las gentes, y los pueblos piensan cosas vanas? Se levantarán los reyes de la tierra, y príncipes consultarán unidos contra Jehová y contra su ungido, diciendo:

Rompamos sus ligaduras, y echemos de nosotros sus cuerdas. El que mora en los cielos se reirá; el Señor se burlará de ellos" (Sal. 2:1-4).

LECCIÓN #2: DIOS REDIME A SU PUEBLO

Ha habido incontables esfuerzos deliberados por destruir al pueblo judío. Como ejemplo, podemos nombrar al faraón de Egipto, Amán, los sirios bajo Antíoco Epífanés, los romanos, las cruzadas, la inquisición, los pogromos de Rusia y la "solución final" del siglo 20, organizado por Hitler y los nazis. Hoy día, las fuerzas islámicas perpetúan el odio a través de su incesante 'jihad', o guerra santa, para "echar los judíos al mar."

Sin embargo, el pueblo judío ha sobrevivido cada maquinación, pero sus enemigos han desaparecido.

De hecho, ¡los judíos fueron librados nuevamente de su destrucción durante una celebración de Purim en la década de 1950! Jose Stalin, dictador de la antigua Unión Soviética, quería deshacerse de su "problema de los judíos". Estableció unas barracas en Siberia y Kazakistán para enviar allá a millones de judíos de todas partes de la Unión Soviética, donde terminarían congelados y hambrientos. Durante varios meses, dirigió una campaña bien orquestada contra los judíos, acusándolos de toda clase de crimen contra el pueblo ruso. Como toque final, el plan era publicar en marzo de 1953 una carta supuestamente firmada por los líderes de la comunidad judía, donde rogaban ser protegidos de la ira popular y pedían ser enviados a Siberia. El gobierno respondería afirmativamente a su petición en "gesto humanitario." Gracias a la intervención de Dios, la carta nunca fue publicada por causa de la inesperada muerte de Stalin. El pueblo judío fue librado de su deportación forzosa, algo semejante a la forma milagrosa en que fueron salvados durante el primer Purim. Más tarde, salió a la luz la verdad acerca de esa campaña anti-judía de Stalin.

También hubo otra redención milagrosa en Purim, tan recientemente como 1991, al final de la Guerra del Golfo. Saddam Hussein fue vencido y dejaron de llover los misiles sobre Israel. Recuerdo haber estado en un café en el paseo peatonal de Ben Yehuda en Jerusalén, mientras miles de israelíes celebraban Purim. Era desbordante su alegría al poder retirar sus máscaras de gas, salir de sus habitaciones selladas, y dar gracias a Dios por haberlos librado una vez más de su enemigo.

Para nuestra vergüenza, la "Iglesia" también tiene sus manos manchadas con sangre, ya que muchos han sido los ataques perpetrados por supuestos cristianos contra el pueblo judío. Los que realizaron este tan grave mal hicieron caso omiso a las enseñanzas de Pablo en Romanos 9-11. Pablo enseñó sobre el tipo de relación que debería existir entre los cristianos y los judíos, aclarando que Dios no había abandonado a los judíos, sino que: "...son amados por causa de los padres" (Rom. 11:28).

Se está levantando una nueva ola de antisemitismo a nivel mundial. ¿Está usted dispuesto a arriesgar su posición social o “buen nombre” por defender a los judíos en su localidad, así como lo hizo Ester?

Es posible que Dios se lo pida como parte de su expresión cristiana y su amor por el pueblo judío. Tristemente, muchos cristianos no han estado dispuestos a aceptar ese llamado. Aunque quizás algunos no participen directamente en la persecución, el antisemitismo cristiano también se puede manifestar en indiferencia hacia el pueblo judío durante sus momentos de necesidad.

Durante estos últimos años, he observado cómo muchos creyentes verdaderos comprenden su conexión espiritual con el pueblo judío a medida que leen las Escrituras, y el Espíritu Santo nos cerca cada vez más los unos a los otros.

Efesios 2:11-14 dice: “Por tanto, acordaos de que en otro tiempo vosotros, los gentiles en cuanto a la carne, erais llamados incircuncisión por la llamada circuncisión hecha con mano en la carne. En aquel tiempo estabais sin Cristo, alejados de la ciudadanía de Israel y ajenos a los pactos de la promesa, sin esperanza y sin Dios en el mundo. Pero ahora en Cristo Jesús, vosotros que en otro tiempo estabais lejos, habéis sido hechos cercanos por la sangre de Cristo. Porque él es nuestra paz, que de ambos pueblos hizo uno, derribando la pared intermedia de separación.”

Ahora que hemos sido injertados en el buen olivo junto con Israel, somos hijos adoptivos de Abraham y coherederos de los pactos, las promesas, la esperanza y aún la ciudadanía de Israel. Es nuestra responsabilidad combatir las fuerzas malignas que luchan contra Israel y contrarrestar el antiSemitismo dondequiera se encuentre. Si existe entre los círculos cristianos, más fuerte debe ser nuestra postura a favor de Israel. Debemos decir firmemente como Rut, la moabita, a su suegra: “No me ruegues que te deje, y me aparte de ti; porque a dondequiera que tú fueres, iré yo, y dondequiera que vivieres, viviré. Tu pueblo será mi pueblo, y tu Dios mi Dios” (Rut 1:16).

Gracias a la sangre de Yeshúa (Jesús) el Mesías, esta declaración la podemos hacer también los cristianos. No siempre es fácil tomar esta postura. Cuando veamos a nuestros parientes espirituales bajo ataque, seamos instrumentos para protegerlos y librarlos. Estemos dispuestos a arriesgarnos, así como lo hizo Ester, y veamos cómo Dios obra milagrosamente para defender a Su pueblo.

LECCIÓN #3: DEBEMOS ARRIESGARNOS PARA DEFENDER AL PUEBLO JUDÍO

He aquí otra lección que podemos aprender de la historia de Purim, y es que debemos ser arriesgados para Dios en beneficio del pueblo judío. En Ester 4:13-14 leemos que Mardoqueo, el primo de Ester, le dijo que tendría que arriesgar su vida si quería salvar a su pueblo. “No pienses que escaparás en la casa del rey más que cualquier otro judío. Porque si callas absolutamente en este tiempo, respiro y liberación vendrá de alguna otra parte para los judíos; mas tú y la casa de tu padre pereceréis. ¿Y quién sabe si para esta hora has llegado al reino?” No era propósito de Dios que Ester compitiera en ese concurso de belleza meramente para vestir lindos vestidos un año, y luego “seis meses con óleo de mirra y seis meses con perfumes aromáticos y afeites de mujeres” (Est. 2:12).

Dios permitió que llegase al reino de esa manera para utilizar a Ester en el cumplimiento de Su voluntad. En otras palabras, Mardoqueo estaba diciendo lo siguiente a Ester: Dios es soberano, y si tú no actúas según Su propósito, Dios podrá proveer la solución y liberación para los judíos por otro medio, pero tú no escaparás, sino que perecerás. Dios te ha llamado para este papel especial en el Reino de Dios, para una hora como ésta. Ester tenía que cumplir el propósito de Dios para su vida en ese momento específico, y saldría victoriosa. Ese es el concepto hebreo de ‘meiserat nefesh’, o sea, “entregar la vida de uno por el bien del otro.”

¡Dios había puesto a Ester en el trono para salvar al pueblo judío! Dios quería que ella fuese parte de esa bendición. Como creyentes en Yeshúa el Mesías, somos parte de

ese real sacerdocio y pueblo santo (1 Ped. 2:9).

Sin embargo, no debemos imaginar que hemos sido llamados para permanecer sentados sin hacer nada y ser mimados por Dios. Tendremos que atravesar algunas batallas fuertes y sufrir mucho dolor en defensa de Su pueblo, pero finalmente el Señor promete intervenir. Tenemos que esforzarnos, y Él nos ayudará para alcanzar la victoria.

Dios nos ha puesto en esta tierra para acrecentar Su reino, trabajar para la redención del mundo y defender a Su pueblo. Ésto implica tener que pelear una fuerte batalla, aunque no nos agrade. Para ello, necesitamos toda la armadura de Dios y vestirnos de protección espiritual, según leemos en Efesios 6:10-18.

A medida que se acerquen los días postreros y el regreso de nuestro Mesías, el Pueblo de Dios sufrirá mayor ataque aún. Eso es especialmente cierto cuando nos declaremos abiertamente a favor de Dios y los asuntos de Su reino en esta tierra, que incluye a Israel y el pueblo judío. Así como Dios esperaba que hiciera Ester, nos podrá pedir que entreguemos nuestra vida en bien del pueblo judío. Muchos cristianos verdaderos se arriesgaron durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial para defender a los judíos de los nazis. Jesús dijo: “Nadie tiene mayor amor que este, que uno ponga su vida por sus amigos. Vosotros sois mis amigos, si hacéis lo que yo os mando” (Jn. 15:13-14). También dijo: “... el que pierde su vida por causa de mí, la hallará” (Mat. 10:39). ¿Estamos dispuestos a que Dios nos use para defender al pueblo judío?

ENFRENTANDO DESAFÍOS PERSONALES CON DIOS

Enfrentaremos muchos momentos desafiantes mientras realizamos el trabajo que Dios nos ha encomendado. ¿Está usted preparado para ser atacado cuando declara abiertamente su fe en Jesús como su Señor y estar a favor del pueblo judío? David era un hombre recto según el corazón de Dios. Aunque Dios le prometió la victoria, todavía tenía que salir a luchar contra los enemigos de Israel. No debemos esperar que sea

diferente con nosotros. Jesús dijo: "...El siervo no es mayor que su señor. Si a mí me han perseguido, también a vosotros os perseguirán..." (Jn. 15:20).

Aunque nos podamos regocijar por ser un sacerdocio real y tener una posición especial delante de Dios, así como Ester, nuestro deber en este mundo es hacer la voluntad de nuestro Padre. Podrían acontecerle ciertas situaciones difíciles, pero le prometo que si permanece cerca de Dios y Su voluntad, finalmente verá la victoria. Así como hizo con la reina Ester, Dios le libraré. Pero deberá estar dispuesto a buscar del Señor con todas sus fuerzas, escudriñar las Escrituras, y conocer la voluntad de Dios respecto al mundo y su persona. Luego, a medida que camina en la Luz y pelea la buena batalla, saldrá victorioso.

Debemos tener un sentido claro de los propósitos de Dios, lo cual el mundo no entiende. El mundo busca metas vanas, como el poder, las posesiones materiales y una vida fácil, inducido por la avaricia, los deseos

de la carne, y una vida egocéntrica que busca sólo el beneficio propio. Esta vida mundana también puede contaminar la vida del creyente, porque los medios de comunicación y los anuncios publicitarios promueven la vida sensual. Si buscamos sólo la satisfacción del momento, terminaremos totalmente vacíos. Las Escrituras dicen: "Donde no hay visión, el pueblo se extravía..." (Prov. 29:18, NVI).

Permítame preguntarle de nuevo: ¿Está usted preparado? ¿Conoce en su corazón el llamado y el propósito de Dios para su vida? ¿Es el deseo de su corazón definirse del lado del Reino de Dios y su justicia, aunque su vida corra peligro? Mardoqueo dijo a Ester que Dios podría encontrar a otro para hacer cumplir Sus propósitos, pero ella perdería esa bendición. ¿Perderá usted la bendición que Dios le ofrece sólo porque la tarea se ve muy grande y arriesgada? Si rehúsa ser instrumento de Dios para evidenciar Su gloria y poder, lo hará de algún otro modo...sin usted. Entonces saldrá realmente perdiendo. Yo no quiero

perder esa bendición, ¿y usted? Recuerde lo que Pablo enseñó: "Todo lo puedo en Cristo que me fortalece" (Fil. 4:13).

Debemos comprometernos y arriesgarnos para responder al llamado de Dios. Cuando respondamos a Su llamado, Él dará la forma de cumplir Su voluntad, así como lo hizo con Ester.

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Psalm 23

A SONG OF DAVID

MAY IT BE OUR SONG AS WELL

Justin D. Elwell, Th.D.

Psalm 23 reminds of what is, even when it isn't. The life of faith is more than tender grass, and pleasant streams. It's more than the refreshing of the soul, and the filling of the cup. It is the promise of God's presence: when the grass is dry, and the flood waters surround; when the soul is worn, and the cup empty; when worry abounds, and the house has collapsed. Psalm 23 speaks of the Lord's destination, when the waypoints on the journey overwhelm. It is a reminder of His enduring presence in our lives as the Good Shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me." (Jn. 10:14).

One of the most important lessons a lamb will learn from its mother is the identity of their shepherd. In a flock, the presence of the shepherd ensures safety, food, and direction; but at times, when a sheep is in distress, the shepherd must seek it out and take whatever corrective action is necessary to ensure the health and well-being of the animal (Matt. 18:12). In messianic faith we are assured that the Good Shepherd found us while we were yet in distress and secured our deliverance (Ro. 5:8). He willingly laid down His

life for His sheep (Jn. 10:11, 15b). The metaphor of the Lord as shepherd creates a powerful image of presence, protection, and care.

Psalm 23 may be the most recognizable of the psalms. David reflects on the journey of his life, and the many ways the Lord has led, provided, protected, rescued, and corrected him. What is often overlooked, from the outset, is that psalm 23 is a song. It opens מִזְמוֹר /mizmor l'Dovid, a melody of David. Perhaps a melody from his days as a shepherd boy, a tune that was comforting to him during long nights in the field.

David begins by singing, יהוה רעי, "The Lord is my shepherd, or my friend/companion, I have no lack" (23:1). He looks at himself from the perspective of a sheep, drawing on his experience as a shepherd caring and providing for the sheep of his father (cf. Gen. 49:24). Here, the Lord is David's shepherd; and because of this he experiences no lack or failure, nothing is missing or incomplete, even the unsettling matters to come. The Shepherd provides for his needs; and from the start David is expressing faith in the Good Shepherd.

He continues, "At home, in a habi-

tation of tender grass, you cause me to sprawl or spread out," (23:2). When sheep feel at peace or calm, they let their guard down, and they sprawl out in the grass because the shepherd protects them. Having rested in peace, the Lord then leads David beside "quiet waters" (23:2b). Sheep will not drink if they are startled, upset, excited or unsure of their surroundings. If startled, they will not relax or put down their guard to drink. Yet David is telling us that he feels safe enough to drink, at ease, and at peace.

David sings, נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוּבָה וְנַחֲתִי, "He restores my soul," the Shepherd has healed him, restored him, and given him peace. This is the faithfulness of the Shepherd. The word "restores" comes from the root "shuv," meaning "turn." This is also the root of "tshuvah," so there is a change in the soul or breath of David. בְּמַעְגְלֵי צְדִיק, לְמַעַן, "He guides me in winding paths of righteousness," a sheep follows its shepherd wherever He may take the flock. Where He leads us may not be our ideal, or convenient for us, it may be indirect or seem as if we are going in

circles, yet we must follow Him, for the sake of His Name, to give glory and honor to our Good Shepherd. He takes those circuitous paths and makes them straight (righteous), working all things together for our good (Ro. 8:28).

Still, there are times when we enter a deep tight valley overshadowed by the surrounding hills, as David said, **גַּם כִּי-אֶלֶךָ בְּגִיא צִלְמוֹת**, “In the gorge overshadowed by death,” (23:4) sheep do not like to move through tight spaces. They will turn back in fear and attempt to run. As they are pressed in and on they cannot see, there is no place to flee, and they are exposed in constriction. Death could come from above, or from behind or from the front. Death overshadows all directions. However, **לֹא-יִרָא לֵאלֹהֵינוּ**, the flock of God will not fear because He, the Lord our Abba, is with us. No matter the depth of the valley, He is with us, and we must continually remind ourselves that He is leading us as the Good Shepherd, never leaving nor forsaking His flock.

How is it that we are led along the way? David sings of the rod and the staff, **שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הִמָּה**, “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (23:4b). The rod and staff are tools used to direct the sheep. They are extensions of the Shepherds hands as He leads them along the way. The rod is for correction, while the staff is for direction. They comfort, even in correction, because they remind the sheep that the shepherd is still present even if they cannot see him. As David reminds us, there are times when we see the enemy more clearly than our shepherd.

וְתַעֲרָה לִפְנֵי, שְׁלֹחַן נֹגֵד צָרָי, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (23:5).

To our relief we exit the overshadowed gorge, the place where we fear attack. We exit to find a table prepared, and provision made. No longer pressed or on the run we can sit in peace. But there, before us, the enemies we expected to attack us in the gorge are there before the very table where we are to be nourished. What is David telling us?

The enemy could not see our fear as we moved through the gorge, but now, as we sit at the prepared table, he sees only our peace. We do not remain hidden away, endlessly roaming the dark valley. No, the Good Shepherd has led us to the place prepared for us to bear witness of His presence, as a testimony of His victory in our lives. At the table we do not appear as disheveled, unkempt sheep as the enemy would expect. No, the Lord

and draw us away from our Good Shepherd. But the Moshiach, the Anointed One, covers us in His pure oil.

כּוֹסִי רִוְיָהּ, “my cup satisfies,” as poetically satisfying as an overflowing cup is, what David is expressing here is a quenching of thirst. He drinks in thirstily, and by what the Shepherd has poured into his life, he no longer thirsts. David is no longer running after his own way, but following the provision, direction, and leadership of the Good Shepherd; and he is now satisfied.

David finalizes his thoughts, **אָךְ, טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יְרַדְפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיָּי**, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (23:6). Of course, we have all felt that nagging fear that something menacing was coming, but we could not discern what. David is reminding us of something incredibly profound in the spirit. The word translated “follow” above also means “pursue” or “track.” If we should find ourselves scared or paranoid of the unknown, that unknown thing that seems to be

coming after us is, as David sings, “only goodness and mercy pursue me.” Why? It is from the Lord, our Shepherd, Who is with us. But where is He leading us?

וְאֶשְׁבֹּתִי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמַי, “and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Yet David is speaking of return. Perhaps as the one lost out of the ninety-nine, David sings of return. The Good Shepherd found him, directed him, and returned him to the place he belonged: the House of the Lord. In “return to dwell,” we find the “shuv” root again, meaning to “turn.” Through all the pastures, streams, and overshadowed gorges, the Lord led a straying sheep home. Along the way the sheep faced challenges. He was afraid. He was parched.

The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep and prepared our place in His house forever. No matter the challenges before us, the pain or turmoil they will cause us, He has rescued us and prepared a pleasant table for us, before our enemies, in the midst of the field having become our peace, our rest and our righteousness.

does something remarkable for us, He refreshes and beautifies us.

David remarks, **דִּשְׁנָתְךָ בְּשֶׁמֶן רָאִשִּׁי, כּוֹסִי רִוְיָהּ**, “You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (23:5). Another way, “You have fattened my head,” the fat was the choice part of the sacrifice and belonged completely to the Lord, as Leviticus 3:16 says, “All the fat belongs to the Lord.” This verse speaks of choosiness. You have “fattened me” or “selected me” and anointed me “with oil,” to make us shine. Still, the anointing also protected the animal, specifically the ears of the sheep. The oil protected the sheep from an infestation of burrowing parasites entering the brain and killing them. How much the enemy desires to infect our minds

But the Lord took care of him in all those circumstances.

In our day-to-day life, with all the trails of our age, the song of David called Psalm 23 must be our song as well. As Isaiah exhorted us, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). The iniquity that kept us distant and lost was laid upon or imputed to our Messiah Yeshua/Jesus. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep and prepared our place in His house forever. No matter the challenges before us, the pain or turmoil they will cause us, He has rescued us and prepared a pleasant table for us, before our enemies, in the midst of the field having become our peace, our rest, and our righteousness.

The apostle Peter expressed it beautifully as he reflected on the words of Isaiah, "For you **were** like sheep going astray, but have **now returned** to the Shepherd and Overseer of your lives" (1 Pet. 2:25, emphasis mine). The past tense of going astray replaced by relationship with our Messiah, our Good Shepherd and Friend (Jn. 10:11; 15:15). Amen.

Psalm 23 (Elwell translation)

23:1, The Lord is my shepherd *and friend*, He provides my needs.

23:2, He settles me in a pleasant meadow. Beside peaceful waters He walks with me.

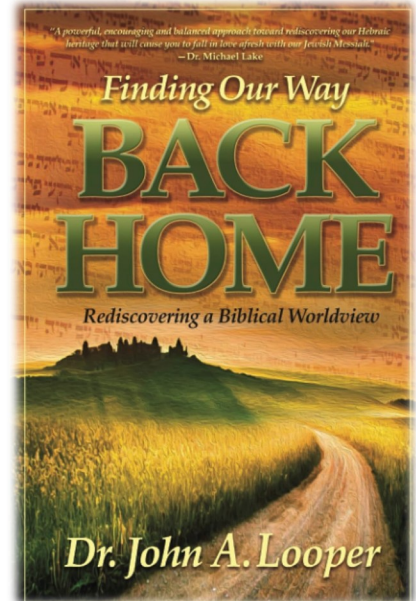
23:3, He refreshes my life. He guides me in the right way because of who He is.

23:4, When I walk in a valley shadowed by death, I will not fear evil, for You are with me. Your rod of *correction*, and Your staff of *protection* give me comfort.

23:5, You set before me a table in view of my tormentors. You refresh *the dryness* of my head with oil. My cup completely satisfies me.

23:6, *When life worries me, I know only His* goodness and loving-kindness chase after me, All the days of my life. And my place of rest will be in the House of the Lord, *My Shepherd and friend*, To the length of ages.

Dr. Justin D. Elwell serves as the messianic rabbi of Messiah Congregation in Washington Mills, New York, and is the bishop-elect of RFI.



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WELCOME

Introducing New RFI Ministers ...

We are so happy to welcome **Harvest Revival Center** of Brookville, Ohio, to RFI. This dynamic church is pastored by Niel Petersen.

This is a Spirit-filled church dedicated to equipping believers to boldly preach and live out the Word of God. They emphasize training in the fruits and power of the Holy Spirit, empowering their members to impact our culture as ambassadors of light and salt. As part of the end-time remnant Church, they operate in the Holy Spirit's power to overcome sin and prepare for the future. They are contending for a great harvest revival of souls, and believe that God will save our nation. They are not trying to fit in, but boldly stand in the face of evil to live out their lives as radical followers of Jesus Christ. They will not be conformed to this world, but will be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And in this, we will be able to test and approve what God's will is for us — His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Welcome to RFI. We look forward to having you work with us.

Niel Petersen became an or-



dainied minister with RFI. He is the senior pastor of Harvest Revival Center of Brookville, OH. Niel and his wife Katie have been

married for 23 years.

Niel was a pastor's son and served under his father's ministry in various roles, such as children's pastor, college pastor and associate pastor. At age 37 Niel felt the call to become senior pastor at Harvest Revival Center.

Lorene Ernst also became an ordained minister with RFI. She has is serving as Associate Pastor at Harvest

Revival Center and is involved with intercessory prayer, teaching and counseling.



Lorene has a heart for missions has made two trips to Africa and ministered in various conferences. She has also gone on missions trips in Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.



Dr. Steven Boehmfeldt also became an ordained minister with RFI. He is a man of deep faith in the Lord. He has helped

lead Harvest and support the congregation in pastoral care for many years.

Dr. Boehmfeldt and his wife Ali' are active in ministerial service. He is a doctor in psychotherapy and does extensive counseling. He has many academic certificates in his field.

We look forward to his contributions to RFI.



**HARVEST
REVIVAL
Center**

HARVEST REVIVAL CENTER
1488 Johnsville Brookville RD
Brookville, OH 45309



Judy Imdahl-King has been an ordained minister with RFI since 2018 and has been the pastor at New Temple Grove Ministries since April 2024.

Judy was born in Ahoskie, North Carolina. She met her late husband Bobby at NTGM where he was working with the media ministry. They have two children, a son, Aaron Imdahl, and a daughter, Ashley Imdahl. She has one grandchild. Her daughter volunteers at the church helping with the computer work and also in the kitchen.

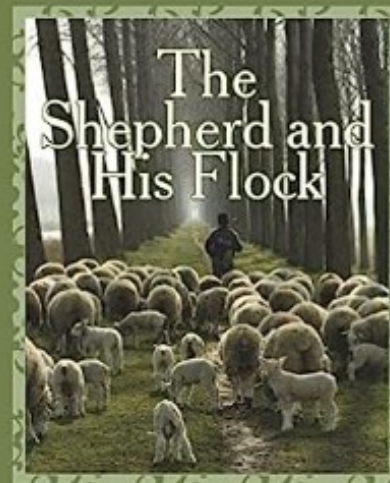


Judy earned BA, CPA and CGMA degrees. She has also done self-studies in ministerial training.

Judy attended NTGM for the past eighteen years. During this time, she has been actively involved in children's ministry, Bible teaching, serving on church boards, treasurer, service moderator, and praise & worship leader. She is also writing a curriculum for new converts.

It was during this time of volunteer work that Judy felt a deeper call into ministry and became a minister with RFI.

We look forward to hearing great things from New Temple Grove Ministries! RFI loves you and prays for the Lord to bless you in your work in enlarging the kingdom of God!



Jeffery Hamm, Ph.D.

Available through Amazon.

Kindle Version: \$2.99

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332 Pages

Pastoring is both an art and a science; however, much more than that, it is a divine calling wherein God imparts to chosen vessels a gift of his grace that empowers them to extend his loving care to all his children—especially those of the household of faith.

While there are many competing theories as to what pastoring means and how it should be fulfilled both in the life of the administrator and in the lives of those who are being pastored, the reality is that the only definition that matters is the one that God himself gives through Holy Scripture.

The insights that you will gain from this book will be invaluable to you as you labor in the Master's vineyard and carry out his prime directive: "Go and make many disciples, teaching them all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

Now, take time to walk the road of servanthood with a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, Dr. Jeff Hamm.



HARVEST REVIVAL CENTER
1488 Johnsville Brookville RD
Brookville, OH 45309
info@harvestrevival.center
[937-687-1525](tel:937-687-1525)

GATHERING TIMES
Sundays: 10:30 AM
Wednesdays: 6:30 PM

The weekend of April 26 & 27, 2025, RFI Executive Director and Presiding Bishop, Dr. John Looper and Bishop-elect, Dr. Justin Elwell will be ministering at Harvest Revival Center in Brooksville, Ohio. On the evening of April 26th, Rabbi Justin will be leading a Passover Seder for the church; and on the morning of April 27th, Dr. Looper will deliver a timely word for Harvest Revival Center. For more information contact the Harvest Revival Center office.

**JULY 8 @ 10:00 AM
TO
JULY 13 @ 12:00 PM**



July 8-13
**FELICIE &
ELWELL**

SUMMER FAMILY WEEK

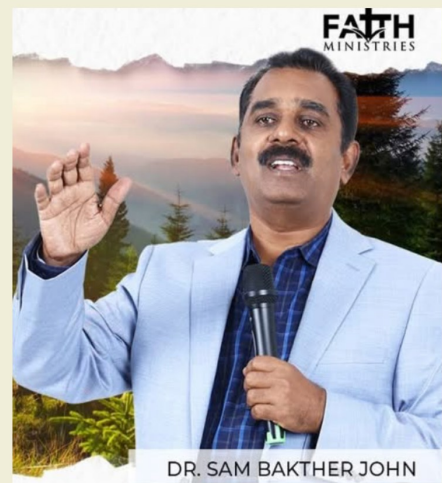


EDWIN FELICIE, MBS CAME TO THE LORD IN 1982. HE IS THE OVERSEER OF THE JACKSON HOME STUDY GROUP IN JACKSON, NJ. HE IS ALSO THE CHANGELLOR OF TIMOTHY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (WEST).

EDWIN HAS BEEN MARRIED TO JUANITA SINCE 1978. THEY HAVE SIX CHILDREN ALONG WITH SIX GRANDCHILDREN.

JUSTIN D. ELWELL, TH.D. IS A MESSIANIC JEWISH DISCIPLE OF MESSIAH YESHUA/JESUS, SERVING AS THE CONGREGATIONAL RABBI OF MESSIAH CONGREGATION IN NEW HARTFORD, NEW YORK.

JUSTIN AND HIS WIFE RENEE HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS AND HAVE TWO ADULT SONS.



**WITH A SPECIAL GUEST FROM
COIMBATORE INDIA,
DR SAM BAKTHER JOHN!**

Around the Network ...



Bishop-elect, Dr. Justin Elwell spoke at Blue Mountain Christian Retreat and Conference Center during their annual Christmas Banquet on December 12th, 2024.

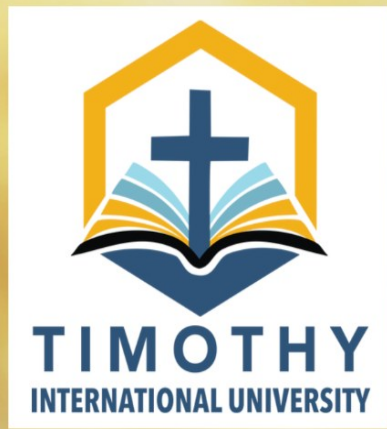


With Blue Mountain Executive Director Mike Liedig.



Dr. Elwell ordained two new ministers for RFI, and one new deacon for Messiah Congregation on December 28th, 2024.

**Pastor Christian Hadlock
Pastor Donald Simpson
Deacon Jose Marrero**



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@ 10:00 am
Sunday Morning Worship
@ 10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship
@ 6:00 pm

*Services live-streamed on Facebook
via Susan Flanery and Bill Wilson's
Facebook Page*

Teen Classes

(Ages 7th to 12th Grade)
Sundays (after dismissed for
Children's Church)
Classes: 1st, 2nd and 3rd
of every month
Worship with congregation on
4th Sunday of every month

College & Career Classes (Ages 18-30)

Sundays
@ 4:30 pm
Get Out of My Head
Contact Amy Morrison for
virtual copy of book.

Prayer Meeting

Mondays @ 6:00 pm

Grief Share

Mondays
@ 6:30 pm
Cost: \$20 (covers book fee)
Contact: Joyce Sorrell Amann

Little Leaps of Faith

Wednesday
@ 6:00 pm

Student & Adult Classes

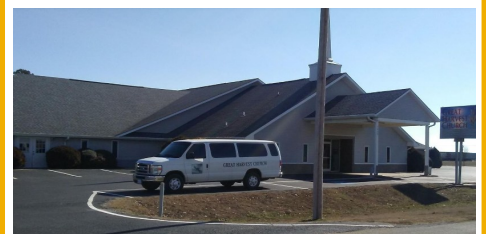
Wednesdays
@ 7:00 pm

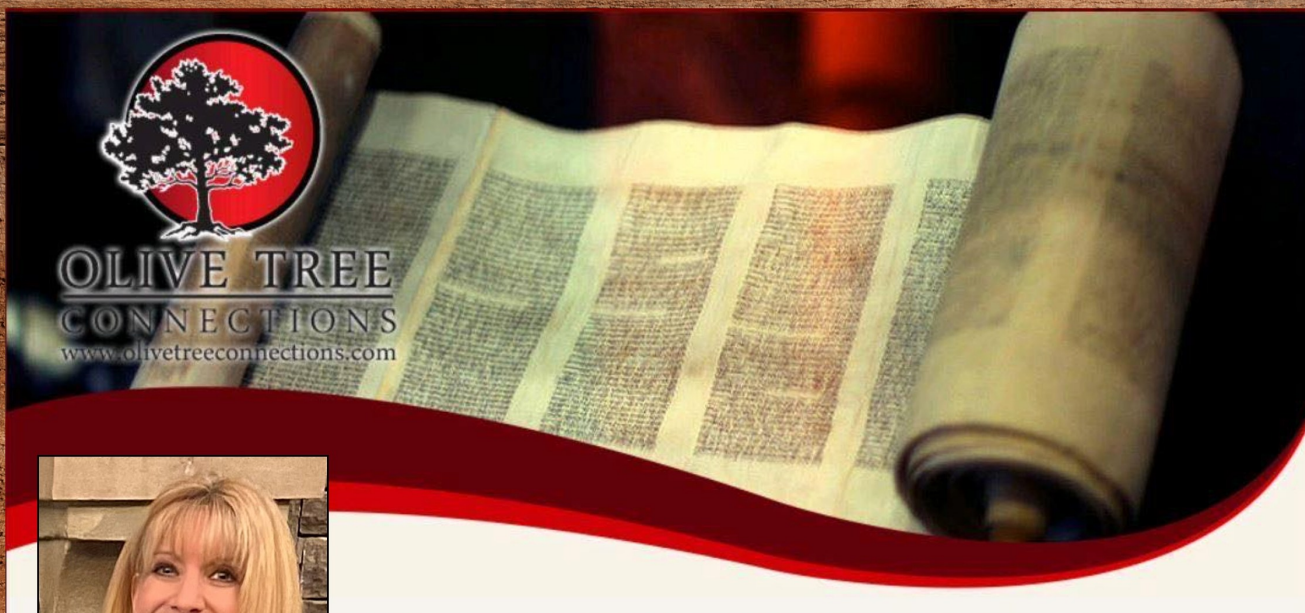
Women's Virtual Bible Study

Last Saturday of every month
via ZOOM or live in person in
Fellowship Hall

Love Stories of the Bible
By Shannon Bream

Contact: Amy Morrison for ZOOM help





Pastor Karen Johnson

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A large white sheep stands in a lush green field. A small lamb is nursing from its udder. The sheep's head is turned towards the lamb, and its eyes are partially closed. The background is a soft-focus green field.

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He
said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”
He said to him, “Feed my lambs.””

John 21:15