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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

RESTORATION TIMES

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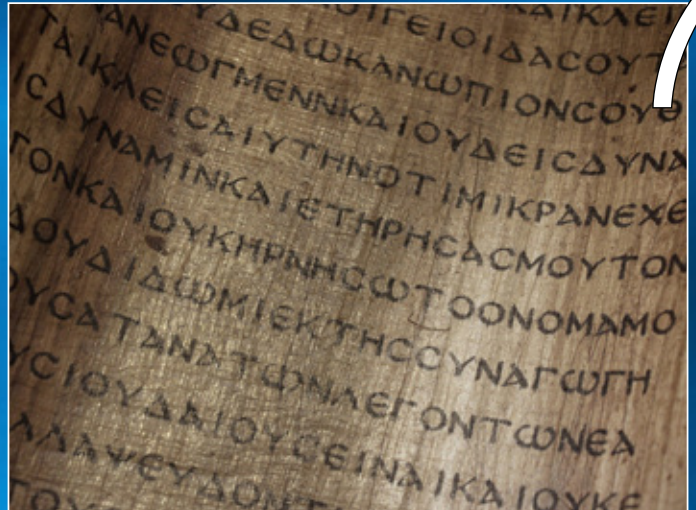
RESTORATION TIMES

VOL. 13 | No. 6 | November-December 2023

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Restoration Times expounds the close ties between the Old and New Testaments. We teach the continuity and harmony that extend from Yahweh's actions anciently down through His present activity in Yahshua the Messiah. This was also the conviction of the early New Testament Assembly.

This publication is made possible through the tithes and offerings of those who desire to see the truth of Scripture restored in our day.

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The Great Paradox of Christmas

Who is the honoree in this annual “birthday” rite, the Savior or Santa? The answer should leave the sincere Bible student with serious concerns about the unholy mix in this mother of holidays.

by Alan Mansager

It seems a losing battle to some. The opponents of the secularization of the “Savior’s birthday” are constantly pleading to put Him back into Christmas. But the rest of the culture is perfectly happy ignoring them and indulging in all of the secular glitter and cheer that money can buy.

Could it be that society has a point? Perhaps there really is no authentic biblical side to this annual extravaganza. Maybe the “reason for the season” is simply that a secular culture wishes to revel in a holiday of its own making, without scriptural foundation, precedent or sanction.

If this is true, someone has a lot to answer for. Let’s look at the historical and biblical facts.

As Unmixable as Oil and Water

Almost from the start, Christmas as we know it was mired in a pagan and pseudo-biblical union that still scourges it today. Even the symbols

are an odd matchup: St. Nick and Savior; Yule logs and wooden manger; Rudolph and camels; jingle bells and celestial star – and many more – all tangled in a confusing blend to create an awkward, discordant anomaly. Through this one observance the Bible is joined with heathenism in a rite that began thousands of years before the Savior was born.

Have you ever felt a certain uneasiness when observing this holiday? Even just the nominally religious individual must experience some buyer’s remorse sitting around a sparkling tree littered with gifts as he considers the Savior born in a humble manger who condemned materialism and greed. There wasn’t even available a single room in a crowded inn in which He could enter the world.

This is one of the great paradoxes of Christmas: joining incompatibles that, like oil and water, refuse to mix. Yet each year society does its best to force-

fit this hybrid’s disparate elements into harmony.

Pressured into Acceptance

The name “Christmas” is a contraction for an originally Roman Catholic sacrament of “Christ’s Mass,” a hand-me-down from the old pagan, Roman feast of Saturnalia. The Saturnalia was an ancient and licentious celebration of the Romans in honor of the deity Saturn, their god of agriculture. Resisting it at first, eventually the Roman church surrendered to this heathen festival:

“During its first three hundred years, the Church in Rome maintained a staunch position against all pagan beliefs and practices; however, many new and potential converts were reluctant to give up their familiar celebrations. One of the most popular holidays in the Roman year was the Saturnalia. It was a week-long festival with torch-light processions, gift giving, and merrymaking culminating

in a winter solstice feast on December 25, called *Natilis Solis Invictor*, the Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun. The holiday honored the strength of the sun and the fertility it would bring to the earth,” *The Solstice Evergreen*, p. 88.

The pagan feast of the Saturnalia, which was celebrated December 17-24, was climaxed by the Brumalia, a word that means the shortest day of winter. On this day, December 25, the sun-worshipping Romans celebrated what they regarded as the “Day of the Birth of the Unconquered Sun.”

The Saturnalia and Brumalia eventually encompassed the Feast of Mithras, which the heathen Romans had also adopted as their own. Mithras was the Persian god of light and goodness, who was often identified with the sun. It was at this time of the winter solstice that the heathens gave homage to the sun in the hope that it would return to warm the earth again.

Amazing parallels exist between Mithras and the Savior – the sun and the Son – which undoubtedly led to the borrowing of the heathen trappings of Mithraism by Christianity.

Note the striking comparisons: in pagan belief, Mithras was “the creator and orderer of the universe, hence a manifestation of the creative Logos or Word. Seeing mankind afflicted by Ahriman, the cosmic power of darkness, he incarnated on earth. His birth on 25 December was witnessed by shepherds. After many deeds he held a last supper with his disciples and returned to heaven. At the end of the world he will come again to judge a resurrected mankind and after the last battle, victorious over evil, he will lead the chosen ones through a river of fire to a blessed immortality,” Joscelyn Godwin, *Mystery Religions of the Ancient World*, p. 99.

Because the two celebrations resembled each other so closely, each vied for dominance in the Roman empire — the one pagan, the other Christian. As one scholar noted, “If Christianity had been halted in its growth by some

mortal illness, the world would have been Mithraist” (Ernest Renan, *Marc Aurele*, p. 597).

Futile Efforts to Stop Paganization

Tertullian, one of the earliest and most influential of the Latin “church fathers” for whom we have writings, lamented over the paganization taking place among supposed Bible believers:

“By us, who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to [Yahweh], the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronalia, are now

‘That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin.’

— Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*

frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year’s day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians,” *De Idolatria*, C. 14, Vol. i, p. 682.

In his book, *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop notes efforts to stop the paganization taking place through the Christmas celebration: “Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and

the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. In Egypt, the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born at this very time, ‘about the time of the winter solstice.’ The very name by which Christmas is popularly known among ourselves—Yule-day—proves at once its Pagan and Babylonian origin. ‘Yule’ is the Chaldee name for an ‘infant’ or ‘little child;’ and as the 25th of December was called by our Pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors ‘Yule-day’ or the ‘Child’s day,’ and the night that preceded it, ‘Mother-night,’ long before they came in contact with Christianity, that sufficiently proves its real character” (pp. 93-94).

His Missing Birthday

Any reasonable person can see the myriads of heathen rituals and rites in the Christmas observance. (For more detail, read our booklet, *Birthday of the Sun*.) To see the connections one need not go any further than newspapers appearing about December 25, or to any standard reference encyclopedia.

The important question is, can we find a command in the Bible or even one biblical example where the birthday of the Savior was observed?

Notice this observation: “There is no scriptural warrant for the celebration of the birth of [Yahshua] on 25 December, nor is there any precise indication of the day in the birth narratives in the [Evangelists] of Luke and Matthew. Speculation as to the time of year is not evident before the mid-2nd century, when there was a pressing need to emphasize [Messiah’s] humanity in order to confound gnostic teachings that he only APPEARED to come in the flesh” (*Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, “Christmas,” p. 67).

In fact, evidence points to an autumn time of birth, most likely around the Feast of Tabernacles, which would explain why there was no room in the inn as Israelites were traveling to Jerusalem to keep the Feast. It would have been an ideal time to collect a tax as well, Luke 2:5.

No Manger Party

But what about the wise men, weren't they celebrating the Savior's birthday with gifts? The wise men who came to the Savior (He was at least two years old by then) were likely astrologers called Magi (we derive the word magic from the Greek *magoi*) who approached the Child King with gifts. This was customary in the Middle East when appearing before nobility. Herod cunningly tried to take advantage of these men in an attempt to find and kill the Messiah.

Notice: "When Herod the king had heard these things [about the birth of Yahshua as King], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matt. 2:3).

"Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, 'Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found [him], bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also'" (Matt. 2:7-8).

After their visit to the "house" of the Savior, not a manger (v. 11), Yahweh foiled Herod's plot by sending the Magi in a direction away from the scheming king (Matt. 2:12). Subsequently, a furious Herod murdered all children two years of age and under, hoping to snag the Messiah in his lethal net.

This is not quite the innocent image you'd expect of December 25, is it? This was no birthday celebration with visitors bringing gifts and enjoying ice cream and cake. It involved a sinister plot by Herod to kill the Savior, a plan foiled by Yahweh Himself. And it took place not even close to the manger either in time or distance.

When Was the First Xmas?

Amazingly, the date for churchianity's most important celebration is stuck in historical confusion. From the start, chaos reigned over when the Messiah was born.

Notice what one source says, "The

date for Christmas was not set until the time of Julius I, who presided as bishop of Rome from 337 to 352. In earlier times different communities of Christians celebrated the birth of [Yahshua] at varying points in the year; some on the first or sixth of January, some on the 29th of March, about the time of the Jewish Passover, and some on the 29th of September, about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Toward the fourth century more and more communities came to celebrate the nativity about the time of the winter solstice" (*Book of Days*, Elizabeth and Gerald Donaldson).

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It took the Roman Church to make the final decision as to the date of Christmas. And that date has held firm throughout history:

"But the Latin Church, supreme in power, and infallible in judgment, placed it on the 25th of December, the very day on which the ancient Romans celebrated the feast of their goddess Bruma...Pope Julius I was the person who made this alteration, and it appears to have been done for this reason: the sun now began its return towards the northern tropic, ending the winter, lengthening the short days, and introducing the spring. All this was probably deemed emblematical of the rising of the Sun of righteousness on the darkness of this world, and causing the day-spring from on high to

visit mankind," *Clarke's Commentary*, notes on Luke 2:8.

The *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* corroborates these facts: "There is no authoritative historical evidence as to the day or month of [Messiah's] birth in Jerusalem. Twenty-five December was the date of a Roman pagan festival inaugurated in 274 as the birthday of the unconquered sun which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase in light. Sometime before 336 the Church in Rome, unable to stamp out this pagan festival, spiritualized it as the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness," "Christmas," p. 223.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* sheds further light on the rather dark and murky early datings of Xmas, explaining where the so-called Twelve Days of Christmas came from. Again, we find there a root firmly grounded in mystery religion:

"In Hellenistic times an epiphany (from the Greek *epiphania*, 'manifestation') or appearance of divine power in a person or event was a common religious concept. The New Testament uses the word to denote the final appearing of [Messiah] at the end of time; but in 2Timothy 1:10 it refers to His coming as Saviour on earth. In this latter sense, a festival of [Messiah's] epiphany is first attested among heretical Gnostic Christians...in Egypt in the late 2nd century (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book I, chapter 21), on January 6, when he was manifested as Son of [Elohim] at his baptism. The date is that of an ancient Egyptian solstice, celebrated by pagans as a time of overflow of the waters of the Nile, and in certain mystery cults as the occasion of the birth of a new aeon, or age, from the virgin goddess Kore, daughter of the earth-mother goddess Demeter. Nothing more is known of an Epiphany feast until the 4th century, when it appears in the Eastern church as a festival second only to Easter. It commemorated three 'manifestations': the birth, the Baptism, and the first miracle of [Yahshua] at Cana. In the

latter half of the century Eastern and Western churches adopted each other's incarnation festival, thus establishing the 12-day celebration from Christmas to Epiphany" ("Church Year," p. 604).

The fact that Xmas is drenched in materialism befits this winter extravaganza, and it screams the real nature of its true spirit.

Our Savior denounced greed, self-indulgence, and coveting of worldly

things. Yet these have become the very hallmarks of His supposed "birthday." The motives that really drive this celebration are not in the "giving" but in the "getting." Especially is this true of children who are most influenced by this yearly rite.

Say the word "Christmas" and what pops into the minds of millions of young people is not a manger scene, but a tinsel-draped, lighted tree covered at

its base with gifts waiting to be opened.

Can the truth seeker continue in hypocrisy? Will he or she be honest and say I must listen to the Father when He commands, "Come out from among them, be separate, says Yahweh, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you"? (2Cor. 6:17)

It is time to drop the worldly observances and keep the Feast days Yahweh commanded and blessed. 🌿

The Actual Time of the Savior's Birth ...and it wasn't mid-winter



A key to when Yahshua the Messiah was born is found in the birth of John the Baptist to Zachariah and Elizabeth, cousin to Mary. We learn in Luke 1 that the angel Gabriel came to the priest Zachariah during his "course of Abiyah." There were 24 annual courses, or divisions of Temple duty times for the priests. That meant two courses per month.

Zachariah's course of Abiyah was the eighth, and fell at the end of June (Sivan) when the angel told him that Elizabeth would conceive and bear John. Zachariah finished his temple duty and returned home (Luke 1:23). In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy Gabriel came to Miriam (Mary) and announced that she had conceived Yahshua (Luke 1:31) by the Holy Spirit. This would have occurred at the end of December.

Delivery nine months later would be the last part of September (Tishri) or first part of October, which is the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Scholars generally accept that the Messiah Yahshua was on earth for 33½ years, having been immersed at age 30 (Luke 3:23) and carrying on His ministry for 3½ years. Being born in the autumn, His death 33½ years later would be in the spring, at the time of Passover, exactly as Scripture tells us in John 13:1.

His birth at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles explains

these biblical facts:

- The sheep were still in the fields at night, which would not occur in the dead of winter because of a lack of pasturage. Livestock are taken out of the fields by the end of autumn.
- The people were going up to be taxed by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), which would be expedient only after the harvest was in and masses of people would be coming together anyway to keep the Feast at Jerusalem. Causing the people to do extensive traveling in the dead of winter would have resulted in a revolt, which the astute Augustus would have avoided at all costs in his realm, which already had discontented Jews.
- Joseph and Miriam had to travel over 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This would not have been possible or practical for a woman in her ninth month of pregnancy, over rough terrain, in the dead of winter.

Because the date of the Savior's birth is not revealed in the Bible, we know that it is not important to our Heavenly Father. What is important is the day of His Son's death, Passover, a time specifically spelled out, commanded, and observed throughout the Scriptures – both by the ancients, by the Savior, His disciples, and by Yahweh's people. The six other annual observances are commanded as well.



The Apocrypha

Recipe for Imitation Bible

by Alan Mansager

Start with a pinch of Aesop's Fables, add two cups of interpretation, slowly pour in some secret ingredients and blend with copious amounts of imagination. Chop into 54 parts (for the Old Testament) and 44 parts (New Testament) and more depending on your appetite. Cook on low and let simmer for 2,000 years or less. Serve along with Scripture.

This is a recipe for imitation Bible known as the Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic Church serves it up in their versions of the Scriptures.

Inquirers will ask, What about the books of *Maccabees*, *Enoch*, and *Jasher* – are these legitimate Scripture? We will address those later.

Apocrypha means “things hidden or concealed,” i.e. “hidden books.” It is from the Greek word *apokryphos* and it concerns writings that at first were not read publicly. Later, Apocrypha came to be seen as spurious and unfit for the canon of Scripture and thus was rejected by the Protestants.

In popular usage, Apocrypha refers to the 11 books made a part of some

Bibles named by the Roman Church at the Council of Trent in 1546.

The books generally recognized as constituting the Apocrypha are: 1 and 2 Maccabees; Prayer of Manasses; 1 and 2 Esdras; Tobit; Judith; Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus (a.k.a. Sirach); Baruch and Epistle of Jeremy; supplements to Esther, the Letters of Jeremiah, and three additions to Daniel: The Song of the Three Children, Susanna and the Elders, and the Destruction of Bel and the Dragon.

The Apocrypha was mostly written between the third and first centuries BCE in the period between the Old and New testaments. Because of that, some Bibles insert the Apocrypha between their Old and New testament pages.

Jews Rejected Apocrypha

The move toward including these works as part of the Scriptures was initiated by Augustine of Hippo, early bishop of the Roman church. Although acknowledging some of the historical values of the books, Augustine admitted there is a definite difference

between these “outside books” and the Inspired Word.

These spurious works were written in Greek, not Hebrew, and found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Jews reject the Apocrypha as Scripture. In fact, the Jewish Council of Jamnia in 90 CE specifically excluded the Apocrypha from the Hebrew canon of Inspired Scripture.

Recall that it is the Jews who were entrusted with preserving the Old Testament Bible. Paul testifies, “What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of Yahweh,” Romans 3:1-2.

By oracles Paul meant the inspired words of Yahweh, given to Moses and the prophets, Acts 7:38. Because Yahweh made the Jewish scribes the caretakers of the Scriptures, we must trust their authority when they deny the Apocrypha.

If the apocryphal books were to be part of the Hebrew Canon, why is

not a single one of them quoted in the New Testament? There are hundreds of quotations from the Old Testament included in the New, yet not one original quotation from one of the apocryphal books is found.

Some might wonder, “What about the books of *Enoch*, mentioned in Jude 1:14-15 (RSB note), and *Jasher* which is mentioned twice in the KJV?” (Josh. 10:13; 2Samuel 1:18).

It is uncertain whether the references to Enoch and Jasher are accurate, or whether they were in the original writings to begin with. Therefore their authority is in dispute.

The *Book Jasher* that exists today was written no later than the mid-sixteenth century CE, and could not have been the original *Jasher*. The RSB note on Joshua 10:13 says the *Jasher* referenced was probably a collection of war songs and is no longer available. This tallies with 2Samuel 1:18, which is a verse speaking of teaching the children of Judah the use of the bow.

As for the Jude 1:14 reference to the book of *Enoch*, this prophecy did not come from the apocryphal book of Enoch. It may later have been put there. *Barnes Commentary* says this reference in Jude for certain was handed down by tradition.

Bible Is Accurately Preserved

No other literary work has been preserved better through the ages than the Bible.

When compared with the oldest Hebrew manuscripts, i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls, our Bibles today are true to the ancient texts. The Scribes were meticulous in transcribing Scripture precisely. If there were any authenticity to the Apocrypha the Jews would have recognized it. On the contrary. They had all kinds of issues with it and they rejected it.

Here is what Josephus, the first century historian and priest, wrote about the Apocrypha: “For there are not with us myriads of books, discordant

and discrepant, but only two and twenty [equivalent to the 39 books of Hebrew Scripture] comprising the history of all time, which are justly accredited.”

Josephus acknowledged that the Hebrew Canon was complete following the books of *Nehemiah* and *Malachi* in the 5th century BCE. He wrote, “From the time of Artaxerxes up to our own everything has been recorded, but the records have not accounted equally worthy of credit with those written before them, because the exact succession of prophets ceased.”

The Bible itself is testimony to the great lengths Yahweh went to preserve the Scriptures.

For instance, Jeremiah had been prophesying for 23 years in the 36th chapter of his book. Yahweh commanded him to write his prophecies in a book to be read in the synagogue. When King Jehoiakim heard some of the prophecies he threw the scroll into a fire. With the help of his scribe Baruch, Jeremiah rewrote the entire book through Yahweh’s inspiration.

Clearly the Bible is inspired as 2Timothy 3:16 says and as this and other incidents prove. The Bible contains no errors. Any mistakes found are made by translators or editors. Most translators don’t have a grasp of Yahweh’s entire plan of salvation and didn’t understand how the Bible complements itself in both Old and New testaments.

The mere historical and literary accuracy of Scripture is testimony to holy inspiration. The same is not true of the Apocrypha.

The Writings Speak for Themselves

The best evidence for the bogus nature of the Apocrypha is in the books themselves.

Lacking inspiration, the Apocrypha at times contradict the Bible and even themselves. They have numerous historical and geographical inaccuracies as well as errors in fact and mistakes in time. Each of these mistakes is witness to the human failings of those who

wrote them. Had they been inspired they would have no mistakes, blunders or contradictions.

Let’s take a look at some samples of Apocryphal books to see why they are classified as uninspired.

The book of *Tobit* or *Tobias* is about a pious Jew who is deported to Nineveh. Blinded by bird dung, he sends his son Tobias to collect a debt. During the journey Tobias acquires the gall of a fish that restores his father’s sight.

Estimated to be from the second century BCE, *Tobit* has a serious chronological flaw, among other problems. It says this fellow Tobit saw the revolt of the northern tribes (997 BCE) and was on the scene when the tribe of Naphtali was deported to Nineveh (740 BCE). That would mean he lived more than 257 years. But Tobit 14:11 says he was 158 when he died.

The fact of two authors brings confusion to the *Book of Baruch*. The first five chapters are made to look as if Baruch wrote them. The sixth chapter is presented as a letter written by Jeremiah.

- Baruch is said to live in Babylon (1:1-2) although the Bible says he went to Egypt. In *Baruch* chapter 3 is this: “You Elohim of Israel, hear now the prayer of the dead Israelites,” meaning the dead are not really dead, contradicting Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Psalm 146:4 that the dead know not anything, they have no thoughts.

- In his preface to the *Book of Jeremiah*, Jerome wrote, “I have not thought it worthwhile to translate the *Book of Baruch*.”

A case of mistaken authorship is found in *Wisdom of Solomon*. Certain texts in this book present Solomon as its author (9:7, 8, 12). The *Jerusalem Bible* states that this is a “literary device,” because *Wisdom* cites passages of Scripture written centuries after Solomon died.

Also in the *Wisdom of Solomon*

8:19-20, is advanced the erroneous doctrine of the preexistence of human souls, as Mormons believe, “Now I was a clever child and received a good soul. Or rather, being good, I came into an undefiled body.”

Wisdom of Solomon (11:17) states that G-d “created the world out of formless matter.” Psalm 33:6 says He created with the words of His mouth out of nothing. Also Hebrews 11:3 confirms that: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of Elohim, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

The books of **Tobit** and **Judith** contain historical, chronological, and geographical errors. The book **Tobit** says Tobit was alive when the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom in 721 BCE. **Tobit** 14:14 says he was 127 years old when he died. But this means he lived 200 years.

Perhaps the most valuable of the Old Testament Apocrypha are **1st** and **2nd Maccabees**. These two books are basically historical accounts of the Jewish struggle for independence during the second century BCE. They concern the exploits of a priest named Mattathias and his five sons who revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes in his attempt to destroy the Jews and their religion.

The works are characteristically written from the human standpoint. Second Maccabees advances the doctrine of prayers for the dead as well as purgatory in 12:45: “...he made the atoning sacrifice for those who had died, that they might be released from their sin.”

NT Apocrypha Are Even Wilder

With the advent of the New Testament, new apocryphal works popped up like blossoms in April.

There are about 50 spurious “gospels” besides many apocryphal Acts and Epistles. Written mostly beginning in the second century, these

works imitated the Evangelists, Acts, Letters of Paul, and Revelation.

They were partly an attempt to fill the gaps purposely left open by the inspired New Testament writers. For example, two books purport to detail the events of Yahshua’s youth, information the Bible is purposely silent on. They picture Him as a capricious child performing miracles at whim with supernatural powers like a super hero before He got the Holy Spirit.

Of the New Testament apocryphal works, **The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible** says, “Many of them are trivial, some are highly theatrical, some are disgusting, even loathsome.” These imitation scriptures were excluded from the New Testament writings in the same way the Hebrew Canon was kept pure of the older Apocrypha.

It is claimed Mohammed got many of his ideas about Christianity from these more recent apocryphal works, and they are also the origin of some of the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church.

Here is a glimpse of some of the spurious works appearing after the New Testament’s advent:

- **Gospel of Nicodemus.** A purely imaginary report on the trial of Yahshua to the emperor Tiberius (2nd or 5th century).

- **Nativity of Mary.** A deliberate forgery of the 6th century to further worship of the Virgin Mary. It has stories about daily visits of angels to Mary. Immensely popular as the papacy grew.

- **Passing of Mary.** Silly miracles, ending with the removal of her “spotless and precious body” to Paradise. It was written in the 4th century with the rise of virgin worship.

- **The Gospel of the Egyptians.** Imaginary conversations between Yahshua and Salome (130-150).

- **Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew** (note the name!). A 5th century forged translation of Matthew, abounding with the supposed childhood miracles

of Yahshua.

- **Gospel of Thomas.** A 2nd century work on Yahshua’s life from the 5th to the 12th year; makes him a miracle worker to satisfy His boyish whims.

- **Apocalypse of Peter.** Purported visions of heaven and hell granted to Peter. Eusebius called it spurious.

Seven Reasons the Apocrypha Are Not Inspired Scripture

- Unlike other Scriptures, none of the apocryphal writers claim to be inspired.


- Unlike the Old Testament, the Apocrypha are nowhere quoted in the New. The Apocrypha are tainted with errors in fact and time, exposing their noninspiration.

- The Apocrypha contain fabulous statements that not only contradict the “canonical” scriptures but also themselves. For example, in the two books of **Maccabees**, Antiochus Epiphanes is made to die three different deaths in two different places.

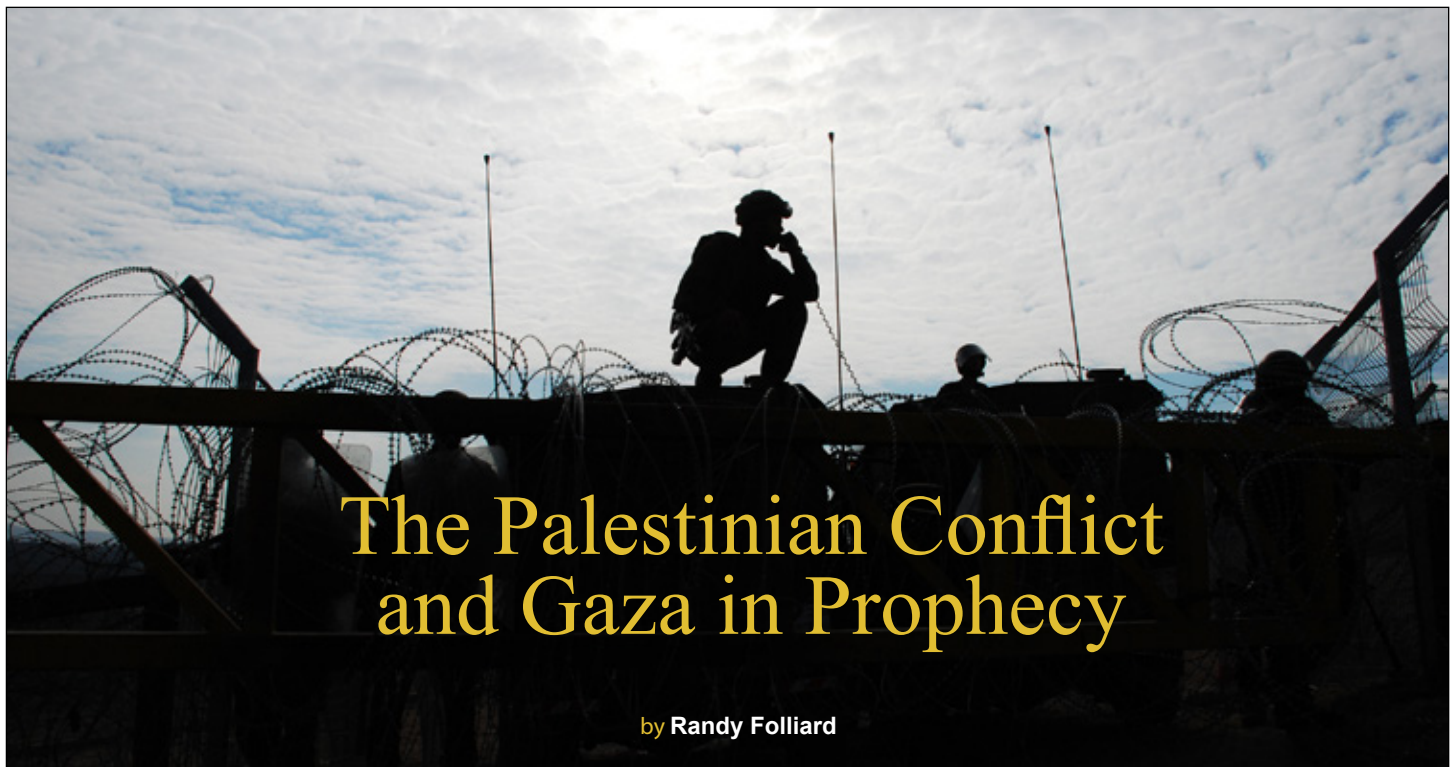
- The Apocrypha include doctrines that contradict Scripture, such as prayers for the dead, sinless perfection, and immortality of the soul.

- The apocryphal books were never acknowledged as sacred Scriptures by the Jews, custodians of the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, the Jewish people rejected and destroyed the Apocrypha after the overthrow of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

- Not one of the apocryphal books is written in the Hebrew language, which was used by all the inspired writers of the Old Testament. All apocryphal books are in Greek, except one which exists in Latin.

- The apocryphal books were not permitted among the sacred books during the first four centuries of the common era. 

In part 2 we continue our inquiry into the veracity of the books called the Apocrypha and more amazing finds.



The Palestinian Conflict and Gaza in Prophecy

by Randy Folliard

The land of Israel has always been a powder keg of turbulence. Today is no exception, except for the escalation that we are currently witnessing between Israel and Hamas. Unlike previous skirmishes, Israel seems determined to eradicate Hamas after being ruthlessly attacked. What led up to the current conflict between Israel and Hamas?

To understand this, it's essential to understand the history of Israel and the Palestinian people. It's also crucial to know Hamas – its origins and ideology. In this article we will explore these questions and more, including a possible connection between Hamas and Bible prophecy.

We begin by dispelling the belief that today's Jewish people are not real Jews but Edomites or from some other heritage. Some base this belief on the fact that King Herod was an Edomite, but just because Herod was an Edomite does not mean that all Jews are Edomites. This belief is highly offensive and antisemitic and I would encourage anyone advancing this belief to reconsider their position.

Here's what Genesis 12:3 says regarding Abraham and his descendants, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

If we are pushing this belief that the Jews in Israel are not true Jews, I believe we are cursing them, and I can assure you that Yahweh is NOT going to look favorably upon that.

Near the end of this article we will see prophetic evidence showing that the Jews will be in the land before Yahshua's Second Coming, validating that the Jews of today are from the tribe of Judah.

The Current Conflict

But let's now focus on the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. Here are some key bullet points from a recent *Fox News* article.

- "Israel has entered its fourth week of war against Hamas after the terrorist group infiltrated the country on October 7, firing thousands of rockets at residential areas and butchering civilians."

- "As many as 8,700 people have been killed in the war on both sides, including at least 1,400 Israeli civilians and soldiers and 33 Americans. The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry claims more than 7,300 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and 110 in the West Bank. At least 10 Americans are feared to be among the 229 people held captive by Hamas."

- "Israel conducted its most intense ground operation in Gaza overnight into Saturday, attacking about 150 underground terrorist targets, according to IDF."

- "A full-scale invasion of Gaza is still looming as Israel has amassed hundreds of thousands of troops on the border with Gaza, who await orders to begin."

Many are asking, what will be the outcome of this current situation between Israel and Hamas? The truth is, nobody knows. It may remain a regional war between Israel and Hamas; Hezbollah and Iran may get directly involved; and while I don't believe this last scenario is likely, it could lead to WWII, mainly depending on the

actions of China and Russia.

China is probably already involved with funding Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas, similar to what the United States is doing in Ukraine. But for the same reasons the U.S. is unwilling to put boots on the ground in Ukraine, China and Russia will likely be resistant to getting directly involved in the Middle East.

But when it comes to war, especially in the Middle East, it's hard to predict. However, this is not the time to pull away from Yahweh; this is the time to get serious with our faith. If you believe in His Word but are not following it, it's time!

Who Are the Palestinians?

Many believe that today's Arabs are descended from Ishmael, and while I largely agree with that opinion, this is an oversimplification. Not all Arabs are descended from Ishmael, especially when we understand how the word is used.

According to modern scholarship, there are three methods of defining the word Arab:

1. Ethnic and linguistic group
2. Cultural and regional identity
3. Geographic region

The most common way of classifying a people is by language or linguistics, and that scholarship rarely uses ethnicity. In the case of the Arabs, they are categorized by their language, Arabic, a Semitic language, like Aramaic and Hebrew. So linguistically, scholarship would consider the Jews and Arabs related, as would the Bible.

That said, it's essential to realize that not all Arabs arose from Ishmael. As an example, even though Iran is considered by many as an Arab nation, ethnically, the Iranians are Persians.

Who, then, are the Palestinians of today? The current Palestinians were those in "Palestine" or the land of Israel before 1948, specifically on May 14, 1948, when the nation of Israel was reborn. In 1947, the United Nations

proposed a partition plan for Palestine, recommending the division of the land into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem being an international city. The United Nations approved the plan through Resolution 181.

Immediately after Israel was given nationhood, the Arab nations around them declared war on Israel. Many Arabs refer to this war as the War of Independence or the Nakba, meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic. This war lasted several months, and not only was Israel able to withstand their enemies, but they were also able to enlarge the borders of their nation beyond what was given to them through the UN Partition Plan.

During this time and later, many of the Arab Palestinians left Israel and migrated into the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and various Arab nations, including Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. According to most authorities, including Jewish sources, about 750,000 Palestinians fled the country of Israel.

Knowing the history of what happened, it's not difficult to understand the reason behind some of the anger in the Middle East. However, it's important to remember that the Palestinian Arabs had more territory based on the UN Partition Plan and lost much of that because they preferred to make war with Israel, much like what we see today.

I believe this increase in land was Yahweh's doing. From Zechariah 12 we see prophetic evidence that before Yahshua's Second Coming the Jews will again be in the land of Israel. We also know that in the Old Testament Yahweh gave this land to the people of Israel as an inheritance.

But this is the controversy – on the one hand you have the Arabs who occupied this land before 1948, and on the other you have the rebirth of Israel through the UN Partition Plan. There is one big difference, though, between the Jews and Arabs: the Jews

want a homeland and to live in peace, while much of the Arab's desire is to obliterate the Jews.

We realize this is not true of all Arabs – currently, Egypt and Jordan, along with a few other Arab nations, are at peace with Israel. But one of the concerns with the current conflict between Israel and Hamas is that this could jeopardize the stability of some of these other Arab nations.

Israel's Desire for Peace

Let me give you an example of Israel's desire for peace. In 1967, several Arab nations, including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, went to war with Israel. During this conflict, known as the Six-Day War, the Jews captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

As part of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979, Israel gave back the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. As the name suggests, this was done to achieve peace between Israel and Egypt.

I point this out to show that Israel wants peace and is willing to give land to achieve that goal. I believe they would even hand over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to the Palestinian people if they thought they could live in peace. But the more likely scenario is that war would continue.

Origins of 'Palestine'

"Palestinian" is a word that's been mentioned several times in this article, but from a historical standpoint, it's important to realize there's never been a Palestinian country. Most scholars agree that the word Palestine goes back to the name of the Philistines. More importantly, we also know that the Romans used the word "Palaestina" in reference to the nation of Israel or the land of Judea. This was done in part to suppress the Jewish identity and ties to the land.

This is why many still prefer to use

the word Palestine in reference to the land of Israel. But again, there's never been a Palestinian nation, and those who call themselves Palestinians today are simply descendants of those who occupied or lived in the land of Israel before 1948 – mostly of Arab descent.

The History of Hamas

Let's now identify the origin of Hamas and its ideology. Hamas is an Islamist Palestinian political and military organization that operates in the Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

It was founded in 1987 during the First Palestinian uprising against Israel and arose from the Muslim Brotherhood and is considered a terrorist organization by several countries, including Israel, the United States, and the European Union.

Hamas is known for its armed resistance against Israeli forces and has been involved in numerous conflicts with Israel. It also operates as a political party in the Palestinian territories, and it won the legislative elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006, which led to a split in Palestinian governance, with Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian Authority governing the West Bank.

The goals of Hamas include the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the destruction of the Jewish people from what they deem as Arab land.

Following are some excerpts from

Hamas's charter, issued on August 18, 1988.

"Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it." (Preamble)

"The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine." (Article 6)

"Palestine is an Islamic land... Since this is the case, the Liberation of Palestine is an individual duty for every Moslem wherever he may be." (Article 13)

"The day the enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In the face of the Jews' usurpation, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised." (Article 15)

"Ranks will close, fighters joining other fighters, and masses everywhere in the Islamic world will come forward in response to the call of duty, loudly proclaiming: 'Hail to Jihad!' This cry will reach the heavens and will go on being resounded until liberation is achieved, the invaders vanquished and Allah's victory comes about." (Article 33)

"[Peace] initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement... Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the infidels as arbitrators in the lands of

Islam... There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility." (Article 13)

"Egypt was, to a great extent, removed from the circle of struggle through the treacherous Camp David Agreement. The Zionists are trying to draw other Arab countries into similar agreements in order to bring them outside the circle of struggle. ...Leaving the circle of struggle against Zionism is high treason, and cursed be he who perpetrates such an act." (Article 32)

Based on this Islamic declaration, there should be no question as to the goals and purpose of Hamas. It was established for the sole purpose of Israel's demise and destruction from the land of Israel.

It's ironic that the word "hamas" is also found in the Hebrew language. According to the *Blue Letter Bible*, the Hebrew word *hamas* is found 60 times in the OT and is translated in the King James as: violence (39x), violent (7x), cruelty (4x), wrong (3x), false (2x), cruel (1x), damage (1x), injustice (1x), oppressor (with H376) (1x), unrighteous (1x). (See page 17)

Gesenius' Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon defines this word as, "violence, wrong, oppression." Even in the Hebrew we find a connection between the word *hamas* and the actions of this terrorist organization.

Israel's Sufferings

As a nation, Israel has suffered

Israel's Perennial Struggles and the Changing of Names

Jacob wrestled with an angel in Genesis 32:22-32. This being is referred to in the Hebrew with two characteristics "*Ish*" which means man and "*Elohim*," which means mighty one. This angel was probably Yahshua Himself but certainly not Yahweh. Yahshua tells us no man has heard or seen Yahweh (John 5:37). Interestingly, Jacob would not let go until he received a blessing. So the angel changes Jacob's name to Israel, which in the Hebrew comes from two words; Sarah, and El. Sarah means to persist, exert oneself and persevere and El refers to "Mighty one." Judah to this day still struggles with Yahweh but has persisted, persevered, and survived despite so much against it. One day all of Israel will accept the Messiah and receive salvation. When that happens, Yahshua's name will change. It will no longer be "Yahweh our Salvation" but "Yahweh our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6 reads, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Yahweh Our Righteousness."

dramatically over the last few thousand years. Here are some of the more notable examples. While in some instances Israel's misery was because of its own rebellion, its oppressors went beyond simple bondage, an action that Yahweh condemns within the prophets.

- In biblical times, Israel faced multiple persecutions in the form of enslavement in Egypt and captivity in Assyria and Babylonia.

- From the Bible we know that Israel, also known as the Northern Kingdom, was taken captive by the Assyrians in 721 BCE.

- Also, between 598 and 586 BCE, Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians and held in captivity for 70 years.

- We also know that the Jews suffered under the Roman Empire; in 70 CE, Rome destroyed Jerusalem along with the temple.

- Under the Bar Kokhba Revolt in the 2nd century CE, the Jews were further persecuted and dispersed from the land. Many believe that hundreds of thousands of Jews died during the siege of Jerusalem and the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

- Moving ahead in time, during the Middle Ages, Jewish communities in Europe faced persecution, including forced conversions, expulsions, and the Inquisition. They were even blamed by many for the Black Plague.

- One of the greatest atrocities in modern history is the Holocaust, during which six million Jews were murdered for nothing more than their ethnicity.

- Even after the Holocaust, Jewish communities faced persecution in the form of antisemitism, especially in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

The people of Israel, including the Jews, have suffered tremendously. But as we are witnessing from the current hostilities in the Middle East and the antisemitism throughout this world, Jewish persecution is far from over. Prophetically, we know that all nations will come against Jerusalem, and this is

what will initiate the Messiah's return.

Gaza in Prophecy

Let's now peruse a few prophecies involving Gaza. Beginning in Amos 1:6-8, we read, "Thus saith Yahweh; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith my Sovereign Yahweh."

Amos prophesied in the 8th century BCE during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and Uzziah, king of Judah. During this time, Israel was experiencing a period of prosperity and economic growth, but it was also plagued by spiritual corruption. Amos's prophecies focus on denouncing this wickedness and calling the people to repentance.

According to some scholars, the prophecy regarding Gaza that we find in Amos was likely fulfilled once by Uzziah, king of Judah, referenced in 2Chronicles 26:6. "And he [Uzziah] went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines."

Uzziah began his reign as a righteous king and because of this Yahweh prospered his ways. However, this prosperity eventually led to Uzziah becoming prideful and turning away from Yahweh. There's a reason why the Bible is emphatic against pride.

Now this passage may be a dual prophecy, meaning that it may have more than one fulfillment. We see many examples of this within the Word, including the Abomination of Desolation. We know from the book of

Daniel that this was fulfilled once by Antiochus Epiphanes, and according to Yahshua in the Olivet Prophecy will be fulfilled again by the Man of Sin.

The passage above from Amos shows that Gaza may suffer again as it did under the reign of Uzziah. The punishment was the Philistines being carried away captive for their transgressions. We may witness a second fulfillment of this before Yahshua's Second Coming. Again, the current situation we're seeing between Israel and Gaza may be a partial fulfillment of this prophecy.

We find a similar prophecy in Zephaniah 2:1-5. "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Yahweh come upon you, before the day of Yahweh's anger come upon you. Seek ye Yahweh, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Yahweh's anger. For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of Yahweh is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant."

According to scholarship, Zephaniah prophesied during the late 7th century BCE, during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. We find Zephaniah prophesying against the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. The prophecy foretells the destruction of these cities, with their inhabitants being driven out of the land.

As in the Book of Amos, I believe this may be a dual prophecy containing both a historical and prophetic fulfillment. And while we can't say for sure, it again might be possible that part of this prophecy could be fulfilled with

the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. The fact that we see a reference to “the day of Yahweh’s anger” strongly suggests this is also a future prophecy beyond the days of Zephaniah.

Our last prophetic reference to Gaza is found in Zechariah 9:5. “Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.”

One thing to remember is that Amos and Zephaniah prophesied before the Babylonian exile, while Zechariah prophesied afterward during the 6th century BCE. Different from the prophecy in Amos, it’s harder to find a historical fulfillment of what we see here. Many speculate that this was Yahweh’s continued punishment and judgment on the Philistines, but this may also point prophetically to the future.

See map above right showing that these cities were all located within or near the Gaza Strip. Again, it is possible that the current conflict between Israel and Hamas could be a second fulfillment of what we find here.

Yahshua’s Defense of Jerusalem

One of the most essential and compelling prophecies in the Old Testament speaks about Yahshua’s Second Coming

Blessings from the Heart

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and how He will defend the people of Israel. Zechariah 12:1-10 tells us: “The burden of the word of Yahweh for Israel, saith Yahweh, which stretcheth



forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith Yahweh, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in Yahweh of hosts their Elohim. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire on the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. Yahweh also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall Yahweh

defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as Elohim, as the angel of Yahweh before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

At the end of this age, the armies of the earth will come against Jerusalem and the Jewish people, and when this happens, the Messiah will return. In that day Yahweh will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people and all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces. The Jewish people will be supernaturally defended and strengthened; every horse will be smitten with astonishment and its rider with madness.

Through the power of Yahweh, even the feeble will be as King David, as a great warrior, and the house of David will be as the angel of Yahweh.

A favorite prophecy of mine is verse 10 of Zechariah 12: when Yahshua comes, the Jewish people see Him and mourn for the One they killed as one would for their only son. I believe it will be at this time that the Jews finally accept Yahshua as the Messiah and say blessed is He who comes in the name of Yahweh. This will be a fantastic day, a day when our Savior returns and a day when He defends the Jewish people.

This prophecy also confirms that the people of Judah and Benjamin will be in the land of Israel before Yahshua’s coming. This provides irrefutable evidence that the Jews in Israel today are from the tribe of Judah.

While we can’t know for sure where this conflict is going, I believe we see many prophetic

(please turn to p. 17)



Q We've killed a bear legally. The meat is dog food. The cape will be a rug. Would you condemn this use of its hide knowing Samson killed a lion with his bare hands then comes back later to retrieve honey from inside it, all while being possessed with Spirit of Yahweh? The prohibition against touching the carcass is if the animal dies of itself.

A We read in Leviticus 11, "And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcass shall be unclean until the even. And he that beareth the carcass of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even," Verse 27. Nothing is said here about whether the animal died of itself, which applies to eating it, Deuteronomy 14:21. We advise not touching the cape, just as we would not wear pigskin gloves or have a Bible cover in pigskin leather (of which 80% of leather Bibles are, according to our Bible publisher). Samson was not always faithful to the covenant. But we also don't know whether the honey actually touched the carcass.

Q Does 1Corinthians 10:27 mean the dietary laws are no longer necessary?

A The passage reads, "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and you be disposed to go; what soever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake."

Here is another of those verses that need to be read in their entire context for proper understanding. Going back to verse 18 we see that Paul is discussing the eating of sacrifices that have been offered on the altar. Just as Israel ate of



the altar sacrifices and became participants in the rite, so those who deliberately ate of what is offered to pagan deities also became participants in heathen worship. In verses 19-20 he explains that food is food except when that food becomes part of a sacrificial ritual. In that case we must not become participants in wrong worship by knowingly indulging in eating such food as part of the sacrificial rite.

Pagans sacrificed animals to their deities as did Israel. What was not eaten in their religious worship was sometimes sold at the market where it could be purchased and taken home to eat. This is what Paul is addressing in verse 27. If you are a guest at a home of an unbeliever, it is not necessary to inquire as to the source of the food. But if you are told that it was used in a pagan rite, verse 28, then don't eat it for the sake of your guest and his learning.

Note verse 31: "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of Yahweh." If these passages are discussing eating food that Yahweh has declared unclean, then eating of the unclean food would not be for the glory of Yahweh who condemned such. Nowhere are we given permission to eat food that is

prohibited in the law of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

Q Where does the term "Christian" originate? I find it used only three times in the New Testament.

A The term Christian was neither a term given by Yahweh nor a name True Worshipers called themselves. It was a label slapped on followers of Yahshua by the Greeks. As Acts 11:26 tells us, the disciples were first called Christian at Antioch. Actually, the word was *Christianos*, the *-anos* termination was common in Grecian Asia. ***Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*** tells us, "The name was coined by the pagans of the first century to identify the followers of the Christ from those who worshiped the Roman emperor who was called Caesar."

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge confirms the fact that True Worshipers did not go by the designation Christian: "That it originated outside of Christian and Jewish circles is most likely because 1) Christians spoke of one another as 'the brethren,' 'the saints,' 'the disciples,' 'the faithful,' etc. 2) the Jews used the term 'Nazarene'" (article "Christian," p. 39).

Another source brings to light these findings: "It seems wide use of the name did not come into vogue in the empire, however, till the reign of Hadrian (117-138 C.E.) or Antoninus Pius (138-161 C.E.). Pagans, unfamiliar with the confessional title 'Christos' (Messiah), mistakenly understood it as a proper name," ***Mercer Dictionary of the Bible***, p. 142. This reference further notes, "By the late first and early second centuries the name 'Christian,' which early believers avoided using of themselves, was beginning to

be accepted.”

The early New Testament believers commonly considered their proper way of worship as simply that, “the way.” Rather than “Christian,” the early New Testament believers simply saw themselves as followers of this way of truth. In fact, in Acts it is how their beliefs were characterized.

They were people of this special “way” (see Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22—cp. John 14:6). The Jews who refused to accept Yahshua called His followers Nazarenes, Acts 24:5, or referred to them as the sect of heretics, Acts 28:22, 24:14, or Galilaeans.

The term Christian was used contemptuously by Roman Governor Agrippa in Acts 26, who mocked Paul by saying, “With but a little persuasion you would fain make me a Christian” (literal translation of verse 28). Agrippa knew that to become what he called a “Christian” would have meant certain loss of his governorship if he were serious about it.

We do not follow a Greek “Christos,” and all that such a designation implies with a modern worship that is steeped in Greco-Roman paganism. Rather, we follow the true Hebrew Messiah and the faith that was first given to the Hebrews and now is passed on to us, Jude 3. Therefore we use the

term “True Worshipers” or “True Believers” to specify those who are of the truth of Yahshua.

Calling the Savior by a Greek title obscures the fact that He is from the tribe of Judah. Our Savior said that salvation is of the Jews, John 4:22, not the Greeks.

Q What are the spirits in prison mentioned in 1Peter 3:19? Aren’t they condemned souls suffering in hell?

A That is the common interpretation, but a much closer look reveals otherwise. If this widely-held understanding is correct, what would be the point of Yahshua’s going to hellfire to preach to them? Are they not already lost? In Yahshua’s parable of Luke 16:26, He has Abraham saying that in “hell” there is a “great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from here to you cannot.” Being that they would be forever stuck in hell, to preach to them would only be torturing them further. The Bible tells us that the dead are just that:

- “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccl. 9:5).
- “For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” (Psalm 6:5).

- “His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:4).

“Hell” is *sheol* in Hebrew and its equivalent word is *hades* in Greek. Both simply mean the grave. The pagan Greeks, not Yahweh, gave it the meaning of an unseen world.

The passage does not say that Yahshua Himself preached to the spirits in prison, but “by which,” meaning by the Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit, the same that Yahshua had, that was in Noah and by the Holy Spirit Noah preached to the “spirits in prison” in the days that the ark was being prepared (verse 20). Noah is called a preacher of righteousness in 2Peter 2:5. “Spirits in prison” simply means people in bondage to sin and death (see Isa. 42:6-7; 61:1).

If the dead never die, then Yahshua never died and we have no payment for our sins. Sin requires a death sacrifice, not one that lives on in another form. The wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23. If Yahshua didn’t pay that debt with His own death, then you and I must pay for our sins with our own deaths and that would mean we have no hope of everlasting life.

The notion that the dead live on in a tortured state is right out of Greek paganism and from the writings of Plato and thirteenth century writer Dante Alighieri.

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Palestinian Conflict

(continued from p. 14)

signs coming to pass.

Those called Palestinians do not constitute a formal state. They are united by their religion, almost exclusively Sunni Muslim, as well as a desire to occupy the land of Israel. Judaism originated some 3,200 years ago. Islam did not exist until the 7th century CE, less than half that time.

While the State of Israel was established on 15 May 1948 and admitted to the United Nations, a Palestinian state was not established. The remaining territories of pre-1948 Palestine, the West Bank – including East Jerusalem – and Gaza Strip – were administered from 1948 till 1967 by Jordan and Egypt, respectively.

Israel has been controlled by many kingdoms and powers through the centuries, including ancient Egypt, ancient Israel and Judah, the Persian Empire, Alexander the Great and his successors, the Hasmoneans, the Roman Empire, several Muslim caliphates, and the Catholic crusaders. In modern times, the area was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, then the British Empire, and since 1948 it has been divided into Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Palestine)

Those who choose to dominate Israel need to realize that they are dealing with the power of Yahweh. As the prophecy says in Zechariah 2:8: “For thus saith Yahweh of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that Yahweh of hosts hath sent me...And Yahweh shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.” Genesis 12:2-3 reads, “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

As Yahweh’s people, we take advantage of the opportunity to get serious with our faith. No matter what happens in this current conflict or in the years ahead, the worst outcome for us would be to hear the words, “I never knew you, depart from me.” Seize this opportunity; live for Yahweh! Make the Word the center and focus of your life. And pray for the peace of Jerusalem, Psalm 122:6. 🕊️

בִּיבְלִי HEBREW WORD לֶשׁוֹן חָמָם T T

Hamas Khaw-mawce’

Composition: Het, gamets,
mem, gamets, samech

The Hebrew word **Hamas** (H2555) is a masculine noun and means violence. It can also be translated malicious, oppressor, unrighteous, or false.

Yahweh trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth **violence** his soul hateth.

Psalm 11:5

Outreach Program’s Current Partners

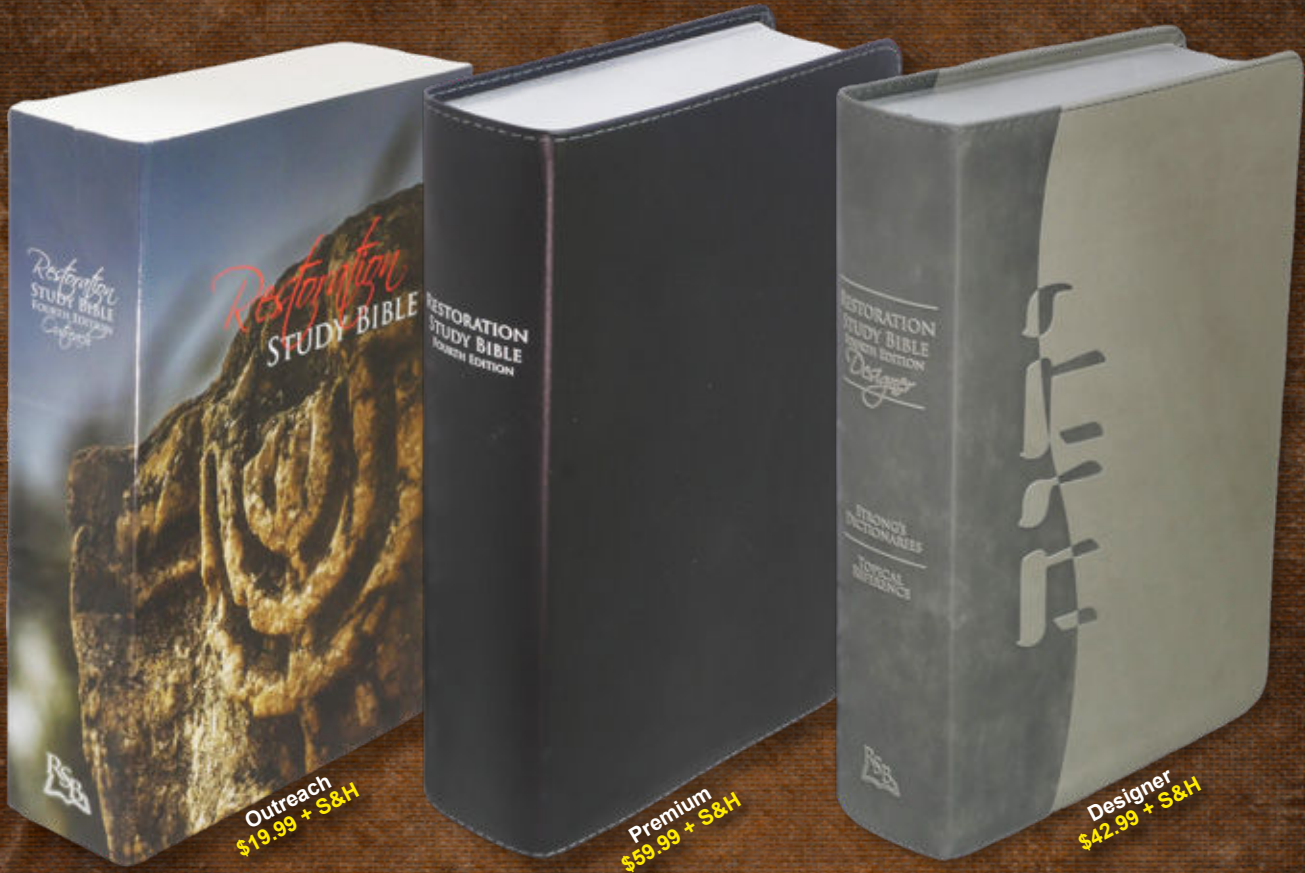
We recognize our outreach partners for their outstanding dedication to the Truth in their efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. If you are interested in becoming an outreach partner to help us spread the Truth, visit: <http://www.ym.org/outreach> or call us at (573) 896-1000 during normal office hours (M-F, 8:00 am- 4:00 pm.) We will explain how you can join this group committed to spreading the Good News!

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End of Bible Literacy

It's incredible and yet sad. Our nation, which was founded by those who held strong biblical convictions, is today nearly biblically illiterate. Ivy League colleges that were established by church denominations are now secular and atheistic.

The plight is just as dismal with churchgoers. Only a precious few today are being taught the true Scriptures in the proper way. Almost no churches correctly explain Yahweh's plan of salvation. The populace's inch-deep, birdbath knowledge and lack of conviction play out in every aspect of our declining culture. Most churchgoers arrive at services empty-handed. Even though they go to learn the Word, they rarely if ever take the Word along to see for themselves what it teaches.

Imagine a school where students never open the textbook, where the teacher teaches from only the last quarter of the book. And where the students are discouraged from inquiring into what is being taught! "Just believe" is the instructor's mantra.

The most important issue in life – our personal salvation and how we attain it – is for most believers left entirely in the hands of someone else. They just go along with what the man in the pulpit tells them without checking a single word from the Bible itself. Talk about blind trust!

Taking advantage of widespread ignorance of the most fundamental

truths of the Scriptures, Bible "teachers" have deceived millions, exactly what was happening 2,000 years ago when Roman Catholic doctrines replaced Bible teachings. Because of this ignorance and the apathy that goes with it, a plethora of erroneous beliefs and practices go unchallenged. Few study the Word to prove what is taught, as the noble Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

Also taking full advantage of widespread biblical ignorance will be the Antimesiah, who will have the whole world deceived, Revelation 12:9. Ultimately he will use the culture's blindness of the Word to defeat the True Worshipers (but only temporarily, Rev. 13:7). The Antimesiah and his false prophet will persuade the world that Yahweh's people are the enemy and that he himself is the promised Messiah.

It will take very little convincing from this silver-tongued impostor with his political genius and ability to perform miracles by the power of Satan. He'll have the earth's billions eating right out of his hand.

True understanding of the Bible and obedience to it is not just something, it is everything. Without it the world is going to fall for the greatest deception ever foisted on humanity.

Let YRM guide you into truth with the **Restoration Study Bible**, booklets on salvational topics, online videos and live, weekly sermons accessible from yrm.org. Don't waste time with churchianity's fluff. Dig into the Word. and prepare for the return of Yahshua.

"I appreciate all of your work in ministry, online in particular. I returned to the Scriptures to find truth in none of the Christian denominations. I looked into comparing their worship or doctrines to the Scriptures. I had almost given up when Yahweh directed me to your ministry. You all helped me discern the true meaning of Scripture, and the will of our Father Yahweh. In all my dealings with your staff I was impressed by their knowledge, and how much time they spent answering my questions. Upon my arrival in person [at Feast of Tabernacles] I felt more of the same and felt welcome despite being new.... Yahweh willing I shall return to fellowship here and see you all this Passover."

– SP

"Thank you for your diligence in your research on the scripture and answering everything in great detail. I have been on a hunt for the truth for a couple years now since I started understanding that the Bible does not describe modern Christianity. I enjoy where you put the truth and what's believed by the world and why it's not the truth. Everything I have read from you guys shows the worldly argument with its twisted scripture and then the truth. I find that you dot all i's and cross all t's when it comes to explaining Scripture. I of course still check it with the Bible and I have not found any contradictions. I have decided to follow you guys and you have been a blessing to me in ways you don't understand. I'm praying for your ministry to reach more and more people." –AV

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