



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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“Put on the whole armor of God”

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And Much More...



## Are You Ready for the Rapture?

By VANCE A. STINSON

This year (2025) the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24–25) begins at sunset on September 22 and ends at sunset the following evening. This day served as a “memorial of blowing of trumpets” in ancient Israel, but we observe it, not as a memorial of past events, but as an *anticipatory celebration* of an event Christians have yearned to see since the days of the apostles—the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

Some have tried to show how the symbols of the Day of Pentecost better “fit” Christ’s coming for the elect, while Trumpets is better understood as Christ’s coming *with* the elect—that is, after they had been in heaven for either the duration of the “great tribulation” or for the time required for celebrating the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” I will not take the space

here to address that view but will only say that I believe it is not supported by a proper exegesis of the relevant biblical texts. Perhaps I will address it in a future article, but for now I will assume you, the reader, agree with our longstanding understanding of how the spring and fall festivals and holy days picture Christ’s past and future redemptive and salvific acts.

What Christ has already accomplished aligns with the “appointed times” that occur earlier in the year. His sacrificial death aligns with the Passover sacrifice; His resurrection appearances align with wave-sheaf Sunday, which occurs within the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and the coming of the Holy Spirit, made possible by the ascension and heavenly enthronement of the glorified Lord, occurred on the Day of Pentecost.

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## Jubilees is Not Biblical Scripture

By MIKE JAMES

Like the book of Enoch, the book of Jubilees is gaining increased interest among Christians due to the internet and a lack of understanding on what God’s Word is.

The book of Jubilees is also known as “Lesser Genesis,” “Little Genesis,” or “The Testament of Moses.” It is a pseudepigraphal book. The pseudepigrapha are books that try to imitate true Scripture but were written under false names. Jubilees was purportedly read aloud to Moses by an angel at the command of God.

The term pseudepigrapha comes from the Greek *pseudo*, meaning “false,” and *epigraphēin*, meaning “to inscribe,” thus, “to write falsely.” The pseudepigraphical books were written from 200 BC to AD 300. They are spurious works written by unknown authors who tried to gain a readership by claiming a

biblical character wrote the book. So, a book like 1 Enoch would interest people because they would think the patriarch Enoch wrote the book. He did not. Jubilees falsely attributes authorship to Moses.

The book of Jubilees records an account of biblical history from the creation of the world to the time of Moses. The book divides history into periods of 49 years. Generally, the book of Jubilees follows the account of creation as recorded in the book of Genesis, but it inserts interesting details not found in the true biblical accounts dealing with the same time frame.

One of the primary purposes of the book is to create a better understanding of the calendar used for the celebration of the holy days. The writer of this book apparently wanted a reform in the calendar the Jews were using at the time the book was written. The Jews were using an intercalated lunar calendar at this time. The

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## Judgment

By ARNIE FONTAINE

Is there any place for judging in a Christian’s life? This paper hopefully will shed some light on this admittedly sensitive and huge subject. There are several aspects of judging, such as Godly judgment on humanity and the church, personal decision-making in our daily lives, and how we see others considering God’s Word. Care should be taken as we try to understand all three areas. There will be an overlap, as is the case in many subjects, but let us proceed.

Let us begin with Christ’s scathing disapproval of the Jewish leadership of His day. We do not lack scriptures, so let us just zero in on one chapter to start with, **Matthew 23**. The Pharisees tried to live perfectly sinless lives and came to judge anyone falling short of their expectations as far beneath them. Not only had they perverted justice through hypocrisy and partiality, but they had also completely lost the next weighty matter Christ urged them to consider—mercy.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (**Matthew 23:23**).

It would do you well to read this entire chapter because it captures so much of what we need to avoid on one hand and apply on the other. Was Christ speaking only to the leadership of the day in Judea? He places judgment in the category of weightier matters. That sounds important, don’t you think?

Paul addresses the judgment issue with one of the most troubled churches, the Corinthians:

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertain-

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### Are You Ready for the Rapture? Continued from page 1

So Christ has already accomplished that portion of God's plan foreshadowed in the Passover/Unleavened Bread and Pentecost festivals, but the New Testament nowhere reveals a clear association between Christ's past works of salvation and the appointed times that occur in the fall—the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, or Last Great Day—so it is quite natural to view the festivals coming later in the year with events coming later in God's unfolding plan for all humankind.

With this understanding, along with our having observed how perfectly the appointed times from Passover to Pentecost align with the events of Christ's past works of salvation, it is logical to think that the Second Coming very well could occur on the Feast of Trumpets—*on the very day itself!*—if indeed Trumpets pictures the Second Coming. That makes perfectly good sense!

So will Christ appear in the heavens on the upcoming Feast of Trumpets?

When replying to a question like that, I have always had a tendency to underscore the prophesied events that *haven't* happened yet and that seem to be described in the New Testament as things that *must* happen *before* the Second Coming of Christ can take place—events such as the rise of the “man of sin” and the “falling away” associated with his Satan-inspired activities (2 Thessalonians 2:3ff) and the final wrath of the Dragon and resultant persecution and martyrdom of the Lamb's followers (Revelation 12:12ff; 6:9–11).

Yet, I also have to remember that biblical prophecies are sometimes fulfilled in ways no one expected. I cannot totally rule out the possibility that the rise of the “man of sin” and the “falling away” could have *already occurred* in some way—that is to say, if the “mystery of lawlessness” was “already at work” in the first century (2 Thessalonians 2:7), perhaps it has produced multiple man of sin/falling away events across the centuries, and that followers of Christ are persecuted and killed with each manifestation of this Devil-inspired arrangement, whether it appears in the form of the Inquisition or Islamic jihad or murderous communist regimes or other such anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-life, and anti-truth movements and campaigns.

I also have to take into consideration the fact that God can decree disaster for a sinful nation and then *reverse* His decree if conditions within that nation change for the better (see Jeremiah 18). He did it when Nineveh repented, and there's no reason to think that the principle does not or cannot apply to scriptural prophecies about the conditions of the last days. In fact, I would suggest that the prophecies about the horrendous things coming upon the earth in the days leading up to Christ's return are, in large part, for the purpose of calling people to repentance so those terrible things *won't* come upon them. The *conditional element* of biblical prophecy has to be considered.

So in light of the two principles above, can I say dogmatically that Christ will *not* return on the next Feast of Trumpets?

**Jesus urges His disciples to “Watch”—to be ever vigilant, always prepared, irrespective of what's going on in the world—“for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42, 44; 25:13). When He appears in the clouds of heaven, “He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (verse 31). The dead in Christ will be raised, and all living saints will be transformed—their mortal bodies will “put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53)—and together they will be “caught up”—RAPTURED—and will meet the returning Lord in the sky above!**

No, I cannot say for sure. I cannot say for sure whether He will or will not return in my lifetime or in the lifetime of anyone presently drawing breath or about to begin drawing breath. But since He didn't return on any of the 1,995 Feasts of Trumpets that have taken place since His resurrection, my guess is that there's a good chance He won't appear in the heavens on the upcoming Feast of Trumpets.

But we don't need to worry over that. The important thing is that we let the Feast of Trumpets remind us that our Savior *is* going to return to this earth one day—so celebrating the day should focus on the *event* itself and what it means for each of us and for the world in general, not *when* that event might occur.

For the world, the return of Christ will mean the beginning of a radical transformation of national governments and international relationships.

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud noises in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15b).

The “seventh angel” sounds his trumpet to announce the Second Coming of Christ. The loud voices proclaiming the reign of Christ are speaking proleptically—that is, in an *anticipatory* manner. Christ's appearance in the heavens will mean the first stage of the radical transformation of the “kingdom of the world” has begun! There's no going back! Christ *will* establish His Kingdom on the earth; the Law and Word of God *will* go forth out of Zion; the nations *will* submit or suffer the consequences; and millions *will* turn to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and will joyously say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3ff). Christ will be King, not only in Israel, but over all the nations of the earth.

The Feast of Trumpets points to the event that will begin the global transformation described in the above and many more scriptures. But, for each individual follower of Christ, Trumpets also points to a *personal* transformation so incredibly wonderful it's hard to fully imagine. The apostle Paul describes it this way:

“Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep [in death], but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we [living believers] will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. But when this perishable puts

on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?’” (1 Corinthians 15:51–55, NASB).

The “last trump” is the “seventh trumpet” that we read about in Revelation 11:15, which signals not only the event that sets off the radical transformation of the nations but also the rewarding of “the prophets and saints and those who fear [God's] name, both small and great” (verse 18b).

The Feast of Trumpets pictures that day when the Son of Man will literally be *seen* descending from the heavens in splendid glory. It is the day Christians through the ages have yearned to see.

It is the day on which the RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS will occur!

Rapture? Since when did we teach or believe in “the rapture”?

Actually, we've taught it all along. It's just that we have not used the term “rapture” for the simple reason that, for most people, the term refers to a “secret” event that occurs just before or right at the beginning of the final tribulation period, which is said to begin seven years before Christ returns. According to that view, Christians on earth are “snatched out” and taken to heaven for the duration of the seven years.

But that's not the only understanding of “the rapture.” Those who believe

the return of Christ will take place *after* or *at the end* of the great crisis at the close of the age, and that the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord and descend to earth with Him. That view is called the “post-tribulation” (post-trib) view of the rapture—but it's still called “the rapture” by believers who hold this view.

Make no mistake, if you believe the people of God will be “caught up” to meet the returning Lord in the earth's atmosphere as He descends to the planet's surface, then *you believe in the rapture!* You may not believe in the *pre-tribulation* or *mid-tribulation* rapture, but you believe in the rapture nonetheless.

Let me explain.

Paul mentions the rapture in his first epistle to the Thessalonians. He writes, “For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17, NASB, emphasis added).

Notice the emphasized words, “caught up.” The saints are “caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” This will happen when “the Lord...descend[s] from heaven.” This means, quite clearly, that Paul expects the resurrected/transformed saints to rise up off the surface of the earth and ascend into the clouds to meet Jesus as He descends from heaven. Paul says the saints will be “*caught up*...to meet the Lord in the air.”

The Greek word translated “caught up” is *harpazo*, which means “to snatch or catch away” (from *An Expository Dictionary of New*

### DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:

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*Testament Words*, W.E. Vine, p. 166). The term is used in several New Testament passages, including Matthew 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2 Corinthians 12:5; and Jude 23. Reading these passages and observing how this term is used will give you a good sense of its meaning.

But *harpazo* is the term used in Greek manuscripts. The Latin Vulgate (the Latin Bible) renders *harpazo* as *raptus*, which is the word from which we get “rapture.”

Notice how Young and Wycliffe translated 1 Thessalonians 4:17:

Young’s Literal Translation: “then we who are living, who are remaining over, together with them shall be **caught away** in clouds to meet the Lord in air, and so always with the Lord we shall be” (emphasis added).

Wycliffe New Testament: “Afterward we that live, that be left,

shall be **snatched (up)** together with them in clouds, meeting Christ in the air; and so evermore we shall be with the Lord” (emphasis added).

The Wycliffe New Testament was the first complete English translations of the Christian Scriptures in the fifteenth century. It preceded the printing press. The translators worked with the Latin Vulgate.

Check your dictionary and notice where the word “rapture” came from. You’ll discover it is from the Latin word *raptus*, which is precisely the word Jerome, in the late fourth century, used when he translated 1 Thessalonians 4:17. You’ll find this word in today’s Latin Bibles. So *raptus* (or “rapture”) was in the New Testament *centuries* before anyone reading this article was born!

The rapture, then, was not some made-up idea that came late in Christian history. It was a part of the

great hope for Christians during the apostolic period and in various times and places afterward.

The Rapture of the Saints is a biblical teaching. The living people of God today, along with the people of faith of past centuries—from the time of Adam to the end of the age—will experience it! Think of what it will be like to find yourself in a transformed body—a body completely free of the afflictions associated with our present and very fragile mortal existence—ascending into the clouds, accompanied by angelic beings, toward the brightly shining Son of Man.

In that day, the one true Church of the Living God will be revealed. Its members will be forever unified, sinless, free of the crippling limitations of the flesh, existing in perfect harmony with one another and with their God and Father and with Jesus Christ their Lord and Elder Brother.

And they will participate, under the Headship of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in the transformation of Planet Earth!

The Feast of Trumpets directs our attention to all these wonderful future realities. Observing Trumpets with these things in focus can only enhance our faith, nourish our hope, and inspire a deeper love of God our Father, Jesus Christ our Lord, and our fellow human beings, especially those of the household of faith.

Have a happy Feast of Trumpets!

Request your FREE copy of  
our booklet,  
*Why Christ Must Return.*

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The Book of Jubilees  
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author of Jubilees advocates for a solar calendar consisting of 12 months and 364 days.

In Jubilees 2:9, the writer says, “God appointed the sun to be a great sign upon the earth for days and for sabbaths, and for feasts and for years and for jubilees and for all seasons of the years.”

But we don’t find any evidence for this type of calendar in the Old or New Testaments of the Bible. It should also be noted that the earth revolves around the sun in about 365 ¼ days and not 364 days. Two points among others that cast doubt on the validity of the book of Jubilees.

It is also important to note what the Bible says about keeping time. **Genesis 1:14–19** seems to indicate more than just the sun should be used for determining the time and seasons:

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.”

It is clear from this scripture that both the sun and moon are involved in determining seasons, days, and years.

**Psalms 104:19** also makes it clear the moon is involved in determining the seasons:

“He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.”

The book of Jubilees also speaks against the use of the moon in determining the calendar. Jubilees 6:36 says this:

“For there will be those who will assuredly make observations of the moon – now (it) disturbeth the seasons and cometh in from year to year ten days too soon.”

It is clear from this that the writer of

Jubilees is speaking against using the new moon as a way of determining the calendar. A lunar year is 354 days and that is ten days shorter than the 364 day calendar the author of Jubilees is advocating.

Additionally, the Bible makes it clear in **Exodus 12:2; Leviticus 23:5; and Deuteronomy 16:1** that the first month of the year was to begin the month the Passover was kept. This is called the month of Abib. This month also came to be called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity. Passover was to begin on the 14th day of this month. But how did Israel determine the first day of each month?

In **Numbers 28:11** we read the following:

“And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot.”

The word for “months” in this verse is the Hebrew word *chodesh*. This word is number 2320 in your Strong’s Concordance. The word means new moon and by implication a month. In other words, the month began when the Israelites determined there was a new moon. Now I’m not going to get into the debate on how a new moon was sighted, but the point here is there is biblical evidence the new moon was the way to determine when the month or the calendar began.

Notice what this source has to say about this:

“The two words commonly used to designate “month” in Hebrew both have lunar referents and etymologies. Yerah is derived from a root meaning ‘moon’ (compare other Semitic languages where this root and its lunar referents are common). Hodes may be used to refer to either the month proper (Ex. 23:15; 34:18; Dt. 16:11) or the day of the new moon (Nu. 28:11; Hos. 2:13; Am. 8:5). Textual evidence seems to indicate that both words were used as a designation for month from an early period in the history of Israel, thus reflecting the lunar nature of the calendar” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 575).

This is important because proponents of the calendar in the books of

Jubilees and Enoch suggest the year begins at the spring equinox due to scriptures in Enoch 80–82. The spring equinox occurs at the same time every year, but the calendar the Bible mentions was determined by the agricultural cycle and is not reliant on the equinox.

Notice **Deuteronomy 16:1** which mentions the month of Abib, the first month in the Hebrew calendar. The word *Abib* means to be tender or green and it was referring to the barley crop. That is how the Israelites determined when the first month of the year began—based on agriculture and not a set day like the spring equinox. Nowhere in the Old Testament is there any mention of the equinox starting the year.

The only complete version of Jubilees is in Ethiopian, although large fragments in Greek, Latin, and Syriac are also known. It is believed that it was originally written in Hebrew. The book was probably written between 250 BC and AD 100.

Among the problems with this book is the fact it was written hundreds of years after the last book of the Old Testament. This is a major issue with the book because the internal evidence in the book suggests it was written about 1,000 years after Moses. Remember, the book claims to have been dictated to Moses.

Jubilees also adds information that is not found in the sections of the biblical accounts that Jubilees addresses. For example, the book of Jubilees divides history into periods of 49 years or “jubilees.” This contradicts the Bible, which considers a “jubilee” to be 50 years and not 49 (**Leviticus 25:10–11**). There is some debate on whether or not the original book of Jubilees was corrupted pertaining to the issue of 49 or 50 years in a jubilee period.

The description of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jubilees has added features that are not mentioned in the Old Testament. The Pharisaic custom of pouring water on the altar at the Feast is not mentioned. Possibly because the Pharisees tried to enforce the adoption of this custom on the Sadducean priest-king who showed his contempt by allowing the water to run over his feet. A protest followed that led to a

massacre of Pharisees in the second century BC. This could be another hint as to when this book was written.

The book of Jubilees also provides extra information on observing the Sabbath that is nowhere found in the Old Testament. In Jubilees the following activities are prohibited on the Sabbath under penalty of death: traveling by land or sea, buying or selling, drawing water, carrying burdens out of the house, killing or striking, snaring beasts, birds, or fish, fasting, making war, and marital intercourse.

For example, in Jubilees 50:12–13 we read you can be put to death for doing these prohibited things on the Sabbath. Well, that is quite interesting because both Moses and Jesus fasted for 40 consecutive days (**Exodus 34:28; Matthew 4:2**). Obviously, there were several fasting Sabbaths included in those 40 days. Jesus was sinless, so Jubilees is flat out false in adding these requirements to the Sabbath commandment, which are not stated in the true Word of God.

This is even more concerning when we read scriptures like **Deuteronomy 4:2** and **Deuteronomy 12:32** which tell us we are not to add to God’s law or take away from it. The additional items mentioned in the book of Jubilees are adding to what God has said about the Sabbath. Yet another reason not to trust this book.

Another curious thing Jubilees relates is the idea that the two highest orders of angels were created circumcised (Jubilees 15:26–27). This is not addressed in the Bible. But this is evidence that the book of Jubilees was written around the time of, or influenced by, the book of 1 Enoch because angels in both of these books are endowed with sexual organs. This does not seem to be in tune with what the Bible has to say about the nature of angels. The angels in heaven are not sexual beings (**Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; and Luke 20:34–36**) and people in the resurrection will not marry.

The book of Jubilees suggests that animals could talk like humans up until the time Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. This is found in Jubilees 3:28. Again this is not at all mentioned in the book of Genesis.

Continued on the next page.

Other verses in Jubilees that suggest the writer of this book was familiar with 1 Enoch mention the angels of the Lord descending to the earth and they were known as the Watchers. This is found in Jubilees 4:15. Jubilees 5:1–10 also tells the story of the angels leaving heaven and making wives of human women and having children with them. These verses also say that the angels were then bound into the earth until the Day of Judgment. These are the same tall tales we find in the book of 1 Enoch. The Bible does not speak about angels being bound in the earth until the Day of Judgment.

Jubilees (Jubilees 10) also mentions unclean demons as being the spirits which came out of the children of the angels and the daughters of men. These spirits of the dead were then able to influence the sons of Noah in a negative way. Once again this is evidence of the time this book was probably written. During the Hellenistic period (300 BC to AD 300), many Jews and Christians were influenced by Greek beliefs and ideas which were contrary to the biblical text. The idea that spirits could leave the dead and influence people is a pagan Greek idea and is not found in the Old Testament canon.

Jubilees 10 goes on to explain that Satan (Mastema in the text) wants to use some of these spirits (a tenth) to help him do his work on earth, but the rest of the spirits will be consigned to some sort of hell to wait till judgment. The evil angels are also bound up in the earth, too, according to Jubilees 6. Once again, none of this foolishness is found in the Bible.

In Jubilees 6:16–17 we learn that the Feast of Weeks was set up to commemorate the fact God would not bring a flood on the earth again like He did at the time of Noah. This is not what is found in the Bible pertaining to the Feast of Weeks. There is no mention in the Bible this was the origin of the Feast of Weeks.

Another piece of evidence as to when the book was written can be found in the writer’s strong opposition to nudity (Jubilees 3:31; Jubilees 7:20). This was likely a response to some Jews embracing nude athletics due to the influence of Hellenism in around 175 BC (see 1 Maccabees 1:14–15; 2 Maccabees 4:9–17). The books

of Maccabees were written during this time frame when Greek thinking and ideas were greatly influencing the Jews. The writer of Jubilees was obviously against the Hellenistic influence impacting the Jews during this time. From the eighth century BC, the Greeks competed in their Olympic games in the nude.

One last item to think about if you think the book of Jubilees is “lost” scripture that should have been part of the Bible. In Jubilees 10:21 we read this:

“And they built it: forty and three years [1645–1688 AM] were they building it; its breadth was 203 bricks, and the height (of a brick) was the third of one; its height amounted to 5433 cubits and 2 palms, and (the extent of one wall was) thirteen stades (and of the other thirty stades).”

This scripture is talking about the construction of the Tower of Babel. A cubit was probably 18 inches although some say it could be up to 21 inches. Taking the idea it was 18 inches, the Tower of Babel would have been 8,694 feet high. That is about 1.6 miles high. The world’s tallest building today is only 2,717 feet high. That would make the Tower of Babel almost three times higher than what we can build today. Other tall buildings from antiquity like the pyramids were less than 500 feet high.

A stade could be anywhere between 150 and 210 meters. This leads some to believe the width of this tower would be about 1.5 miles and the length of the tower about 3.5 miles, roughly. Once again, the enormity of this structure boggles the mind. None of these measurements are mentioned in the account about the tower in Genesis. It just does not make logical sense that men could have built things this large thousands of years ago. Unless you believe the 450-foot-tall giants (size of giants mentioned in book of Enoch—some even claim larger) were there to move the building materials around. That is one theory some who believe in these pseudepigraphal books are biblical would hold.

In Jubilees 1:29–30 we read about an angel taking information from what is implied as a history of the world from creation to the coming Kingdom of God on the earth. Some interpret this as implying that God already has predetermined how history will go. The Bible does not imply such a deterministic pattern for human history.

Yet another concerning bit of information in the book of Jubilees concerns God’s relationship to Gentiles. In Jubilees 15:30–32, the text suggests God does not want Gentiles to be His people. In fact, He uses “spirits” (likely angels) to lead them away

from God. Jubilees 2:31 also implies that God only wants Israel to keep the Sabbath and nobody else.

But when we check out the Old Testament, we find God was open to Gentiles following his law and becoming part of Israel if they did so (**Exodus 12:48; Numbers 9:14; Numbers 15:14–16**). The Old Testament is also clear that all people were going to be blessed by Abraham (**Genesis 12:1–3**) therefore including Gentiles in the blessings that were coming from God. This is further evidence that the writer of Jubilees was likely a Jew writing prior to the first coming of Jesus. Remember one of the major issues the early Jewish Christians had was realizing God was opening salvation for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. **Isaiah 56:1–8** also makes it clear God has no problem with Gentiles keeping His Sabbaths also.

Finally, there can be no doubt what the New Testament teaches us about God’s relationship with Gentiles. Jesus makes it clear in **Matthew 28:19–20** that the message is for all people regardless of nationality. **Acts 10–11** also supports the New Covenant message that God is now working with all people. Jubilees does not support the Bible message on this subject. In fact, it contradicts it, which should help us realize it is not Scripture.

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Judgment

Continued from page 1

ing to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church” (**1 Corinthians 6:2–4**).

What was Paul referring to? Well, John explains further in **Revelation 20:4**:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

It is obvious then that we must be able to judge. I find it interesting and disconcerting to do a word search for judgment with various translations.

Here are the numbers found:

KJV – 294

FV – 274

NKJV – 190

RSV – 173

ESV – 170

NASB – 158

NIV – 121

What are we to make of the dramatic editing out of such a crucial part of Scripture? I’ll leave that to you to “judge.”

Is it not our whole purpose in this life to learn to make proper judgments of right and wrong and to exercise wisdom? God is putting us through the paces now to train us to be leaders, teachers, kings, and priests (**Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6**)—members of the very God Family—ruling and managing angels and men. Our job is to learn to do it right.

Judging righteously requires some

kind of plan, a way to look at things. May I propose a six-step way to judge? You may come up with more or a different listing.

First on my list is: **Do not judge by outward appearance**. In our society today, it seems the order of the day to do just that. I might add, include age as well.

First, how did God want a leader chosen? This goes back to Israel wanting a king like all the nations roundabouts had. Warnings were given to no avail.

“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his face, nor on his height, because I have refused him, for the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (**1 Samuel 16:7**).

It is the inner person, the real “you,” God looks at. Does this not dove-tail

with the Sermon on the Mount where Christ identifies the location of sin’s origination, and James as well?

Paul, in a pastoral letter to Timothy, lays out guidelines for various positions in the church as well as how we should comport ourselves.

“Having an outward appearance of godliness, but denying the power of true godliness. But as for you, turn away from all these. For from men such as these come those who are worming their way into houses, and are gaining control over empty-headed gullible women given over to various sins, being driven by all kinds of lust” (**2 Timothy 3:5–6**).

Refer to **Matthew 23** to see how Christ saw this flaw in judgment in the ruling class in Judea. They put on huge pretense and show.

In **John 7:23–24**, Christ is at the Feast of Tabernacles with yet another

opportunity to teach on this subject:

“If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with Me because I made a man entirely whole on the Sabbath? judge not according to appearance but judge righteous judgment.”

They based how they judged by their traditions and what they saw.

Not to leave the ladies out of this problem Christians must overcome, Peter exhorts the ladies in **1 Peter 3:3–4**:

“Whose adorning, let it not be the external adornment of braiding the hair, or wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in costly clothing; But let your adornment be the inward person of the heart, manifested in the incorruptible jewel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great value in God’s sight.”

Consider the writers of the New Testament who reached back over the prior 4,000 years to teach their “students” (and us, by extension) how to apply those life lessons of old as they/we go about our lives making decisions (judging), considering biblical history. The condition of the heart was what God looked at then and since.

Reflect on what we have presented so far and look at the world around you. How much has really changed? As far as technology, much, but in the human condition, very little.

It would be good at this juncture to establish where judgment fits in the scheme of things godly. The book of **Proverbs 1:1–4** tells us something important:

“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, righteousness, and judgment, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young man.”

The proverbs are written for our instruction in four major areas—wisdom, righteousness, judgment, and equity. It would seem reasonable to think that a wise and righteous Christian would attain to proper judgment and equity. The 31 chapters of Proverbs are a guide to proper judgment as we go about our daily lives as Christians, and revelation is the result of poor or no judgment by mankind as a whole.

The court system, as an example, is rife with respecter-of-person crime, secondary to position in society. **Proverbs 24:23–25** instructs us:

“These things also are for the wise: **To have respect of persons in judgment is not good.** He who says to the wicked, ‘You are righteous,’ the people shall curse him and nations shall abhor him. But to those who rebuke him, it shall be a delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.”

And what’s more, if we will become judges, should we not **know what was expected of judges in Israel as a guide for us?**

“And he said to the judges, ‘Take heed what you do, for you do not judge for man, but for the LORD who is with you when you render judgment. And now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful and act wisely, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of a bribe’” (**2 Chronicles**

**19:6–7**).

Please note that, as in Proverbs, wisdom and equity are mentioned together, and bribery classically is used to buy influence to respect a person in a compromising situation.

There is a parallel concept in the use of diverse weights. Let me explain. In **Proverbs 20:10, 23** we read:

“Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.... Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.”

There was a practice frowned upon using extra weights or less, depending on selling or buying merchandise, to gain advantage. This fits into equity in our judgment of people in an even-handed manner. Recall in **Matthew 23** how Christ speaks of the weightier matters of the law. Each aspect is important and requires our diligence. Moving to **1 Corinthians 1:10–13**, we see Paul giving them “what for” with their respecting individuals. Respecting individuals in the church—giving loyalty to this man or that—beyond measure can affect judgment and cause division. Have we not seen that in the Churches of God time and time again? Paul exhorts us/them to realize to whom we should look to, that is the Godhead, Christ and our Father. Reviewing how each Christian is part of the greater Body of Christ in the church, as Paul lays it out, can be helpful. Each has a job or role to play, and it is important for the individual’s growth and the collective Body’s well-being. This divisiveness was not exclusive to the Corinthian church because we find Paul exhorting the Romans and Galatians.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (**Romans 16:17–18**).

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies” (**Galatians 5:19–20**).

“Seditions” is the word to consider. It is *dichostasia* in the Greek, meaning dissension or division. So far, it seems that judgment in the church is essential to maintaining a unity of the Spirit, but let us continue our exploration of this subject. Is there a caste system in society? Do we treat people by some system of differentiation? Pick an area—looks, clothing, race, country of origin, wealth or little means, politics, and on and on. Can we live in the world and not be affected by these things? As Christians, we must draw the line and not cross over. It is for each of us to study God’s Word and let the Holy Spirit guide us to a proper respect of ourselves and others in and out of the church. If you sense an incompleteness so far, it is because, so far, we have only two pieces of a puzzle.

There is another troubling decision-making process that has caused much pain.

The next aspect to consider is to **not judge a matter before you have sufficient information**. Just the facts, Ma’am. Decisions on the spur of the

moment can bring long-term regret. “If I had known that I would....”

“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a broken spirit who can bear? The heart of the prudent gets knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (**Proverbs 18:13–15**).

Proverbs is telling us to decide a matter with a gathering of knowledge/facts. This is something that takes time, not a “rush to judgment.”

Answering a matter before you hear it fully is the impulse that wells up inside your mind, urging you to make a decision or judgment right now. But wait, hear every matter in its entirety.

“In the multitude of people is the king’s honor, but in the lack of people is the destruction of the prince. He who is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he who is hasty of spirit exalts folly” (**Proverbs 14:28–29**).

Have you ever had someone tell you something, and then you act on their information, only to find out later by another person that the original information was missing key points?

Failing to “get all the facts” also includes overlooking certain facts, minimizing certain facts, or over-emphasizing other facts, and in general failing to discern what is truth and what is fiction.

The next point is closely tied to getting the facts, and that is **going to the source and verifying information**. In our daily lives, do we take the care to trust but verify? If we hear something about a person, do we accept it as fact? Does the concept of gossip come to mind?

“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter” (**Proverbs 11:13**).

Why would a faithful person conceal a matter? In the context of this discussion, it would be to wait and make sure of the facts.

Forgiving principles need to be considered as we decide what to say or not say about a matter, as **Proverb 17:9** illustrates:

“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter alienates friends.”

Motives come into play here. Once we have the facts, what then do we do with them? Is our motive and attitude of love as we judge and consider?

Another aspect of getting the facts is to never suppose motive and then act on the presumed motive you “think” the other person has for doing thus and such. If in doubt, ASK! **Use the Matthew 18 principle of going to your brother/sister to clarify the issue**. Every action has a motive behind it. I doubt many of us are mind-readers, so it behooves us to ask what was meant by a said action or what was said. Recall offences will come. Several years ago, my wife and I were relaxing on the couch. She was in the midst of a crocheting project whereupon I made what I thought to be a complementary statement. She completely misunderstood me and took offense. “What do you mean?” I then clarified my statement and further told her that I liked this particular project and the skills it took to accomplish it. Peace reigned again. But in this little exchange, can you see that getting the

facts gave proper judgment a chance? It is human nature to fill in what we don’t know about an issue with good or bad, easily providing an opportunity to misjudge a matter. Let us go back to Scripture for a classic example of acting without the facts.

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, ‘Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me.’ And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he took them from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw the calf, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD’” (**Exodus 32:1–5**).

The people presumed abandonment by God and Moses. They took it upon themselves to then mix worship with a pagan deity and presume God would accept their interpretation of proper and acceptable worship. Lacking all the facts and acting as they did bring us to the consequences of their improper judgment.

Three thousand men died by the hand of the loyal Levites (**Exodus 32:28**). This brings up a parallel lesson in the New Testament of a delay in the Second Coming. The brief account is found in **Matthew 24:45–51** and **Luke 12:42–48**. The consequences for Israel and the church were and are very serious. Gathering the facts with a large dose of patience can protect us from our penchant to jump the gun or put off till tomorrow what should be dealt with today, be it in personal relationships or proper worship of our God and Father. The solution?

Judgment is such an important aspect of Christian living that it requires time, patience, and continual study of God’s Word. By way of review, the previous suggested methods to apply to our judgments are:

Do not judge by outward appearance.

Do not be a respecter of persons.

Do not judge before you have the facts.

Go to the source before judging.

The last two things to apply are to **seek God’s Will in love and then use the godly principles and laws in the Scriptures**. How do we do this? Is it enough to verify a minister’s message as the Bereans did, or is there more? It might begin with approaching God in prayer to ask for wisdom via the Holy Spirit, and then open our Bibles daily. If we are to have an answer for the hope within us, does it not follow that in that study we internalize God’s guidance through His Word? It is in that internalization of books such as Proverbs that enables us to grow in grace and knowledge as our heart changes.

**Continued on next page.**

In order to judge righteously, we need experience living day to day, applying the two principles written above. Why do I say this, you might ask?

This brings us to why Christ came to Earth as He did. Yes, He came to reveal the Father; yes, He came to be our sacrificial lamb for the sins of mankind, to be the First Fruit of the Resurrection, but there was yet another reason...to “walk a mile in our shoes.” Hebrews explains to us the walk Christ did:

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (**Hebrews 2:18**).

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin” (**Hebrews 4:15**).

As a physical human being, Christ experienced times of judgment as we do. Part of that came out of temptations and His responses.

Additionally, we might add:

“For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (**John 3:17**).

Judgment follows.

To test whether we are using righteous judgment, let’s ask ourselves the following questions:

Do I know enough of the facts to make a judgment?

Am I being impartial and unbiased in my judgment?

Does my judgment ultimately help the other person?

Is my judgment made in an attitude of love?

Have I sought God’s will and guidance in my judgment?

Is my judgment based on godly principles and laws?

To apply these principles, we must apply them to ourselves, yes ourselves, as difficult as that may be. Honest appraisal of our way of life; is that not what we do leading up to Passover? Much more could be written on this subject; hopefully, this article has given you pause to reflect on it.

# Did Anti-Jewishness Shape Early Christian Thought?

By HORANE SMITH



In an age of Jewish sensitivities, we’ve heard from time to time about anti-Jewishness or, in the modern vernacular, anti-semitism, but this is nothing new. It may come as a surprise to many people, but it dates as far back as the first-century church.

Today, the term antisemitism is widely used to describe hatred against the Jews. Antisemitism is still alive and well today. **Ted Deutch**, the CEO of **The American Jewish Committee** said recently, “If, before October 7 [2023], antisemitism was a slow-burning fire, it has now become a five-alarm emergency that requires all of us to douse its flames.”

Where did all this hatred begin? Why was it allowed to fester into what it is today in our modern world, with all its advanced technology, a new age of enlightenment, tolerance among minorities, and so on? The historical records speak for themselves; when it was not Roman power oppressing the Jews, it was some followers of early Christianity, including the very men responsible for developing Christian thought and doctrines—the church fathers. It’s not often we hear of their role in anti-Jewishness, but to deny it would be hypocritical.

The modern term *antisemitism*, used to describe hatred against the Jews, was coined by a **German Journalist Wilhelm Marr** in 1879, and it was first widely printed in the **Zwangslose Antisemitische Hefte and Neue Freie Presse** in 1881. It was also incorporated into the English language in 1881.

## How did antisemitism begin?

According to the *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, “Antisemitism has its roots in the anti-Judaism of ancient times and early Christianity. Many stereotypes and conspiracies about Jews can be traced back to early and medieval Christian teachings and practices. Early Christians taught that Christianity had replaced Judaism and that the Jews were no longer God’s chosen people. They claimed that Jews were stubborn and blind to the truth because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. These ideas shaped Christians’ mistrust and animosity toward Jews for many centuries.”

In the first century, AD, the Christian church was connected to its Jewish roots. Jesus practiced that throughout

His mission on Earth. However, once Christianity and Judaism began to take separate paths (started in the first century and gained momentum around AD 135 after the **Bar Kochba Revolt** that was crushed by Emperor Hadrian), the gap became wider and wider. Judaism was considered a legal religion under Roman law, while Christianity, a new religion, was illegal. Christianity did not become legal until 313 under **the Edict of Milan**.

It was before the end of the first century that we can see anti-Jewish attitudes starting to manifest themselves. The attitudes were nurtured in the ensuing centuries by several factors: theological differences, competition between church and synagogue, the drive for converts, misunderstanding of Jewish beliefs and practices, and alleged Jewish hostility towards Christians.

The growing movement that the Christian church had become “the new Israel” started to gain momentum. The “new Israel” now had to define itself. What did it really believe? Christian thinkers from AD 80 onwards started to spend a great deal of time writing defenses and arguments against heresies; applying proof texts from Scripture to fit the new theology, and cementing the beliefs of **the new religion**. The belief was Christ came to begin a new religion; therefore, the Law was no longer in effect and all the Hebraic practices were no longer needed. Hence, a new day of worship, Sunday, abandonment of God’s festivals, dietary laws, etc. These writings were called **Apologies**, and the early church fathers were called **Apologists**. But, in their zeal to justify early church doctrine, the Apologists inevitably vilified Jewish teachings.

Is it any wonder that the church today hardly resembles the first-century church in its teachings? Christmas, Easter, heaven, hell, immortal soul, Trinity, Sunday worship, rapture, once saved always saved—none of which was first century teaching. It would appear that its two biggest festivals, Christmas and Easter, are pagan rooted and came at the expense of God’s “appointed times” or festivals because they were deemed as “Jewish.” We hear of so many attempts by the early church leaders to fight paganism, and perhaps they did, but how come we end up with the biggest Christian festival steeped in pagan practices? Is it a fair claim that “this new religion” wanted to distant itself so far from the Hebraic practices that they readily

embraced pagan rituals to build a new but unbiblical theology?

One biblical historian notes, “The people to whom Jesus addressed His message and to whom He belonged, rejected all Christian claims concerning Him. By continuing to keep Torah, the Jews threatened the very truth, if not the very existence, of Christianity. If Judaism remained valid and the only path to God, then Christianity was invalid.”

Another said, “The Church Fathers had a very logical solution to this problem...their apologetics would deny the legitimacy of the Jews and Judaism. A part of the Church promoted itself as the new Israel, and *the other Israel had to be discredited*. And it did so by citing the Jews own scriptures against them, not just on specific issues, but on the fundamental questions of Israel’s status as God’s chosen people. In the process, the Christian religion became saturated with anti-Jewish sentiments.”

It’s a fact that the primitive church followed the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, and kept the appointed times or festivals of God (Leviticus 23) and the dietary laws, which were central to Jewish worship. Shortly after Judaism and Jewish Christians parted ways after the failed **Bar Kokhba Revolt** around 135 CE under **Roman Emperor Hadrian**, a gradual shift started to steer Christianity away from its Jewish roots. For example, in later years, Sunday became a day of worship for many while other Christians kept both Sunday and Saturday. Why such a move though when there’s nothing in the Bible that sanctions such a change?

Did attitude towards the Jews, what we call antisemitism today, have any influence in the unbiblical change from Saturday to Sunday, Christmas instead of the Feast of Tabernacles (one of God’s seven annual festivals or holy days), Easter instead of Passover, abandoning the dietary laws, and eating anything they feel, going to heaven instead of the Kingdom of God on Earth, etc.? Early Christian thinkers, some of whom were responsible for the development of doctrines, didn’t hide their disdain for some Jewish teachings and practices. Did such a stance contribute in any way?

## Biblical claims for Sunday worship

There have been claims the shift from the Hebraic roots of the primitive church began in the first century. One of the often-used texts is **Acts 20:7**,

where it is said Paul started to worship on Sunday. A closer examination of that text will show that Paul had no such service. It was merely a Saturday night meeting, so much so we read in **verse 9** that one young man, Eutychus, fell asleep and plunged to his death from the third floor. Christians familiar with Hebraic practices would know that it was customary after the Sabbath to have a (love) meal after coming together. Paul was doing that, hoping “to depart on the morrow, [Sunday].” It was not a Sunday service.

We’ll come to the question of the church fathers later, but before we do that, let’s look at other claims that the change from Hebraic teachings began in the first century. This will lead to a clearer understanding that the changes from the Hebraic roots came much later. By that time, in the second century, anti-Jewishness began to fester, especially when some well-known church fathers began to make utterances about the **Jewish deicide** (Christ-killers).

Apart from claiming that the new day of worship came on the day Christ was said to be resurrected (Sunday), for which there is no clear scripture, there are other biblical texts used to justify the change—mainly the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, which is always on a Sunday, and **1 Corinthians 16:1**, which is used to show that people gathered for worship on Sundays. In case of the former, the **Day of Pentecost** was NOT a Sunday service as many Christians have been led to believe; in fact, it’s Hebraic teaching from the Old Testament regarding God’s holy days/festivals or *appointed times* (Heb., *moedim*: **Genesis 1:14** and **Leviticus 23**). The apostles were gathered to observe the **Feast of Firstfruits** (or **Pentecost**), an annual Sabbath, not a Sunday church service. Yes, it was the birth of the New Testament Church, but the gathering was in obedience to the command for God’s people to appear before Him on His *appointed times*.

On the other hand, **1 Corinthians 16:1** is not about a Sunday service where the collection plate is passed around during the service. Read the text carefully. Paul told the brethren in **Galatia** and **Macedonia** that he was collecting gifts for some poor saints so they should store them up for him to collect when he comes so “there be no gatherings when I come.” He says nothing about church service or passing around collection plates; they were to have the gifts, not necessarily

money, so he would stop by on the first day of the week to pick them up. Notice in verse 8, Paul talks about waiting at Ephesus for Pentecost. What does that tell you? Paul was still observing the Jewish or Hebraic practices. Was Paul observing Sunday and Sabbath? No, wasn't he the same one in Acts who kept the Sabbath?

The point here is the Bible does not tell us anywhere that Jesus or the apostles changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Jesus was on Earth for forty days after His death, and that would have been the time to make the changes; instead, **Luke 24:52–53** tells us, “And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually **in the temple** [my emphasis], praising and blessing God. Amen.” What does that tell you? The apostles continued to worship in the temple (or synagogue), praising and blessing God. What did they use to do in the temple? They appeared before God in obedience to the Sabbath command. It was also Jesus' custom to worship on the Sabbath.

### The Didache

This brings us to the early church fathers and how they viewed the Hebraic teachings of the Bible, the Jews, and whether Christianity should chart its own course as a new religion.

With no scripture authorizing Sunday worship, believers have turned their attention to the practices that developed later in Christianity, likely late into the second century and onwards.

There is an early document called the **Didache** (the subject in a previous article in *The International News*), said to have been written late in the first century or early in the second century that talks about Christians coming together to worship on the Lord's Day. This was the conclusion of the article entitled, *The Didache's take on the Lord's Day and the Eucharist*:

**How should we see the Didache then as it relates to these two modern-day teachings—the Lord's Day and the Eucharist? The evidence is clear that it cannot be taken for granted that it's an all-clear-cut proposition that the Didache indicates that the concept of the Lord's Day being Sunday came as early as the first century. First, no one can say for certain that the Didache is a first-century document, and second, the insertion of the word “day” to read Lord's Day robs the phrase of authenticity or accurate translation, because “On the Lords of the Lords...,” the literal translation of the phrase, seems to have no link with a day, or a day of worship for that matter.**

### The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus

Numerous letters were written by early church leaders, some branded heretical, others thought to be canonical material, and yet others thought to be in defense of Christianity or apologetics. These letters played a major role in the development of Christian thought. Sadly, and unfortunately, many of them resorted to attacking the Jews for killing Jesus the Christ (the Deicide), hence a need to separate themselves from “Christ-killers” or

“the ultimate evil,” as some of them described the Jews. There's a long list of apologetics and early church leaders who did not mince their words about how they felt about Jews.

One of the earliest Christian apologetic statements came in the second century treatise, **Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus**. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (page 201) says, “A late 2nd century apology addressed to a certain Diognetus who is otherwise unknown. Diognetus was a tutor of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, who admired him for his freedom from superstition and sound educational advice (**Meditations 1.6**), but he is not likely to be the recipient, or even the assumed recipient, of this apology from around AD 200. The work itself survived (with other writings ascribed to Justin) only in a 13th century manuscript, formerly at Strasbourg but burned during the invasion of 1870.”

This letter is significant, being one of, if not the earliest, from a Christian apologist. It openly opposed the law and anything Jewish, especially the Sabbath and feast days. As the Bible was not canonized yet, this document was widely used in the new Christian movements. The author calls the Jews “superstitious,” and that the Sabbath and God's holy days are “utterly ridiculous and unworthy of notice.”

Chapter 4 of the epistle says, “But as to their scrupulosity concerning food, and their superstition as respects the **Sabbaths**, and their boasting about circumcision, and their fancies about fasting and the new moons, which are utterly ridiculous and unworthy of notice—I do not think that you require to learn anything from me.”

### The Epistle of Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas was another second-century document, like the Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus, that opened a trend against anything Jewish. The Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter 3, says the Jewish fasts are not true fasts, not acceptable to God. Chapter 4 says Antichrist is at hand: let us therefore avoid Jewish errors. Chapter 5 says the new covenant, founded on the sufferings of Christ, tends to our salvation, but to the Jews' destruction.

“Incense is a vain abomination unto Me, and your new moons **and sabbaths** I cannot endure [quoting Isaiah 1:13]. **He has therefore abolished these things, that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human oblation....** I suppose, then, you are sufficiently convinced that the Christians properly abstain from the vanity and error common [to both Jews and Gentiles], and from the busybody spirit and vain boasting of the Jews.”

### Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr was another of the well-respected (to this day) apologists who didn't have kind words for the Jews. The influence of Justin Martyr, back then and today, speaks for itself. Yet, he too followed the trend of his predecessors in denouncing anything Jewish.

In 145 CE, about ten years after the **Bar Kochba Revolt**, Justin Martyr (who was later killed by the Romans) wrote an apology about a dialogue

with a **Jew named Trypho**. He used Bible proof texts to prove the Jews were originally selected by God because they were an *unspiritual group; they needed additional laws*. He slammed the Jews for rejecting Jesus, for killing Him, and leading people away from salvation. Justin claimed the destruction of the Temple was punishment for Jewish betrayal. Justin Martyr's writings became incorporated into early Christian thought, and little was it known then, he was sowing seeds of anti-Jewishness and subsequently pushing Christianity away from its Hebraic roots.

### Hippolytus

The second century was significant. What we see unfolding during that period was some fundamentals of Christian thought were being initiated by men who, although with sincere intentions, used flawed reasoning and interpretations of the Holy Scriptures. They wanted to be different and not be associated with the chosen of God because they believed erroneously that the Jews crucified the Messiah.

The prominent **church father Hippolytus** felt this way, too. “Now then, incline thine ear to me and hear my words, and give heed, thou Jew. Many a time does thou boast thyself, in that thou didst condemn Jesus of Nazareth to death, and didst give him vinegar and gall to drink; and thou dost vaunt thyself because of this. Come, therefore, and let us consider together whether perchance thou dost boast unrighteously, O Israel, and whether thy small portion of vinegar and gall has not brought down this fearful threatening upon thee and whether this is not the cause of thy present condition involved in these myriad of troubles.”

### Marcion of Sinope

In his 1993 book, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate*, Nicholls William said, “In the early second century AD, the heretic Marcion of Sinope (85 – c.160 AD) declared that the Jewish God was a different God, inferior to the Christian one, and rejected the Jewish scriptures as the product of a lesser deity.... Marcion's teachings, which were extremely popular, rejected Judaism not only as an incomplete revelation, but as a false one as well, but, at the same time, allowed less blame to be placed on the Jews personally for having not recognized Jesus, since, in Marcion's world-view, Jesus was not sent by the lesser Jewish God, but by the supreme Christian God, whom the Jews had no reason to recognize.... In combating Marcion, orthodox apologists conceded that Judaism was an incomplete and inferior religion to Christianity, while also defending the Jewish scriptures as canonical” (pages 178–187).

Just about all the first century writing against Jewish practices and customs quoted Isaiah 1:13 out of context when God told Israel He hates their new moon and Sabbaths. God was not saying he hated the very Sabbaths He created; He was telling Israel He hated the manner in which “your” Sabbaths were being observed, or the hypocrisy associated with their observance of them. It had nothing to do with abolishing them!

### More Second-Century Church Fathers

**Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon** (c. AD 177) declared, “Jews are disinherited from the grace of God.”

**Tertullian** (AD 160–230), in his treatise, “Against the Jews,” announced that God had rejected the Jews in favor of the Christians.

**Origen** (185–254 CE) echoed the growing hostility: “On account of their unbelief and other insults which they heaped upon Jesus, the Jews will not only suffer more than others in the judgment which is believed to impend over the world, but have even already endured such sufferings. For what nation is in exile from their own metropolis, and from the place sacred to the worship of their fathers, save the Jews alone? And the calamities they have suffered because they were a most wicked nation, which although guilty of many other sins, yet has been punished so severely for none as for those that were committed against our Jesus.”

**Hilary of Poitiers** (AD 291–371) wrote, “Jews are a perverse people accursed by God forever... a people who had always persisted in iniquity and out of its abundance of evil glorified in wickedness.”

**Gregory of Nyssa** (died AD 394), Bishop of Cappadocia: “the Jews are a brood of vipers, haters of goodness... advocates of the Devil, slanderers, scoffers, men whose minds are in darkness.”

**St. Jerome** (AD 347–407) describes the Jews as “serpents, wearing the image of Judas, their psalms and prayers are the braying of donkeys.”

In the early fourth century, **Eusebius** wrote that the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures were for Christians and not the Jews, and the curses were for the Jews. He argued that the church was the continuation of the Old Testament and thus superseded Judaism. The young church declared itself to be the true Israel, or “Israel according to the Spirit,” heir to the divine promises.

**John Chrysostom, the Bishop of Antioch**, lived in the fourth century. He was one of the most powerful orators of his time and earned the title of “the man with the golden tongue.” His writings are used in seminaries today, which speak a lot to the current beliefs of modern Christianity. This was what he said about the Jews:

“The synagogue is not only a brothel and a theatre; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. No Jew adores God.... Jews are inveterate murderers, possessed by the devil, their debauchery and drunkenness give them the manners of the pig. They kill and maim one another.... The Jews have fallen into a condition lower than the vilest animal.... The synagogue is a curse, obstinate in her error.... Jews are abandoned by God and for the crime of deicide, there is no expiation possible.... The Jews sacrifice their children to Satan.... they are worse than wild beasts.”

In a work known as **The Paschal Homily**, the following observations were made: “*Against those who fast the fast of the Jews [Atonement] and against the Jews themselves. Delivered after the other homily has been given and five days before the Jewish fast*

**Continued on page 13.**

# Psychotherapy for Christians

By JAMES FIRE



## Symptoms

Proverbs 11:14 reminds us, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

During a documentary interview, a woman described specific symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Her awareness came from her experiences in domestic abuse. Ironically, I realized that I too had the same symptoms. This led me to seek help from a mental health care professional, an expert in treating PTSD. After a year-long process of therapy, I learned to effectively deal with it.

Afterwards, I realized that obtaining mental health therapy raises some interesting questions for Christians.

Does seeking such therapy imply a lack of faith in God?

Is seeking therapy from a mental health professional acceptable as part of our Christian walk?

If a mental health care professional is used, what should Christian’s consider?

What are some red flags and, more importantly, what questions should be asked before therapy begins?

Is it acceptable to take medications for mental health issues?

Finally, what should the overall goals be for mental health therapy in light of biblical teachings?

We’ll explore these and more.

## Examples

First Corinthians 10:6 states: “Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”

Within the pages of the Bible, we find examples of those who faced emotional trauma. In modern language, they would be defined as “mental or emotional disorders.” We read how they were resolved through various means—such as spiritual intervention, community support, prayer, repentance, faith, and at times, physical rest or nourishment.

Moses was tasked with leading the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. This was a 40-year

assignment that took its toll on Moses, who suffered from despair and ministry burnout. Numbers 11:15 exemplifies how Moses was feeling: “If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me....” God dealt with Moses’ despair by instructing him to organize 70 elders to assist him.

Elijah experienced depression and deep despair. Queen Jezebel mandated that Elijah be killed and he ran for his life. This account is found in 1 Kings 19:1–18. Elijah had suicidal thoughts, as we read in verse 4: “He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’”

We see that God intervened and provided loving physical care to him through food, rest, and sleep. In verses 11–12, God dealt gently with Elijah, which eventually led Elijah back to his mission (verses 15–18).

David experienced anxiety and panic. He expressed them in Psalm 55, 56, 61, and 94. He feared his enemies and betrayal, as in Psalm 55:4 states, “Terror of death has fallen upon me.” His approach to overcome this was through focusing on God’s protection and faithfulness through heartfelt prayer and meditation on God’s truth.

Job was another who experienced emotional turmoil from loss and physical suffering. He expressed suicide ideation in Job 3:11: “Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?” Again in Job 6:8–9 we read, “Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut off my life!” Despite Job’s suffering, he maintained faith in God and didn’t curse him (Job 1:22; 2:10).

The resolution came when God granted Job his request to speak directly to him. Job’s emotional, relational, and physical issues were healed. He found strength through suffering.

King Nebuchadnezzar experienced madness, psychosis, and demonic affliction. We read the account in Daniel 4:28–37. This resulted in animalistic behavior, loss of dignity and identity (verse 33). We see in the next verse that he credits God: “At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sani-

ty was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.” God mercifully returned to Nebuchadnezzar his understanding and kingship.

Jeremiah is noted for having to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and grief. Jeremiah 20:14 records his state of mind: “Cursed be the day I was born!” Verses 7–18 record his complaint to God, his struggles of being rejected, public humiliation, weariness, and “terror on every side!” Yet, Jeremiah embraces the hope in God’s mercy and sovereignty (Lamentations 3:21–24). “I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’”

Mark 5:1–20 tells the story of the man of Gerasenes who was demon-possessed. His behavior included self-harm through cutting himself with stones, uncontrollable behaviors with supernatural strength. Jesus intervened by casting the demons out, resulting in the man having a sound mind. Verse 15 states, “When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind” Jesus told this man to share his story with others that they may know of God’s mercy.

Perhaps one of the most famous examples of emotional turmoil is the guilt and shame that Peter expressed when he denied Jesus three times. We read the account in Matthew 26:69–75 and John 21:15–19. Peter expressed tremendous remorse as he bitterly wept. He was restored when Jesus asked him three times if he loved him, once for each time Peter denied Jesus. As Peter acknowledged his love, it was followed with a command from Jesus to Peter. John 14:15 states, “If you love me, keep my commands.”

In both the Old and New Testaments, God was instrumental in dealing with emotional trauma and providing resolution. In addition, important lessons were learned and faith increased from them.

**Reasons**

Proverbs 19:20 states, “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.”

What therapies are not: Behavioral therapy is not inherently wrong—it can be a helpful tool when used with discernment. However, from a biblical perspective, it becomes damaging when it...

- Treats symptoms without addressing sin;
- Relies on human strength over divine grace;
- Conflicts with God’s moral standards;
- Misplaces hope in human wisdom rather than God’s truth.

Understanding the basis of modern-day therapies is vital in comparing them to biblical teachings. It is more than mere symptom relief. It can serve as emotional healing that is grounded in truth along with sound psychological principles. We will explore some of those principles and compare how they relate to biblical teachings.

*Restoration of the Image of God in Humanity (Imago Dei).* The goal of this approach is that individuals reflect the image of God more clearly in thought, behavior, and relationship. Sin and trauma distort our identity, but Christian therapy focuses on healing that allows the person to return a life aligned with God’s original intent. Healing helps restore dignity, purpose, and spiritual clarity.

*Healing of the Heart and Mind Through Christ.* This approach recognizes the fallen nature of humanity and the brokenness that results. Therapy is guided by Scripture to lead the individual to healing through God’s truth, grace, and presence. The goals are to promote healing from emotional wounds, anxiety, depression, and trauma through Christ-centered intervention.

*Renewed Mind and Biblical Thinking.* This aims to cultivate a biblical worldview and mindset through cognitive and spiritual renewal. The goals are to replace lies, distortions, or ungodly beliefs with biblical truth.

*Spiritual Growth and Discipleship* encourages spiritual maturity, deeper faith, and obedience to Christ through the therapeutic journey. Mental health struggles can be opportunities for sanctification. Christian counseling should help clients deepen their walk with Christ, trust Him more fully, and

Misuse	Description	Biblical Concern	Scripture
Ignoring Sin and the Soul	Behavioral therapy often focuses solely on external behavior and neurological patterns, without addressing sin, the heart, or spiritual condition.	Human problems are not only behavioral but spiritual in origin. Treating sin as a mere “dis-order” can deny personal responsibility.	Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; Mark 7:20–23
Redefining Morality	Behaviors are judged by societal norms or emotional well-being rather than God’s standard of righteousness.	What may be “functionally effective” behaviorally (e.g., self-assertion, sexual behaviors) may be sinful biblically.	Proverbs 14:12; Isaiah 5:20
Reinforcing Self-Centeredness	Emphasis on self-esteem, personal happiness, or behavioral success can feed pride or self-idolatry.	Scripture calls for humility, self-denial, and Christ-centered identity, not self-exaltation.	Luke 9:23; Philippians 2:3–5
Ignoring the Role of the Holy Spirit	Behavioral therapy often assumes that human effort alone can achieve lasting change.	True transformation comes through the Holy Spirit and God’s Word, not just techniques.	Galatians 5:22–25; John 15:5
Promoting Behavior Modification Without Heart Change	Surface-level behavior can be modified while the heart remains unchanged.	God looks at the heart; mere outward conformity is not enough.	Matthew 23:27–28; 1 Samuel 16:7
Rejecting the Sufficiency of Scripture	Behavioral therapies may be treated as ultimate solutions, sidelining biblical counsel.	Scripture claims sufficiency for addressing the deepest human problems.	2 Timothy 3:16–17; Psalm 119:105

develop spiritual disciplines.

*Healthy Relationships and Reconciliation* promotes forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and healthy interpersonal boundaries. A Christian goal of therapy includes the restoration of relationships—especially family, church, and community—rooted in love, truth, and grace. Therapy should help clients live out the relational aspects of the gospel.

*Freedom from Bondage and Sin* helps individuals break free from patterns of sin, addiction, or demonic strongholds. Christian therapy deals not only with psychological symptoms but spiritual oppression, generational cycles, and sin. A central aim is to lead the person into freedom through confession, repentance, and spiritual deliverance when needed.

*Hope and Purpose through God’s Plan* instills hope and a sense of divine purpose despite past or present suffering. Hopelessness is common in mental health struggles. Christian counseling restores hope by rooting one’s life in God’s sovereign plan, reminding clients that pain can have purpose in God’s economy.

phasizes the autonomous self; individuals determine their own meaning, values, and identity.

- *Determinism* uses behaviors explained by biology, past experiences, or the environment (e.g., Freudian psychoanalysis).
- *Humanism* focuses on self-actualization and human potential; believes people are inherently good and capable of healing themselves.
- *Moral Relativism* relies on ethics and morality defined by the culture or individual —there is no absolute truth.
- *Reductionism* defines mental health to behavior and brain chemistry (e.g., CBT, neurobiology).

The foundation of these are based on the following schools of thought:

- *Behaviorism*. Focuses on modifying behavior through conditioning.
- *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy* (CBT). Identifies and restructures faulty thinking patterns.
- *Existential Therapy*. Explores meaning, isolation, and death in the absence of religious framework.

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Biblical Teaching: Humans are made in God’s image but are fallen and sinful.

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things....”

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short....”

*Source of Truth and Healing*

Modern Therapy: Healing comes from within or the therapist-client relationship.

Biblical Teaching: Truth and healing come from God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit.

John 17:17: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Psalms 147:3: “He heals the brokenhearted....”

*Purpose of Life*

Modern Therapy: Self-fulfillment, self-esteem, or self-actualization.

Biblical Teaching: Glorify God, become like Christ, and live in obedience.

First Corinthians 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink ... do all to the glory of God.”

Romans 8:29: “Be conformed to the image of His Son.”

*Moral Framework*

Modern Therapy: Often based on situational ethics and personal values.

Biblical Teaching: Morality is absolute and revealed by God.

Psalms 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Isaiah 5:20: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.”

*Responsibility and Sin*

Modern Therapy: Focuses on external causes; sin is often reframed as dysfunction or disorder.

Biblical Teaching: Acknowledges both external influences and personal responsibility for sin.

James 1:14: “Each one is tempted when ... he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”

*Integrating the Two Responsibly*

Christian counseling doesn’t reject modern psychology altogether—but it evaluates everything through the lens of Scripture.

First Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything; hold fast what is good.”

Colossians 2:8: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy ... rather than Christ.”

*A Balanced Approach*

Use prayer, Bible study, meditation, and fasting along with therapy sessions.

Use evidence-based therapies (like CBT) that are morally neutral when filtered through biblical truth.

Reject philosophies that contradict Scripture (e.g., radical autonomy, denial of sin).

Encourage repentance, faith in Christ, spiritual growth, and renewal of the mind.

**Qualities**

Proverbs 12:15: “The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.”

From a biblical perspective, a healthy and trustworthy mental health therapist should embody characteristics that reflect biblical wisdom, integrity, compassion, and alignment with God’s truth. While Scripture doesn’t directly speak about modern psychotherapy, it provides enduring principles for discerning good counsel and character.

*Wisdom and Godly Understanding*. A therapist should not merely be educated but possess a form of wisdom that aligns with God’s design for human nature and flourishing. This includes understanding the emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions of the person.

*Integrity and Trustworthiness*. A trustworthy therapist must be confidential, honest, and consistent, mirroring the biblical principle of integrity. This is essential for safety and vulnerability in therapy.

*Compassion and Empathy*. The therapeutic relationship should be built on compassion, mirroring Christ’s concern for the brokenhearted. A therapist should reflect a genuine heart of care and gentleness.

*Respect for Free Will and Responsibility*. A healthy therapist supports autonomy and respects your role in making choices, encouraging responsibility without coercion or dependency.

*Discernment and Moral Clarity*. A biblically aligned therapist will not embrace moral relativism but will uphold truth in areas such as identity, sexuality, forgiveness, and justice, applying discernment without being judgmental.

*Encourages Holistic Healing (Mind, Body, Spirit)*. Therapy should support the healing of the whole person, not just behavior or emotions but also deeper spiritual questions and wounds.

*Points Toward Hope and Restoration*. A Christian-compatible therapist encourages hope, healing, and restoration, never leaving a person stuck in their past but helping them move forward with purpose.

If you’re specifically seeking a Christian therapist, you might also

Continued on the next page.

Summary of Modern-day Therapies in Light of Christian Goals with Scriptural Basis	
Christian Goal	Scriptural Basis
Restoration of Imago Dei	Genesis 1:27; 2 Corinthians 3:18
Healing Through Christ	Psalms 147:3; Romans 12:2
Renewed Mind and Thinking	2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8
Spiritual Growth and Discipleship	James 1:2–4; Ephesians 4:15
Healthy Relationships and Reconciliation	Matthew 5:23–24; Romans 12:18
Freedom from Sin and Bondage	John 8:36; Galatians 5:1
Hope and Divine Purpose	Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28

**Delta**

In Isaiah 55:9, God tells us, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Technology and information are exploding exponentially in today’s world. Assumptions are that civilization is advancing as a whole. However, we need to remember that if one area is advancing, we cannot in all fairness assume others are as well. Medicines and procedures have evolved in healthcare to levels never experienced before. However, one area that is still a mystery is the human mind.

Many, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Ivan Pavlov, Carl Rogers, Jean Piaget, and others, explored behaviors of mankind to understand and find ways to treat them. However, not all agree due to the complexities of the psyche.

Scripture tells us that God is the chief psychologist in Jeremiah 17:9–10: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.”

What are the philosophies of modern psychotherapies?

- *Autonomy and Self-Authority* em-

- *Freudian Psychoanalysis*. Emphasizes unconscious drives, particularly sexual and aggressive ones.
- *Humanistic Therapy* (e.g., Carl Rogers). Identifies and restructures faulty thinking patterns.

**Differences from Biblical Teachings**

While modern therapies offer valuable tools, their underlying worldviews may conflict with scripture. Christians must approach therapy with discernment.

*View of Human Nature*

Modern Therapy: Humans are inherently good or morally neutral; problems are external (environment, trauma).

Summary Table: Key Contrasts		
Topic	Modern Psychotherapy	Biblical Teaching
Human Nature	Good or neutral	Fallen, in need of redemption (Romans 3:23)
Truth Source	Subjective or scientific	God’s Word (John 17:17)
Goal of Life	Self-fulfillment	God’s glory and Christlikeness (Romans 8:29)
Moral Authority	Personal/cultural norms	God’s standards (Psalms 119:105)
Cause of Problems	Trauma, environment, brain chemistry	Sin, broken world, spiritual warfare (Genesis 3)
Healing Source	Self-awareness, therapist	Christ, Scripture, Holy Spirit (Psalms 147:3)

Summary of Key Attributes in a Biblically-Grounded Therapist

Attribute	Biblical Reference	Why It Matters
Wisdom & Godly Understanding	Proverbs 1:7; 15:22	Provides sound, spiritually grounded counsel
Integrity & Trustworthiness	Proverbs 10:9; Matthew 5:37	Ensures safety and consistency in the relationship
Compassion & Empathy	Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:32	Mirrors Christ’s love and gentleness
Respect for Free Will	Joshua 24:15; Romans 14:12	Encourages ownership and growth
Discernment & Moral Clarity	Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:14	Helps avoid confusion in areas of right/wrong
Holistic Healing	Matthew 22:37; 1 Thessalonians 5:23	Supports growth in all dimensions of life
Hope-Oriented Perspective	Psalms 147:3; Jeremiah 29:11	Offers encouragement and a redemptive path

look for:

- A shared theological foundation (e.g., view of Scripture, sin, grace)
- Openness to prayer, Scripture, and spiritual disciplines in the healing process

Questions

Luke 6:45: “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

**Worldview & Approach to Counseling**  
A Christian client should ensure the therapist’s approach is not rooted in secular ideologies that contradict biblical truth.

A key goal of counseling should be “Post-Traumatic Growth” (PTG). Rather than simply returning to baseline functioning, many individuals experience PTG, which includes:

- Increased personal strength
- Greater appreciation for life
- Improved relationships
- Recognition of new possibilities
- Spiritual development

**View of Scripture and Christian Values**  
A therapist respectful of Scripture will not undermine biblical convictions on morality, identity, forgiveness, or relationships.

**Prayer and Spiritual Disciplines**  
While not all therapists will pray with you, openness to your spiritual life is vital.

**Understanding of Christian Identity & Relationships**  
A Christian must be cautious of therapeutic guidance that affirms values contrary to biblical teachings on identity, sexuality, and family.

Key Questions to Ask a Potential Therapist

Below are sample questions designed to address various philosophical approaches to psychotherapies. These questions apply to the practice of therapy sessions, they are not designed to judge the therapist’s character or challenge their professionalism. A therapist doesn’t have to be Christian, but they must respect your beliefs and not work against them.

**Worldview & Approach to Counseling**

- What is your general approach to counseling?
- What are your views on treating depression and anxiety?
- How do you view the integration of faith and psychology?
- Are you comfortable working with

clients who want to incorporate their Christian beliefs into therapy?

**View of Scripture and Christian Values**

- Do you have experience working with clients from a biblical Christian perspective?
- How do you view the authority of Scripture in someone’s decision-making and healing?

**Prayer and Spiritual Disciplines**

- Are you open to including prayer or Scripture in sessions if requested?
- How do you respond to clients who want to rely on spiritual practices during therapy?

**Understanding of Christian Identity & Relationships**

- What are your views on sexuality, marriage, and gender identity?
- Do you support traditional Christian understandings of family and marriage?

**Moral Clarity vs. Moral Relativism**

- How do you address issues of right and wrong in therapy?
- Do you see moral values as subjective or objective?

**View of Sin, Grace, and Forgiveness**

- How do you help clients deal with guilt, shame, or moral failure?
- What roles do forgiveness and grace play in your therapeutic model?

**Respect for Christian Boundaries**

- Will you respect desires to adhere to biblical values even if they differ

from modern norms?

- Have you ever worked with clients whose beliefs and values differ from your own?

Warnings

Second Peter 2:2–3: “Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories.”

We address identifying potential red flags in mental health therapy that may conflict with a Christian lifestyle and worldview. Recognizing these red flags helps Christians stay discerning in their pursuit of mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

**Promotion of Moral Relativism**  
The idea that morality is subjective—what’s right or wrong is up to the individual or culture, not an objective standard—undermines biblical truth and God’s moral law, potentially leading to advice that supports sinful behavior or rationalizes it.

**Dismissal or Pathologizing of Faith**  
Faith is minimized, mocked, or considered delusional, or religious beliefs are seen as a “psychological defense mechanism.” Christian faith is central to one’s identity and healing. Therapists who pathologize faith may steer clients away from spiritual growth.

**Encouragement of Sinful Behaviors Under the Banner of “Self-Expression”**

Behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, pride, or revenge may be encouraged as a means of healing or empowerment. Healing that involves endorsing sinful actions undermines spiritual integrity and leads to bondage rather than freedom.

**Rejection of Absolute Truth or Biblical Authority**  
The Bible is treated as outdated, metaphorical, or inferior to psychological theories. A Christian’s mental and emotional health should be rooted in the truth of God’s Word.

**Encouragement to Abandon Christian Community**  
Therapists may suggest leaving the church, distancing from believing family members, or rejecting spiritual accountability. While toxic environments should be addressed, isolating a believer from their spiritual support system is dangerous.

**Endorsement of New Age or Occult Practices**  
Use of crystals, astrology, tarot, “energy healing,” guided spirit visualizations, or other practices rooted in non-Christian spirituality violate biblical teachings and may open spiritual doors that contradict the worship of the one true God.

**Affirmation of Lifestyles Contrary to Biblical Sexual Ethics**  
Encouragement to pursue or affirm sexual identities and behaviors contrary to biblical definitions of marriage and gender. It promotes rebellion against God’s created order, leading to confusion rather than healing.

**Promotion of Self as the Ultimate Healer**  
Messages such as, “You have all you need inside yourself,” or, “You are your own truth,” elevate the self above God. Healing, wisdom, and truth come from God—not merely from within ourselves.

**Disregard for Repentance and Forgiveness**  
Some therapists avoid discussing personal responsibility, repentance, or the healing power of forgiveness. True healing often requires confession, repentance, and offering or receiving forgiveness.

**Encouragement Toward Bitterness or Unforgiveness**  
Therapists may promote “cutting toxic people off” or “never forgiving” as a means of self-protection. Scripture warns against bitterness and commands forgiveness as the path to freedom.

Medication

In Timothy 5:23, Paul advises Timothy, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.”

From a biblical perspective, the use of medications to treat mental illness can be understood through principles of stewardship, compassion, healing, and discernment. Scripture doesn’t directly address psychotropic medications, but it does provide foundational wisdom for evaluating medical treatments, including their benefits and potential pitfalls.

When considering to use medicines to treat mental illness, there are con-

Summary Table of Questions and Their Biblical Foundations

Topic	Question to Ask	Bible Reference
Worldview & Philosophy	What is your general approach to counseling?	Colossians 2:8
Use of Scripture	How do you view the role of Scripture in therapy?	Psalms 119:105
Openness to Prayer	Will you pray or read Scripture with me if I ask?	Philippians 4:6
Christian Values	What are your views on marriage, sexuality, and identity?	Genesis 1:27; 2:24
Moral Framework	Do you believe there are moral absolutes?	Isaiah 5:20
Understanding Sin & Grace	How do you address guilt and forgiveness?	1 John 1:9; Romans 8:1
Respect for Boundaries	Will you support my biblical beliefs even if you disagree?	Romans 12:18

Red Flag Dangers and Supporting Scriptures

Red Flags	Why It’s Unbiblical	Key Scriptures
Moral relativism	Undermines God’s law	Isaiah 5:20, Psalm 119:105
Dismissal of faith	Rejects God’s role in healing	1 Corinthians 1:18, Hebrews 11:6
Encouraging sinful behavior	Permits bondage, not freedom	Romans 6:1–2, Galatians 5:16
Rejection of Scripture’s authority	Denies God’s truth	John 17:17
Isolation from Christian community	Weakens spiritual growth	Hebrews 10:25, Proverbs 27:17
Endorsement of New Age/occult practices	Violates biblical worship	Deuteronomy 18:10–12, Ephesians 5:11
Affirmation of unbiblical sexual lifestyles	Rejects God’s design	1 Corinthians 6:9–10, Genesis 1:27
Self as healer or source of truth	Replaces God with self	Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 4:13
Avoidance of repentance and forgiveness	Blocks spiritual freedom	1 John 1:9, Colossians 3:13
Promotion of unforgiveness and bitterness	Contradicts grace	Ephesians 4:32, Hebrews 12:15

Mark 12:31: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

- When Medication May Be Appropriate
- Severe depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, panic disorders, etc.
  - When paired with biblical counseling, prayer, and community
  - Under supervision of a doctor who respects your Christian conviction

- When to Be Cautious
- When it’s used to avoid spiritual growth or repentance
  - When it suppresses emotional warning signs rather than addressing causes
  - When dependency or idolatry replaces faith and transformation

Findings

Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Results from research has provided some valuable insights. Author Abigail Shrier, who wrote *Irreversible Damage* (2020), and *Bad Therapy: Why the Kids Aren’t Growing Up* (2024), sheds light on the findings on the effects of modern therapies.

In a Joe Rogan podcast, she explained, “Gen Z has the belief they cannot improve their lives. They don’t want to be in charge, they’re afraid. They constantly report their mental health. The issue is that no one is telling these kids to ‘suck it up’ or ‘you’ll live’ no matter how tiny the scratch is. As a result, they don’t know they can overcome.” Therapies teach patients to focus on their issues and use “tools” to address them, which has the effect of enhancing the impact and enlarging them more than they really are.

Continued on the next page.

Summary: A Biblical View on Medication for Mental Illness

Principle	Application	Key Verse
Stewardship	Medication may support brain function and body care	1 Corinthians 6:19–20
Compassion	Eases suffering and restores functionality	Psalm 147:3
God’s Provision	Medicines are part of His providential care	James 1:17
Limitations of Medication	Cannot heal spiritual wounds or replace faith	Jeremiah 17:9
Danger of Overreliance	Must not be a substitute for God	Isaiah 31:1
Accountability & Caution	Risk of dependency or masking deeper issues	1 Corinthians 6:12

siderations beforehand.

Biblical Warnings About Potential Pitfalls

Over-Reliance on Medication Without Addressing the Heart

Medication may relieve symptoms, but it cannot transform the heart, heal sin wounds, or replace spiritual formation. Spiritual and emotional care must not be neglected.

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Mark 12:30: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.”

Using Medication as a Substitute for God

When medication becomes the primary or only source of hope, it can drift into functional idolatry. The believer’s ultimate refuge must remain in God.

Isaiah 13:1: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses ... but do not look to the Holy One of Israel.”

Psalms 20:7: “Some trust in chariots ... but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”

Misuse, Dependency, and Side Effects

Some medications (e.g., benzodiazepines or stimulants) carry the risk of addiction or mind-altering dependency. Use must be monitored with discernment and accountability.

First Corinthians 6:12: “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.”

Ephesians 5:18: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Masking Deeper Issues

In some cases, medication may suppress symptoms without addressing trauma, relational sin, unforgiveness, or spiritual bondage, leading to a false sense of healing.

Jeremiah 6:14: “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”

Biblical Support for Using Medications (When Appropriate)

God Gives Wisdom for Healing

Medications can be seen as tools given through God’s grace, made possible through scientific discovery and providential care.

James 1:17: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father ...”

Care for the Body and Mind

Christians are called to steward their mental, emotional, and physical health. If medication helps restore mental function, it may be part of honoring that stewardship.

First Corinthians 6:19–20: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.... Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

Compassion for the Suffering

Using medications to alleviate severe suffering can be an act of compassion—toward oneself or others—when it supports healing and functionality.

Psalms 147:3: “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Responsibility	Description	Biblical Foundation
1. Seek God First	Christians must prioritize their relationship with God and seek His guidance before and throughout therapy.	“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matt. 6:33); “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...” (Prov. 3:5–6).
2. Use Discernment in Choosing a Therapist	The believer must ensure the therapist’s worldview does not contradict biblical truth. Ask about the therapist’s worldview, ethical practices, and openness to Christian beliefs.	“Test everything; hold fast what is good.” (1 Thess. 5:21); “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...” (2 Cor. 6:14).
3. Be Honest and Transparent	Therapy requires vulnerability. The Christian is called to “speak the truth” in love and avoid deception.	“Speak the truth to one another...” (Zech. 8:16); “Confess your sins to one another...” (James 5:16).
4. Take Responsibility for Growth	Therapy is not passive; it requires effort, humility, and action on the part of the patient to apply truth and take steps toward healing.	“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...” (James 1:22); “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling...” (Phil. 2:12–13).
5. Align Therapy Goals with Biblical Values	A Christian should pursue mental health in ways that promote sanctification, love, truth, and service, not just personal comfort.	“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind...” (Rom. 12:2); “Set your minds on things above...” (Col. 3:2).
6. Remain Prayerful and Spirit-Led	A believer must regularly pray for wisdom, healing, and discernment during the therapy process.	“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God...” (James 1:5); “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess. 5:17)
7. Practice Forgiveness and Grace	Often, therapy involves addressing wounds. A Christian must be willing to forgive as Christ forgave them.	“Forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven you” (Col. 3:13).
8. Uphold Confidentiality and Integrity	Be respectful of the therapist’s time and policies, and commit to showing up faithfully.	“Let your yes be yes and your no be no...” (Matt. 5:37); “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).
9. Stay Rooted in Scripture	Any insights from therapy must be filtered through Scripture to avoid adopting worldly ideologies.	“Your word is a lamp to my feet...” (Ps. 119:105); “All Scripture is God-breathed...” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

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She provided this example: “In Australia, there were over 1,000 teens who participated in the ‘Wise Teen’ program that taught these coping skills. The results of it was that the teens felt sadder, they couldn’t cope with regularly remediating on their bad feelings which made them feel worse.”

She continues, “Depression is a good reaction to things we are forced to think about. It makes us shut down and consider what happened. Because sometimes, we need to make a change. By medicating the depression, it will minimize the lessons needing to be learned and discourage change because it removes the motivation. A good example, a woman leaving an abusive marriage. With

medication, she will likely remain and the abuse will continue.”

Further, she addresses anxiety. “Anxiety helps us remember the important things... anxiety is beneficial to performance, which often is not explored or presented. An example, we want the person who is crossing the street to have anxiety for their safety. However, the profession is medicating it away so there is no anxiety. This robs the teen of developing this emotional muscle to deal with real life problems, like a break up with a boy or girl friend then moving on.”

She offers this bit of advice on dealing with these: “Research has shown that exercise does more to lift mood than any therapy or medication for adolescents. There are no bad side effects introduced. In fact, getting

kids involved with others through volunteering, or spending time with their friends, is incredibly good for mood.”

#### Ownership

Proverbs 4:23: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

There are three key areas to be considered by Christians when engaging in mental health therapies.

1. Spiritual Discernment: Evaluate whether therapy aligns with God’s Word.
2. Personal Accountability: Apply lessons, maintain honesty, and show up consistently.
3. Faith Integration: Pray, seek biblical truth, and grow in Christ through the process.

The table at the bottom of the previous page (page 11) summarizes per-

sonal responsibilities with a description of them along with scripture.

#### Conclusion

As we have seen, psychotherapies can be effective when used in the correct context of biblical principles. Just as the woman who listed symptoms of PTSD, it brought about awareness. That awareness was motivational to seeking professional help.

The best advice beyond asking the right questions is this: Do the work. Therapies, whether it’s for recovery from a surgery, broken bone, or emotional duress, is only as effective as the effort put forth. As it states in Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

# Soldier or Priest: What is the Armor of God?

By JEFF FLANICK



The logo of the Church of God International depicts a traditional knight’s armor above a partial quote from verse eleven of chapter six in the book of Ephesians, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” This passage of Scripture is quite familiar to many Christians, especially to most reading this newspaper. The armor depicted in the logo bears a resemblance to the attire of English knighthood in the days of King Arthur. When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was quite familiar with soldiers of the Roman Empire. The garments of Roman soldiers and centurions were markedly different from the advanced stages of armor produced in Europe many centuries later.

The intention of writing this article is not to promote a change in CGI’s logo, nor to discuss the merits regarding what type of soldier’s armor conveys Paul’s idea best. I am intrigued by the proposition put forth that the Apostle Paul did not have fighting men in mind when he used the metaphor of the “armor of God” concerning our battle against the Adversary.

It is important to note that when Paul wrote Ephesians he was under house arrest. He was being guarded by Roman soldiers because of his strong convictions and true faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul condemned the false gods of the empire and idol worship. With this in mind, it is quite understandable to see how Paul’s references to armor may have indeed been referring to the armor worn by the Roman soldiers in his midst. On the other hand, some have balked at the idea of Paul using the hated military might of Rome, and the cruelty exemplified by its soldiers, as acceptable representatives of *anything* concerning God and His Power.

Another salient point to remember is that Paul was a “Pharisee of Pharisees” as recorded in Acts. He was intimately aware of the Old Testament laws and statutes. Paul certainly understood the Levitical priesthood and the details regarding priestly garments. Consider **Ephesians 6:12**: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

The Armor of God is employed in a spiritual battle, rather than a physical battle. Inserting the clothing of a priest of Israel into Paul’s analogy, as opposed to the armor of a Roman soldier, is indeed fitting (pardon the pun.) The term for putting on the Armor of God in Ephesians is *endyo*, which in the ancient Greek refers to the verb “to put on,” “to clothe,” or “to be clothed.” When

used in a figurative sense, it can mean “to be clothed with a quality, or characteristic.” In the New Testament, it’s translated as “to put on Christ” or “to clothe oneself with Christ.” We are to *put on Christ* to defeat the spiritual demons attacking us on our walk. The *Topical Lexicon* on the *Bible Hub* website states: “The use of [*endyo*] in the New Testament reflects a broader biblical theme of transformation and renewal, where clothing imagery is employed to convey the idea of adopting a new way of life. This aligns with the biblical narrative of redemption and sanctification, where believers are progressively conformed to the image of Christ.” Paul may indeed have been using the garments of the priests in the Old Testament to make this point. Let’s examine how this priestly analogy may indeed fit the pattern Paul envisioned: as snugly as a well-tailored suit.

I cannot take credit for the following scripture pairings which demonstrate the possible relationship between the Armor of God, as described by Paul in Ephesians, and the Holy Priesthood. This illumination was provided by an unnamed author of a blog entry called “The Whole Armor of God Priestly Garments.” The piece supplied the following verses for context: **Numbers 31:6**: “And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar *the priest, to the war*, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.” **Exodus 28:2**: “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother for glory and for beauty.”

The first pieces of armor concern the



midsection. **Ephesians 6:14**: “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” Parallels to this verse can be found in the Old Testament: “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And *righteousness shall be the girdle [waist cloth] of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins*” (**Isaiah 11:4-5**). “For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head” (**Isaiah 59:17**). Of course, the verses in Isaiah quoted here refer to our Messiah. Yet, the priests who were representatives of God on earth do show a similarity to this imagery. We find in **Exodus 28:30**: “And you shall put in the *breastplate of judgment* the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart, when he goes in before the LORD...”

Next in Paul’s description of armor are the feet: “and having fitted *your feet* with the preparation of the Good News of peace” (**Ephesians 6:15**). Consider **Isaiah 52:7**: “How beautiful upon the mountains *Are the feet of him who brings good news.*” Moving on to the shield in a believer’s armor, **Ephesians 6:16** states: “above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.” We see beautiful symmetry throughout God’s Word in



verses such as **Psalms 84:11** (“For the LORD God is a sun and *shield*: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”); **Psalms 115:11** (“Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their *shield*. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great”); and **Habakkuk 2:4** (“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by His faith”).

The powerful armor contained in **Ephesians 6:17** are the helmet and the sword: “and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” **Exodus 28:36–38** may well provide some relevance to the helmet Paul alludes to: “You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, *like* the engraving of a signet:

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

And you shall put it on a blue cord,

that it may be *on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. So it shall be on Aaron’s forehead*, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.” God’s protection is found in His servant’s mind and thoughts. If we keep our minds focused on Him and His ways, we can win the spiritual battle before us. Think of **Revelation 7:3**: “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their *foreheads*.”

Paul directly tells us in Ephesians the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. We also find in **Hebrews 4:12**, “For the word of God is living and



powerful, and sharper than any *two-edged sword*, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Priests are to wield this sword as Elohim’s representatives here on earth. “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And *people* should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (**Malachi 2:7**).

Peter yields additional ammunition in support of the supposition Paul was alluding to priestly armor, rather than military armor. Peter writes, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of

darkness into His marvelous light” (**1 Peter 2:9**).

Contemplating the Armor of God in a different way than we have been accustomed to may help reveal God’s marvelous Word in more vibrant clarity. The website/blog *Judah Lamb* had a wonderful summary on this subject: “In conclusion, the armor of God, viewed through a priestly lens, reveals our calling to stand before God, represent Him to the world, and intercede for others. *This perspective challenges us to see spiritual warfare not primarily as combat against evil forces, but as faithful service in God’s presence, equipped with His truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and word.*”

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Antisemitism  
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[Atonement]. The wicked and unclean fast of the Jews is now at our doors. Thought it is a fast, do not wonder that I have called it unclean. What is done contrary to God’s purpose, be it sacrifice or fast, is the most abominable of all things. Their wicked fast will begin after five days. Ten days ago, or more than ten, I anticipated this and gave an exhortation with the hope it would make your brothers safe. Let no one find fault and say my discourse was untimely because I gave it so many days beforehand. When a fever threatens, or any other disease, physicians anticipate this and with many remedies make safe and secure the body of the man who will be seized by the fever; they hurry to snatch his body from the dangers which threaten it before the patient experiences their onset.”

**Augustine**, the great theologian, was also guilty of the growing hatred. In a sermon on Catechumens, he says: “The Jews hold him, the Jews insult him, the Jews bind him, crown him with thorns, dishonor him with spitting, scourge him, overwhelm with revilings, hang him upon the tree, pierce him with a spear.... The Jews killed him.”

The Middle Ages

By the Middle Ages, the ideological collection of Christian anti-Semitism was already established. This was further revealed in a variety of significant events within the church, such as **Patriarch Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria**, expelling the Jews and giving their property to a Christian mob.

Martin Luther

There were others echoing similar sentiments but for lack of space, we move to ensuing centuries where we see the trend continuing right up to the time of the great **Martin Luther, the Father of Protestantism**. Yes, he, too, made his anti-Jewish stance known.

Luther, early in his ministry, was sympathetic to the shameful way the church had been treating the Jews and urged they should be treated kindly.

However, that changed, as in later years he was to write the complete opposite:

“What then shall we Christians do with this damned, rejected race of Jews? Since they live among us and we know about their lying and blasphemy and cursing, we cannot tolerate them if we do not wish to share in their lies, curses, and blasphemy.... We must prayerfully and reverentially practice a merciful severity.... Let me give you my honest advice: First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our LORD and of Christendom. Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.”

Yes, that was Martin Luther, believe it or not!

Church Councils

Many church councils were set up to decide doctrine and teachings. The anti-Jewish slant was clearly obvious and unapologetic. Prominent church fathers, religious leaders, and even political figures stacked these councils. For the most part, they were all anti-Jewish and embraced Greco-Roman culture.

The Council of Nicea

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem says this about the ecumenical council meeting in Nicea in AD 325: “Yet beginning at Nicea and continuing at the councils and synods that followed, the largely gentile Church began separating from its Jewish origins. This shift occurred in three main areas: First, a change in calendar and religious holidays; second, a change in Church attitude towards the Jews; and third, strict rules against Christians engaging with Jews.”

It was the **Emperor Constantine**, who demanded a unified Christian calendar for his empire, declared after the council meeting in a synodal letter to all churches, “We declare good news to you! ... As of now we do not anymore celebrate Easter according to the tradition of the Jews!”

Canon 29 of the **Council of**

**Laodicea** (held in 363–364) later accused those Judaizers who kept the seventh-day Sabbath, many of whom were also Quartodecimans. The controversy over Passover or Easter boils down to following Scripture versus following Roman Catholic tradition.

Nicea II

“Because those from the Hebrew religion have been deceived, they seem to mock Christ as God, pretending to become Christians, but they deny him as they openly and secretly keep the Sabbath and follow other practices in the manner of the Jews. We determine that they are not to be received into communion, nor into prayer, nor in the Church, but the Hebrews are manifestly according to their own religion: their children are not to be baptized; nor is a slave to be purchased or acquired. But if anyone of them will convert out of a sincere faith and heart and will make a profession of faith with all his heart, disclosing their customs and practices so that others might be exposed and corrected, he is to be received and baptized, and also his children; but indeed we decree that they are to be observed so that they depart from Hebrew practices, otherwise they are not to be admitted at all.”

The Edict of Milan

“Imperial Rome, in AD 313, issued the Edict of Milan, which granted favour to Christianity, while outlawing synagogues. Then, in AD 315, another edict allowed the burning of Jews if they were convicted of breaking the laws. As Christianity was becoming the religion of the state, further laws were passed against the Jews: The ancient privileges granted to the Jews were withdrawn. Rabbinical jurisdiction was abolished or severely curtailed. Proselytism to Judaism was prohibited and made punishable by death.”

Conclusion

A great deal of Christian doctrine and thought was developed and formalized in the second, third, and fourth centuries. The short history of the

church was already rooted in anti-Jewishness. By the third century, it set the stage for revolutionary changes in Christian doctrine. With every effort to stay far from anything Jewish, the influence of paganism, and Greco-Roman thought, the dominant culture and intellectual power of the day began to shape Christianity and has lasted to this very day. What transpired in the early centuries of the church seems to be forgotten history, yet the church today can easily lay claim, and it does so proudly, too, to the work of the church fathers. In fact, in some circles, their beliefs and practices are equated with the Holy Scriptures. Wherever and whenever the Bible is silent on a matter, the position of the early church fathers is adopted. The biggest examples are Sunday keeping and the Trinity.

“In the early church literature, [Gentile] Christians are really desperate to separate from Judaism and to distinguish themselves,” notes **Burton L. Visotzky, PhD (Jewish Theological Seminary)**. “As a result, there is the appearance of a great deal of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism. Some of it is invective—nasty comments about Jews. Some of it is pushing away from what they saw as Old Testament religion.”

“The result of these anti-Jewish teachings continued onwards throughout Church history, manifesting itself in such events and actions as the Crusades, the accusation of communion host desecration and blood libel by the Jews, the forced wearing of distinguishing marks to ostracize them, the Inquisition, the displacement of whole Jewish communities by exile or separate ghettos, the destruction of synagogues and Jewish books, physical persecution and execution, the Pogroms. Ultimately, the seeds of destruction grew to epic proportions, culminating in the Holocaust, which occurred in ‘Christian’ Europe,” notes one theologian.

What are we to make then of the reasons behind the obvious hatred and despise meted out to Jews by the very

Continued on the next page.

men who purport to follow the risen Christ who is all about justice, love, and mercy?

Had the church understood the clear message of being grafted into the olive tree from the beginning, then the sad legacy of anti-Semitic hatred from the church may have been avoided. Perhaps the church today would look more like the first-century church instead of one that Christ would hardly recognize today, having abandoned the Christ-centered and Hebraic teachings of the primitive church.

The church fathers completely overlooked what Paul said in Romans 11:25. They didn't seem to grasp that the reason the acts of disassociation from the Jewish community among the Christ-followers was not justified, was because the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Christ was temporary in nature. Apostle Paul stated in **Romans 11:25**: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own con-

ceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." It's a pity but then one could argue, it was meant to be so.

In **Ephesians 2:11–18**, we are told that "*by the blood of Messiah*," we Gentiles are "*made near*" to the commonwealth of Israel, the covenants, promises, and hopes given to Israel. In **Romans 11:11–12, 25**, we are told that "*blindness in part*" has come to the Jews so that the message would be forced out into the nations. Nevertheless, we are told that a time would come when "*all Israel would be saved*" (verse 26), because the gifts and callings of God towards Israel and the Jewish people were given without repentance (verse 29). God's relationship with Israel and the Jewish people is everlasting. The church fathers did not seem to grasp that, hence their attitudes to Jews.

The legacy of anti-Jewishness is evident by teachings such as Christmas,

Easter, the Trinity, heaven is the reward of the saved, the law has been nailed to the cross, the dietary laws are no longer in effect, the Sabbath and holy days are abolished.

Something else has replaced God's true teachings. A Greco-Roman culture has filled the void anti-Jewishness left. It continues to influence Christianity to this day, whereby observances of Sabbath and holy days, for example, are seen as cultic and anti-Christian, and has nothing to do with Jesus Christ, the One who gave those very commands in the first place.

The same One who chose Israel as the model nation by whom He would bring all nations into His family as a kind of "Israel of God." Unfortunately, the church fathers just didn't get that message and instead "threw the baby out with the bath water," so to speak. Pity!

Here are some quotes from **prominent theologians** and historians that we can reflect on as we consider what has

gone down over the centuries among people who like to describe themselves as "Bible-believing Christians":

"If one reviews the writings of the church fathers from the second to the sixth centuries, almost all are anti-Jewish. This discourse has become part and parcel of the doctrine of mainstream Christianity."

"Anti-Judaic attitudes developed from the early years of Christianity and persisted over the ensuing centuries, driven by numerous factors including theological differences, competition between Church and Synagogue, the Christian drive for converts, misunderstanding of Jewish beliefs and practices, and alleged Jewish hostility toward Christians."

"Gradually the motif of Jews being Christ-killers assumed a major role in the church's anti-Jewish preaching. This is still very much alive in our day."

# Questions & Answers

By **VANCE A. STINSON**

## The One True Church

**QUESTION:** Would you explain why you believe your particular brand of Church of God is "God's only true church" and why you believe all the other similar so-called churches of God are missing the mark?

*J.C., Plano, TX*

**ANSWER:** We of the Church of God International do not believe our organization is "God's only true church." The CGI is a man-made organization, as are all the other Church of God groups. The true Church of God is made up of all in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and it cannot be confined to a particular organization. I have no doubt that the CGI, UCG, LCG, COGWA, and the many independent COGs have within them members of the true Church of God, or Body of Christ, but no one organization can claim that it alone is the true Church.

If you have the Holy Spirit, then you are a member of the true Church. The CGI, UCG, and several others have differences I would not consider major at all, so when CGI folks have decided, for one reason or another, to make a UCG congregation (or other, similar group) their new home, I have not objected or tried to talk them out of it. We have shared pulpits and Feast sites with brethren from some of the different COG groups, as we recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are certain groups and leaders, however, that I cannot recommend. I would advise you to stay clear of those that do claim their organization is the one true church, or that it is the "Philadelphia Church," or that its leader is an apostle or "Elijah" or a special prophet of some kind. These, in my opinion, are personality cults.

I would not attempt to build a case for why you should choose CGI over any of the other groups. It may well be that one of the other groups—the UCG, for example—may be able to fill your needs better than we can. We're not in competition with each other. I have on several occasions encouraged people who identify with CGI to attend Sabbath services with the UCG or an independent COG when they didn't have a CGI congregation in their area.

## The Added Law

**QUESTION:** Yeshua refreshed the holy covenant made at Horeb, the ten commandments ('...and He added no more'), and ended the sacrificial laws that were added at Sinai because of transgression. The handwritten ordinances, placed at the side of the ark, were finished, as prophesied, when the Seed came (Gal. 3; Col. 2; John 19:30; Deut. 31:24).

*P.M. (posted in Messages)*

**Reply:** The "Book of the Law" that was placed "beside the ark of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 31:26) included all the commandments, statutes, and judgments God had given to Moses, not just the laws pertaining to the priesthood, tabernacle, and sacrifices. The entire Torah, not just the ceremonial law, was "added because of transgressions, until the Seed should come" (Galatians 3:19). Some suppose this was the ceremonial law, and that it was "added" in order to keep

Israel ever-mindful of the gravity of transgressing the moral law—the Ten Commandments—that came from the mouth of God and were written by Him on tables of stone. But the context itself indicates strongly that the whole law—the Torah—is in view here. Paul goes on to say:

"Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given **that could give life**, then righteousness would indeed be by the law" (verse 21).

THAT'S THE KEY! "It [the law] was added because of transgressions" means that it was written down, codified, explicitly spelled out. God had Moses write all the commandments, statutes, and judgments He had given to him in order to define sin specifically. By so doing, the Israelites could not plead innocent on grounds of ignorance when they sinned against God. This understanding is further confirmed by the next verse:

"But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (verse 22).

Here, Paul uses "the Scripture" to refer to "the law" that "was added because of transgressions." The law set forth in Scripture defined sin and revealed the good and perfect will of God but could not give life; it could not release imprisoned souls from the bondage of sin.

This brings us to the meaning of "until the Seed should come." What happened when the Seed—Jesus Christ—came and accomplished His purpose? Many suppose that the word *until* in "It was added **until** the Seed should come" means the law was *temporarily* added but came to an end—was abolished—once Christ came and died for mankind's sins. But that's clearly not what this verse means.

When the Seed (Christ) came, something was indeed abolished, but it wasn't the law or any part of it. The law was added in order to expose transgressions, but when the Seed came, the **transgressions exposed by the law** were abolished.

Colossians 2:14 does not refer to the handwritten document mentioned in Deuteronomy 31:24, but to our record of sins. The Complete Jewish Bible captures the intended meaning of this verse: "He wiped away the bill of charges against us. Because of the regulations, it stood as a testimony against us; but he removed it by nailing it to the execution-stake."

## Escaping Harm's Way on the Sabbath

**QUESTION:** In Matt. 24, concerning the great tribulation, Christ makes the statement "Let not your flight be on the Sabbath day." I do not understand this. Did he mean for you not to try to escape disaster and protect yourself?

*R.B., Martin, TN*

**ANSWER:** No, Jesus did not mean that one would be violating the Fourth Commandment by attempting to escape harm's way on the Sabbath day, Matthew 24:20 does not say, "*Let not your flight be on the Sabbath day*," but "*Pray that your flight may not be in the winter or on a Sabbath*." He is not forbidding fleeing from harm's way on the Sabbath. Rather, He is saying to *pray* that the flight *from Judea* not be in the winter or on a Sabbath because weather conditions associated with winter and religious restrictions for travel on the Sabbath would make escape much more difficult.

The Unpardonable Sin

**QUESTION:** I’ve heard...sermons saying if you commit the unpardonable sin, you can’t repent because you have no desire to repent. In your opinion is that true?  
W.C. (sent by email)

**ANSWER:** Yes, I agree with that. Scripture reveals that if a true believer falls away, it is impossible to renew him again unto repentance (Hebrews 6:4–6). Therefore if a believer leaves the faith and returns to his old sins but then comes to his senses and repents, then he obviously never reached the point at which it would be

impossible to renew him to repentance.  
The unpardonable sin is the sin of **apostasy**, which means a total abandonment of faith. It was through faith, not works, that we were justified in the first place. Walking away from “saving faith” can result in loss of salvation, but that happens only when one literally becomes an unbeliever again.  
Falling into and persisting in a life of sinful behaviors can lead to abandonment of faith altogether. But it is the abandonment of faith that makes sin unpardonable. It is unpardonable because repentance is no longer possible. Christ hasn’t locked the sinner out; the sinner has locked Christ out.

Shreveport-Bossier City, LA Congregation Celebrates 40th Anniversary



On August 16, 2025, the Shreveport-Bossier City Congregation, along with a number of guests, gathered to celebrate our 40th anniversary as a chapter of the Church of God International.  
Following a moving song service by Davell McKay and Vera Bounds, John Woodard narrated an hour-plus slide show of pictures from 1985 to the present. It was wonderful to remember all of those we have known through the years, and to honor

those who are no longer with us. Gloria Miller was recognized as a founding member who is still in attendance today. Another long-time member, Shirley Thomas, was recognized as our oldest member. Also honored with a plaque was our minister, Vance Stinson, for all of his service, dedication, and friendship to us over the years. Not surprisingly, Mr. Stinson then provided us with another great sermon!  
And, of course, no special church gathering can be

complete without a fellowship meal, and this one didn’t disappoint, complete with an anniversary cake and ice cream.  
When leaving, everyone was presented with a gift bag of commemorative items donated by LaShaun Aldridge. It was a great day of remembering the past, but also looking to the future and all of the memories that we will continue to build as a church family.  
John Woodard

Summer Fun for the CGI Philippines Brethren

It’s summer in the Philippines! Summers in the Philippines can be really hot, so much so, you’d want to dip yourself in a pool of ice-cold water for a really long time. It’s that time of year when people in the Philippines flock to the beaches or swimming resorts nearest them to cool off and spend time with family or friends.  
Last May 1, 2025, coincidentally a Philippine holiday, 163 of the brethren and their family members from the Alabang, Malolos, and Manila congregations went to The Spring at Eastland Heights, Antipolo City, Rizal for a first ever combined church family outing.  
The place boasts of a large swimming pool with two slides leading up to one end of the pool, several cabanas, barbecue facilities, and an airconditioned pavilion. Surrounding it are troves of coconut trees and other endemic flowery plants, shrubs, and trees, providing a restful, relaxing, and peaceful ambience—the perfect getaway from the hustle and bustle of city life.  
As an added bonus, our pastor, Mr. Winston Co, was able to secure the whole place exclusively for the brethren and their families.



Fun, Fellowship, and Food for Everyone

The children, the youth, the young at heart (read: young once), or those brave enough and adventurous, tried the slides. As expected, they had a lot of fun doing it, laughing and screaming as they slid and eventually fell into the pool. Individually or in groups, they had several trips to the slides. The less adventurous of us were content staying in the pool, relaxing, trading friendly banters with one another, or just simply cooling off our heels.  
In one of the cabanas, several of us engaged in a lively discussion of just about anything under the sun over whiskey, vodka, and brandy with grilled *bangus* (milk fish), chicken barbecue, and other light dishes, appetizers and snacks. Some of us brought portable karaokes and, you guessed it right—you can hear people singing their hearts out (what’s a Filipino gathering like without karaokes?) In another cabana, several of our women folk gathered together and had their own, I suppose, girl talk.  
Meanwhile at the pavilion, our pastor was able to share some of our beliefs to some family members of the brethren who are not affiliated with us. We are

hoping from this that the seeds of the gospel would soon take root in them.  
And before we forget, the amount and variety of food brought by the members and their families gave us a foretaste of our traditional *bayanihan* night during each of our Feast of Tabernacles celebrations. Food was in abundance ranging from chicken *adobo*, *lomi*, *lechon manok* (roasted chicken), chicken barbecue, *pancit* (a popular Filipino noodle dish), stir fry chicken, beef *pares* (braised beef stew), chicken nuggets, and chicken *lumpia* (spring rolls), among others. We also had traditional Filipino delicacies and fruits for dessert.  
At the end of the day, the brethren and their families had a memorable and wonderful activity together. This gathering surely bonded the church members. So, here’s looking forward to another fun-filled, memorable church outing.  
Ferdie S. Padilla for CGI Philippines



See photo on back page.



Summer fun in the Philippines!



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