

OIM UPDATE

June 2016

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

As the Summer arrives, and I contemplate yet another annual gathering with Margaret’s family later this month, the above verse comes to mind because of the many spiritual blessings bestowed on our immediate family for our conscientious decision to walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). After all, our family has been walking by faith for nearly two decades since we were commissioned to serve the emerging Messianic community. Along the sojourn, Margaret and I have modeled to our children what it truly means to walk by faith in total dependence upon our Heavenly Father for His provision. Our actions have spoken much louder than all the words we could have mustered. As a result, we have been blessed with children who love the Lord and in their own ways are seeking to serve the Almighty with their many talents and gifts.

Hence, the familiar expression, “An apple doesn’t fall too far from the tree,” has come to mind a number of times this past month, primarily because Margaret and I had the blessed privilege to attend our youngest daughter’s graduation at the University of Oklahoma. After six years in Norman, Maggie earned a Master of Arts degree in history, to compliment her Bachelor’s degree with a history major and Naval Science minor. Maggie fulfilled the requirements to be commissioned an Ensign in the United States Navy, and will commence her military service as a surface warship officer (SWO) at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida later this month. Needless to say, two very proud and patriotic parents beamed with joy, as our daughter repeated her solemn oath to continue the family tradition to serve, in her case, the armed forces of the United States of America.

Consequently, the influence of being raised in a ministry family, which appreciates theology and history, resulted in Maggie’s master thesis reflecting her interest in how the Lord used godly and sincere people in Great Britain to establish a framework for the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land. As I read her thesis entitled, “**Glory and Empire: The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews and the Road to the Balfour Declaration,**” I was reminded of God’s sovereign hands over the course of human events. In addition, Maggie gave me a copy of a 1956 book by Barbara Tuchman, entitled *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, which added more detail to how the influence of the Holy Scriptures ultimately established the environment for the formation of the State of Israel. As a result, I have written an article entitled, “**God’s Patient Perseverance,**” in order to encourage others to appreciate the Lord’s sovereign will over His Creation. After all in these tumultuous times, there is a tendency to forget that God is in charge, despite the attempts of “the prince of the power of air” to persuade the faithful otherwise

(Ephesians 2:2). Let us never forget the following reality of the Messiah's power and authority:

“For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17).

Finally, your support of our mission is greatly appreciated, as we have established the **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund** to write and disseminate our materials to those seeking balanced, scholarly, and loving perspectives on what we believe the Holy Scriptures describe is happening in this hour of restoration. Also, please prayerfully consider helping us with our new **OIM Technology Fund**! Thank you for your prayers and financial partnership in our efforts to produce sound teaching that we believe, in His time, will be critical for the emergence of the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15) our Heavenly Father is bringing together!

“The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-25).

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...
Mark Huey

GOD'S PATIENT PERSEVERANCE

by Mark Huey

In recent weeks, given the human propensity to focus on the here and now, as the inundation of information and current events cloud our thinking and thoughts, I was hurled back in time by reading a master's thesis and a book which both detail how the Holy Scriptures have influenced events in ancient and relatively modern times. As I read those historical accounts and marveled at how a diverse array of people made significant life decisions, a specific verse from Hebrews frequently came into my mind, because there is no doubt that God's Word has accomplished all that it was intended to, during the time since the resurrection of the Messiah:

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The broad subject matter of the two writings were how some English speaking people of Great Britain were influenced by statements found in the Holy Bible, to prepare the way for the eventual return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land. Indeed, the entire history of Western Civilization has been profoundly influenced by God's immutable Word, as He has persevered patiently down through the ages!

On one hand, Barbara Tuchman's book, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, is a more comprehensive depiction of the classic struggle between proclaiming God's gospel and securing mammon, from ancient times to the early Twentieth Century. On the other hand, Maggie Willetts' master's thesis focused specifically on the time period from 1807 to 1917. The "Glory and Empire: The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews and the Road to the Balfour Declaration" did not seriously delve into the theological justifications for actions taken, but instead, simply gave an informative historical analysis of what certain individuals did because of their spiritual convictions. Nevertheless, as I read these two writings, I was overwhelmed with the reality that the Sovereign God of Creation is extremely patient with people, and that He will persevere until the end in order to accomplish His will for the created order. Of course, exactly why God has chosen to use mere human beings to achieve His Divine purposes is beyond our understanding. Nonetheless, that is His choice, because in the end, He will receive all the glory!

But before reflecting on how God has worked through human civilization over the millennia, as a follower of the Messiah and a seeker of truth for nearly forty years, I must make a confession. Above all, I am deeply influenced by the Holy Scriptures which have not only assured me of eternal life, but penetrated

my thought process to the point of making me view life and circumstances through a Biblical grid. Although I will never claim to fully have the “mind of Messiah” while being conformed to Yeshua’s image (Romans 8:29), at present, I do know that when I was born from above, a completely new perspective entered my thoughts. *God’s Word vividly highlighted my fleshly thoughts from those received by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.* I found the reason for a different understanding of the world in these verses:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13]? But we have the mind of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).

After my conversion, I spent an inordinate amount of time sharing my new understanding of being taught by the Spirit of God with others. But despite my passion and zeal for the revelation I was given, I soon came to the realization that not everybody, especially family, was on the same wavelength when I shared my faith and the blessed hope (Titus 2:13) within me. *Their natural minds could not comprehend the spiritual understanding I was describing.* I also discovered that it was not always perfectly clear as to what God’s will was for my life. I knew that I had been purchased by the precious price of the blood of the Lamb Yeshua:

“If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Messiah. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:17-21).

But despite being indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, and seeking to conduct my life in a reverent fear of the Lord, there still remained challenges to overcome the human nature I inherited from Adam. On one hand, I found a degree of solace in some of the words of Romans 7, commonly interpreted to be a personal confession of the Apostle Paul, who seemingly continued to contend with the battle that waged in his soul between his flesh and the Spirit of God:

“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the

very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Yeshua the Messiah our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:14-25).

But blaming my lack of reverence or fear of the Lord on my "flesh nature" was an insufficient excuse. Over time, in searching the Scriptures, I found a prayer which encouraged me to enlighten the eyes of my heart toward a deeper realization of who and what I was and am, in the Messiah:

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the [assembly], which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:18-23).

My prayers were answered, as I matured in my understanding of who I was and am in the Messiah Yeshua. But in order to please the Holy One, the following verse became a foundational aspect of my pursuit of the Almighty:

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith in God and Him alone became instrumental in seeking His face. But faith without works was also a critical component of what the Word of God teaches His children. This explanation from James the Just articulates why faith without works is useless:

*"What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. But someone may *well* say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith with-*

out the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS' [Genesis 15:6], and he was called the friend of God. **You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone**" (James 2:14-24).

So with all of these passages as a preamble to reading about those, who down through history, preceded us in their respective walks of faith—let me turn to some of the amazing things God accomplished through our predecessors who were contending with the same indwelling Spirit, but who had much less access to the Holy Writ.

What struck me the most, as I reviewed the history of the past two thousand years since the resurrection, was how despite the challenges posed by lack of communication tools modern people take for granted, these ancient saints were propelled to action by two things: the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Quite frankly, there is no other explanation for the major life decisions that were made by many. *This becomes abundantly clear when one realizes that the dissemination of the Holy Writ across the globe moved along at a snail's pace.* One has to remember that communication in the early centuries after the resurrection of the Messiah was extremely slow, and at first, hindered by nefarious pagan forces seeking to snuff it out. However, because the God of Creation has a plan for humanity, He used various people to take His ineffable Word to the uttermost parts of the World. Based on some of the books I recently read, I can see how there was a plan in using the peoples of the British Isles, as not only would they be geographically separated from the European continent, but that their global influence would come naturally due to their maritime abilities.

In reading the accounts of how the Word of God made its journey to the outer most reaches of the Roman Empire, after destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E., the fact that the dispersion of the Jewish people was simply a part of God's sovereign plan, really became evident. How else was God going to get His Word spread to the world without using Jewish people faithful to their heritage, into remote locations? Certainly, the Jewish people were noted for their commercial acumen, and as trade increased around the Mediterranean, they were ideally located to harbor those who valued the Word of God above everything else. In addition, it is noted that during the Bar Kocha rebellion in Judea, a Roman general stationed in Britain named Julius Sextus Severus, had to be called to Palestine to put down the revolt. Once again, as I encountered in some of the materials I recently reviewed, apparently upon his return to the island and after the Jews were once again cast out of Jerusalem (save a remnant), some of the lore regarding Joseph of Arimethea journeying to Britain arose. While there is **no concrete evidence at all** of Joseph of Arimethea jour-

neying to Britain, there is evidence that legends of Joseph's graciousness demonstrated toward Yeshua (Matthew 27:57-60) made its way. Obviously, descriptions of what had been recorded in the Gospels (Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; and John 19:18-42) were things that God apparently wanted communicated to other people.

Perhaps for God's long-term purposes, lore about Joseph of Arimetha migrating to Britain caused legends of the Holy Grail to percolate up from various stories. Once again, we must understand that in those ancient times, without the communication tools we have today and when most people were illiterate—such story telling produced a considerable amount of traction on its own. In fact, when the Holy Writ eventually made it to Great Britain, it was the Latin Vulgate which was considered to be the true "Word of God." When it is noted that by 314 C.E. there were Celtic churches in Britain which sent bishops to the Council at Arles, it is clear that the gospel was already having an impact in the region before the concentrated influence of the Emperor Constantine and the formal emergence of Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, many in the church in Britain clung to the belief that Joseph of Arimetha was "the apostle" to their islands. Clearly as one surveys many of the spotty historical records, needless to say, the power of the Word of God—whether misinterpreted for political purposes or not—was still having a tremendous impact on Western Civilization as it matured in ancient times.

Without going into great detail, as I read the accounts of how people from all walks of life reacted to the proclamations stated in God's Word, it was apparent that many made profound life decisions based on their knowledge of the Word. I could not help but conclude that the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit had to be at work in some way, because people of the flesh simply do not chose to dedicate their lives and fortunes to God *unless something more powerful than themselves compels that choice*. This was particularly evident when the period of time about the Crusades was described. What would have inspired relatively young people in their late teens or early twenties to willingly give their lives to reclaim the Promised Land from the conquering "infidels" who were following the dictates of the Islamic religion? Many of the accounts reminded me of various modern-day jihadists, who are convinced to the point of death that followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and those who profess a saving knowledge of Yeshua the Messiah are themselves the "infidels" because they do not profess a belief in Islam. How paradoxical is that? And yet, because the Word of God is more powerful than a two-edged sword, Believers today can attest to the fulfillment of many of the prophecies found in God's immutable Word at this juncture in world history.

In addition, when the testimonies of William Tyndale and John Wycliffe were related, and how they gave their lives to preserve translations of the Holy Bible, I was reminded of the human cost required to transmit the Scriptures. The spiritual battles which took place in Britain, as the Protestant movement matured into the modern era, is fascinating reading—especially in light of where the followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob find themselves

at this point in time in the Twenty-First Century. In many regards, some of the same warfare continues, with the people and places simply different.

Nevertheless, the work and mission of God's Kingdom continues—especially as it involves Israel and the Jewish people! This month, Israelis are recognizing the forty-ninth anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem during the Six Day War. Next year will be the one-hundredth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration and the formation of the British Protectorate, ending the occupation of Palestine by the Ottoman Empire. And, in 2017-2018, the State of Israel will be celebrating its seventieth anniversary. In the next few years, the confluence of these major anniversaries has various people espousing different prophetic interpretations and speculations, intending to see parallels from what has happened to Israel throughout history in different dispersions, such as seventy years spent in Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10), to further prognostications associated with the end-times.

While it is thought provoking to speculate on what this all means, I am mindful to remember that the Holy One is extremely patient with His plans for the Creation with a perseverance that is never ending. Instead of focusing on speculative arguments, it should instead be recognized that just like those who dedicated their lives and fortunes to reclaim the Holy Land in years past, **it is far more beneficial today**, to simply dedicate our lives to serving the Almighty with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. *This means paying much more than mere lip service to the Lord*, because according to Isaiah, the Holy One sees right through all of the words that usher forth from human lips, and as noted earlier, His Word is able to divide between the soul and the spirit like a two-edged sword down to the very marrow of the bone:

“Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*’ (Isaiah 29:13).

Consequently, God is not necessarily impressed with our words, but is instead, absolutely mindful of our actions. Hence, because He is patient about His promises, our lives should be such that we continue to proclaim His truths through our actions, no matter when we exist on the time compendium. After all, God created time—and unlike us as limited mortals—is outside of the constraints of time, so much so that the Apostle Peter can proclaim,

“But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Additionally, as I wonder about the faithful saints who have preceded us down through the ages, I have to speculate that many of them took to heart the following passage from the Apostle Paul when making life and death decisions. Here in unequivocal words, his testimony is such that the eminent Apostle had confidence that when he did die, he would be in the presence of the Lord:

“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:6-10).

Finally, as I consider God’s patient perseverance through the actions of His faithful ones, I am reminded of another historical scene from a movie I saw years ago that depicted some of the final battles of the American Civil War. As I recall in those waning days of the conflict, the Confederacy was in such desperate need of soldiers, that it enlisted the teenage students of its military academies in an attempt to thwart the onslaught of the Union advances. In a dramatic battleground scene, there were two obvious young friends or brothers who were caught in crossfire, when one of the youngsters was struck by a bullet in the torso that induced substantial internal bleeding. While lying in the field with bullets screaming overhead, the uninjured student-soldier leaned down to comfort his friend, as the loss of blood began to take his life. But before the young man succumbed to his wound, he uttered these words which have stuck in my mind ever since, “I’ll see you on the other side,” with a smile. In other words, despite his youth and willingness to offer his life to a cause he believed in, he was confident that by his faith in God, he would be in the presence of the Lord. But he also knew that his friend would eventually join him in just a matter of time!

In a similar vein, I am confident that many of God’s people down through the millennia have had that same conviction regarding their ultimate destiny, as they have chosen to take actions—rather than utter mere words—for their belief in the Holy One of Israel. The annals of history are filled with such testimonies. Thankfully, our patient Creator God and His plan for the ages are proceeding along according to His perfect will. We might not understand why certain things happen, but we do know that He is persevering through it all! My prayer is that we will each do our part, and fulfill the roles which He has foreordained each of us to do. In the end, no matter what our individual call is, surely we will know that we will ultimately be in His presence, proclaiming all honor and glory to Him alone!

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever’” (Revelation 5:13).

May we praise You, Lord, for Your patient perseverance!

Until the Messianic restoration of all things...

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

June 2016

Dear Friends:

Following many of the political maneuvers taking place this year, 2016 is a year where it should be quite conscious to each of us, that there are many people who are **anti-establishment**. The reasons for this are varied



and complex. Whether it be the referendum in the United Kingdom on whether to stay or leave the European Union, or whether it be the upcoming presidential election in the United States, many people believe that their leaders have betrayed and failed them. Perhaps this is something that happens at various points throughout history. One of the indicators issued by Yeshua of His forthcoming return is, “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another” (Matthew 24:10). *The trust level between people and their leaders is at an all-time low.*

Like many of my peers, having been in high school in the late 1990s and college in the early 2000s, I was affected by the widescale lack of trust in “the establishment,” be it political or religious. By the mid-2000s, I was absolutely appalled by how various Christian leaders spoke out against the activities of one American president in the 1990s, but then were broadly silent about the activities of another in the 2000s—when both of them did some pretty bad things.

But on a more personal level, being in high school and college in the 1990s and into the 2000s, *and* being a part of a very up-and-coming Messianic movement—I was told by various leaders and people that I was a member of the “next generation,” and that my concerns would very much be taken into consideration, as we considered the growth and expansion of our faith community. Well, as I went to college and seminary, and starting asking a number of questions about the Bible and particular issues, I found myself being increasingly isolated and dismissed from such people. Subjects and issues that both Judaism and Christianity have had to deal with for the past century, were inconvenient, and by raising awareness, I made some people look bad. Today, it is not uncommon for people attending Messianic congregations and fellowships, to not see many people in their late twenties to late thirties. **Did my “next generation” just get lost?** Or, were we really dismissed?

The Messianic movement is a very unique and special community. We all know that we have a responsibility to present the good news of Yeshua as the Messiah to the Jewish community. We should also know that we have a responsibility to welcome in those evangelical Christian Believers who are embracing their Hebraic and Jewish Roots in a very tangible way. In our uniqueness, let us not forget that many of us, across different demographic divides, are all in this “together.” We need to make more of an effort, in a season of growing mistrust and suspicion, to not allow those among us—particularly that younger, “next generation”—feel isolated and alone.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee