

The Chosen People

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**"TO THE JEW I BECAME AS A JEW."
Jewishness Finds Its
Place In The Church**



The Chosen People

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"**L' Shanah Ha Ba-ah B-yrusalim**" (Next Year in Jerusalem). With this acclamation of hope, the Passover Seder closes. In a few short hours, a Jewish family has relived the Exodus out of Egypt. Passover is a festival of hope. Year after year it retells God's great redemptive power when He brought Israel out of Egypt. It's the story of a slave set free; a people of bondage forged into a nation of hope.

"Next Year in Jerusalem" symbolizes that hope. It's the hope of the Jewish people in exile and in persecution through the Holocaust. It is remembering that God will not forget His promises. It is a national hope that one day Israel will be restored to the glory promised by God to the prophets.

One day soon, we believe that hope will be realized when our Messiah the Lord Jesus returns to establish His kingdom. Until then, however, we as believers are also called upon to share in an acclamation of hope. For us, it is not "Next Year in Jerusalem," though that is certainly a hope. It is "Now is the Day of Salvation."

Ours is a present hope, a living hope, a purifying hope. It too finds its basis in the Passover—not in the Exodus from Egypt, but in the forgiveness and cleansing of sin through our Passover Lamb, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (cf. 1 Cor 5:7). This is the message of salvation that our missionaries and staff are prayerfully carrying to the Jewish people around the world. It is an urgent message because the hour is late and the fields are white unto harvest. The night is coming when no man can work. We realize that without the Lord Jesus there is no hope for Jew or Gentile. It is also a personal message.

Very few Jewish people come to faith in Jesus through great evangelistic crusades, large church meetings, or radio and television evangelists. Most Jewish people come to faith in Jesus through an individual witness, a one to one ministry. Jewish evangelism is demonstrating our Messiah's love through word and deed. It is being involved in the lives of those to whom we minister. It is carefully pointing out that each individual, Jewish or Gentile, must make a personal decision concerning Jesus. As you can well imagine, this takes time and infinite patience. God has given to us a wonderful staff of workers.

Please continue to pray for each of them as they faithfully reach out with the Gospel to their Jewish friends and families. As you read through the pages of this issue of *The Chosen People* magazine, I trust that you will be impressed with the fact that indeed Passover has become a day of salvation, a day of hope for many Jewish people.

Let us pray together that this Passover may be a day of salvation for your Jewish friends and my Jewish friends. Thank you for your faithfulness in praying for and supporting this worldwide ministry to the Jewish people.

In Messiah,

HAROLD A. SEVENER

“I have been pulling hard uphill with you for many years, waiting for the Mission building, and now when I’m almost to the top, the Lord wants me to go away. I have asked God to let me live to see the building and a Jewish Christian congregation worshipping the Lord in it, but He says no, just as to Moses when he wanted to enter the Promised Land.”

From her deathbed, Rose Hoffman Cohn whispered these words to her husband, Leopold Cohn, founder of ABMJ/Chosen People Ministries. In April 1908, just as she sensed in her spirit, she went to be with the Lord before she saw the fulfillment of her dream.

But even had she lived another year or two, she still would not have seen the great waves of blessing that God brought to her beloved Jewish people.

A DREAM COME TRUE

Since the middle of this century, God has drawn more Jewish believers to Himself than any time since the first church.

As a result of these large numbers of Jewish people coming to Christ, Mrs. Cohn’s dream is now becoming a reality. Throughout the country and

even around the world, there are Jewish-oriented congregations where Christ is proclaimed from a Jewish perspective and is worshipped by Jews and Gentiles together.

ABMJ missionaries have been a part of many of these congregations. Some, such as those in Israel, we uphold in prayer. Others were started and pastored by ABMJ missionaries until they were able to be self-supporting and self-sustaining.

The Olive Tree Congregation in Chicago is such an example. It was originally started by John Bell and Roy Schwarcz but now is independent of the ABMJ/Chosen People Ministries and has a full-time pastor. In fellowship with local churches, the Olive Tree Congregation gives support to several mission agencies and workers. A second Olive Tree Congregation in

ABMJ/Chosen People Ministries’ missionary Larry Feldman conducts services at Beth Messiah Congregation in East Hanover, N.J.



Messianic congregations where both Jews and Gentiles are worshipping together within a Jewish cultural context are probably the single best possible witness to the Jewish people.

—Larry Feldman



Toronto has recently been established by missionary Roy Schwarcz.

Many of the congregations in which we have a part today are in various stages of growth. The Vineyard in Chicago and the Olive Tree in Toronto are pastored by missionary Roy Schwarcz. Beth Messiah Congregation in East Hanover, N.J., was recently started by ABMJ missionary Larry Feldman and Light of Israel Congregation in White Plains, N.Y., pastored by ABMJ missionary Sam Nadler, continues to thrive.

Mrs. Cohn did not live to see her dream come true. But her vision of establishing worshipping Jewish Christian congregations that would reach out to other Jewish people has come to fruition through the grace of God given to these men.



ROY SCHWARCZ
Missionary, Chicago IL

Jewish Christian congregations meet the real needs of Jewish people. It's fine to say, "There are already enough



Larry Feldman

Photos by Al Katz and Al Rothman



Ray Schwartz

Judaism isn't something from which one should repent. If there is to be a stumbling block, it should be Christ crucified, not the way He is presented.

— John Bell

Bible-teaching churches," but the fact is, these churches aren't geared toward concentrated Jewish evangelism.

One couple who is active in our Chicago congregation, the Vineyard, is a perfect example. Bob and Linda had been married for several years. They were happy, successful, and by all social appearances would seem to fit into any church.

Linda was a Christian, but Bob was a Jew who didn't believe in Jesus and



John Bell

For Linda, the congregation put Jesus in His proper role as Lord and Messiah. For Bob, the congregation put the Gospel in a (Jewish) context he could understand.

—Roy Schwarcz

Linda and Bob Kruger



who was uncomfortable in a church. There was too much that was alien to him, and he couldn't understand why some churches ignored so much of the Old Testament. He was afraid this type of teaching would alienate his children from their Jewishness and from his family. Linda went with him to synagogue, but she wasn't comfortable where they didn't preach Christ.

When Linda saw a newspaper ad for our high holiday services, they decided to give us a try. They were both immediately comfortable in the meetings. For Linda, the congregation put Jesus in His proper role as Lord and Messiah. For Bob, the congre-

gation put the Gospel in a context he could understand. He saw how the Old Testament, which he had studied when he was young, was really one book with the New Testament—the old pointing the way to the new.

It wasn't just the services and their Jewish context, though, that brought Bob to the Lord. It was the people. The congregation was committed to reaching Jewish people.

I met with him for Bible studies, and the others prayed for him, got involved in his life, and were sensitive to his doubts. He was able to see the bigger picture and to understand Messiah Yeshua as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. Now Bob and Linda are part of making this happen for others like themselves. □

JOHN BELL
Midwest Regional Director
Chicago, IL

Jewish-oriented congregations can serve more effectively than non-Jewish churches on two specific levels: (1) They can more readily address the needs of a distinctively Jewish culture, and (2) they can present a *corporate* testimony of Jesus as Messiah to large numbers of Jewish people.

Many churches are willing to reach out to Jewish people. Most Bible-teaching churches see the urgent need to witness to the Jews. But Judaism cannot be approached as merely another religion. It's a *culture*, and most Gentiles are unequipped to minister to the needs of this culture within their own culture.

A congregation of Jewish Christians, however, can meet these needs, just as missionaries do in other cultures. For instance, it would be unthinkable in today's mission field to establish a distinctively American church in Latin America, China, or Africa. Likewise, Jewish people have their own memories and culture that can be incorporated into the faith.

Judaism isn't something from which one should repent. If there is to be a stumbling block, it should be Christ crucified, not the way He is presented. Unbelief and sin are the issues, and this is not always made clear when the Gospel is presented by someone who is not familiar with Judaism and the Jewish culture.

There is a great deal in Judaism, and certainly in all the Old Testament, that clearly points to Jesus. Jesus used Judaism and the Old Testament to point to Himself, and so did the early apostles. Paul had the same revelation, and, thank God, today there are many Jewish believers in Jesus who are using the same approach! □

By LARRY FELDMAN
Missionary, West Orange, NJ

Messianic congregations, that is, congregations where both Jews and Gentiles are worshipping together within a Jewish cultural context, are probably the single best possible witness to the Jewish people.

I know that we've been able to point to isolated believers and say, "See, that person is Jewish and came through the witness of a Gentile church." But for every Jew we see won, how many have been pushed away? What's sad is that they weren't pushed away by Jesus, they were pushed away because they couldn't see through centuries of Gentile cultural trappings that have become part of the Church.

Being born a Jew is not a matter of pride. It's a matter of fact. Jews were created distinctive from non-Jews. It's antibiblical to make a Gentile into a Jew, and it's equally wrong to force a Jewish person to become a Gentile.

It's the same as the distinction between men and women. They are one in Messiah, one in the way in which they can have a relationship with God. Yet in a marriage, God says that it takes a man and a woman, each with a separate role, to join in a perfect union.

I can't point out any specific things that make a congregation "Jewish," but I know that when unsaved Jewish people enter our services, and there are many who do, they can listen to the Gospel without being forced to divorce themselves from everything they've ever known to be a part of themselves and their culture. □

Getting Through To Harry



By TOM HUCKEL
Missionary, Phila.

Harry was scheduled to enter the hospital for tests on what the doctors thought was a cancerous tumor. For two nights he had lain awake thinking about life and death, so the evening that Herb Jaffee and I went to visit him, Harry was feeling tired and anxious.

We knew Harry had heard the Gospel from his neighbors, Walt and Vickie. He had also seen them live their beliefs. By human reasoning, it seemed that Harry had rejected Christ, but Harry frequently ended their discussions by saying, "I'm Jewish and Jews don't believe in Jesus."

Because of this, Walt and Vickie knew that despite all the right words, something wasn't getting through to Harry. When they asked me to share the Gospel from a Jewish perspective with Harry, I agreed.

As Herb and I began to speak with Harry, Herb sensed Harry's insecurity and uncertainty. He explained how God had worked in his own life to show him the surety that comes from Messiah.

As Herb spoke, Harry's look grew puzzled. The message was clear, but coming from another Jewish person, it was unexpected. Finally, a look of understanding came across his face.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "you are a *meshumad*."

This Yiddish word meaning "traitor" is usually a great insult. But at this moment, it wasn't so much an accusation as it was an indication of the attitude Harry had toward Jesus.

"Harry," I broke in, "let me explain. Herb is Jewish and believes in Jesus. I'm a Gentile who also believes. Herb didn't become a Gentile or a traitor. Jesus is the promised Messiah of *your* people."

As I spoke, I saw God opening Harry's heart. Perhaps it was the stillness in the room, perhaps the glimmer of anticipation in his eyes. It was as though everything he had seen and heard from Walt and Vickie was falling into place.

I continued, "You know what Walt and Vickie believe. But do you realize that Jesus sacrificed His life for the sins of *all* people, both Jews and Gentiles? When you think about it, it makes sense that there would have to be one sacrifice for us all. After all, sacrifice is a part of life. Every piece of bread you eat brought death to a stalk of grain; every piece of meat meant death to an animal. Just as it is in the physical world, so too is it in the spiritual. The difference is that to bring spiritual life, it took a perfect sacrifice. And who could be a perfect sacrifice but God alone?"

"You know, Harry, Jesus wasn't a little boy who grew up to be God. God prophesied that He would come to earth. He lived as we live, except He never sinned. When He died for us, even death couldn't hold Him. We can join in His resurrection. This is what having a personal relationship with God means.

"God cannot lie," I then explained as I quoted Numbers 23:19. "And He has told us in John 3:16 that He gives

eternal life to all who believe in His Son."

Harry nodded. "I've heard it all before, but now I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is true. I'm a candidate!"

My heart leaped, but I held off a moment longer. "What do you mean?" I asked.

"I believe," he proclaimed with joyfulness.

"If you died tonight, where would you go?"

With all uncertainty and unsureness gone, he exclaimed, "To be with the Lord!"

Without fanfare we bowed our heads and thanked God for what He had just done in Harry's life.

In God's providence, the medical tests turned out to be negative, so we had more cause to rejoice. Walt and Vickie continue to reach out to Harry and have asked us to pray for his growth and for his wife, who does not yet know Messiah. And even as I continue to pray for this new brother, I remember the new look on Harry's once worried face. It is a look that testifies to a new life in a heart that has seen the Lord God of Israel. □

TEACHING PASSOVER To Your Young People

PASSOVER

On Friday, April 5, the holiday of Passover begins. Jewish people around the world celebrate this seven-day commemoration of the Israelites' redemption from slavery in Egypt. The holiday is celebrated by a family observance, the Seder, and by the removal of all forms of leaven from the household.

This festival of freedom is also an important part of the Jewish heritage that Christians share. It was at a Passover meal that Jesus instituted our Communion, and the New Testament



is replete with references to Passover symbols such as the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb.

Because of its significance in the Jewish home, Passover is a very meaningful time for Christians to pray for their unsaved Jewish friends. It is also a special time of the year, because of its proximity to Easter, to teach Christian young people more about the redemptive work of Christ.

TEACHING PASSOVER TO YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE

The teacher should read Exodus 12 in advance and be able to tell the story in a way the children will understand.

As you tell the story, emphasize the following points:

1. The name of the holiday originated because God *passed over* the homes of Egypt. Where the blood of the lamb was applied, the firstborn was spared from death.

2. The blood was applied to the door posts and the lintel of each household (the door posts are the side posts, and the lintel is the top post).

3. It was during the Passover that God redeemed the Israelites from slavery.

After the story, emphasize the following points and draw the following parallels:

1. The blood formed the sign of a cross on each door.

2. When we apply the blood of Jesus shed on the cross to our hearts, God spares us from spiritual death.

3. Just as God redeemed the Israelites from slavery, He redeems us from sin.

Have the children join in the following activities:

1. A question-and-answer period about how sin is like slavery, what it

means to be redeemed, and how the faith of the Israelites is a picture of what we have to do with the blood of Jesus.

2. For younger children: Have them draw and color a doorway. With dark red or purple, apply dots where the blood was placed. Have the children connect the dots to draw a cross.

3. Give each child a piece of matza (unleavened bread, available in most grocery stores) and a glass of grape juice. The teacher should explain that leaven is a symbol of sin and show the students that matza is unleavened and it is also pierced and striped. It's easiest to show that it is pierced by holding a piece in front of a burning candle so the flame shows through. Explain that Jesus ate matza at His last supper with the disciples and said it was His body (see Luke 22:19). Explain that Jesus, like the matza, was without leaven (sin) and that He was pierced for our sins and we are healed by His stripes (see Isaiah 53:5).

In explaining the grape juice, point out that it is deep purple like blood. Explain how Jesus said it was His blood (Luke 22:20) and how it was poured out for our sins. Draw the parallel of what God did for the Israelites through the blood of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12.

Let the children eat the matza and drink the juice. If they are old enough to celebrate Communion, hold a discussion on what this act means to those of us who know Jesus as Savior.

An excellent tool for groups of all ages is the ABMJ/Chosen People Ministries kit, *Christ in the Passover Seder Dinner*. In it are complete instructions and explanations to hold a Passover dinner, including music, recipes, order of service, and steps for preparation. □

THE PROMISE OF PASSOVER

More clearly than any artist, more dramatically than any playwright, God gives us a picture of redemption in the holiday of Passover. The unblemished lamb, the unleavened bread, the blood on the door posts, the freedom from death are all strokes of the Master's brush on the canvas of Jewish history.

As Jewish families around the world prepare for the Passover, your ABMJ missionaries also prepare themselves to proclaim the prophetic portrait that God commanded His people to remember in all generations. During April we will take part in hundreds of services and dinners where the true Lamb of Passover is proclaimed. Many Jewish people will hear and, by God's grace, will have the courage to apply the sacrificial blood to their own lives and accept Jesus as Messiah.

We invite you to be a part of our ministry this month through your prayers and gifts. Come with us into churches and homes, to dinners and services, to proclaim the risen Passover Lamb to those He loves so much. Join us in the drama of seeing Jewish people return to the God of their fathers.

I promise to pray for ABMJ missionaries and for the salvation of the Jewish people.

I also enclose \$_____ in support of ABMJ missionaries.

NAME (Please print)

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TESTIMONY

TOO JEWISH TO

In the middle of the service my father walked in. "Look here.

You have your religion and we have ours," he said to the pastor. "These are my children and we're Jewish."

Then he walked over to us and took us by the hand.



BELIEVE IN JESUS

By JEFF SEIF
Missionary, Dallas, TX

When I was little, instead of public school I went to *yeshivah*. Most of my teachers had been in Nazi Germany, and I remember having a terror of ovens when I was very young. Even in our comfortable home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, when we lit the oven, I pictured the Jews that had been burned to death in the concentration camps.

My father's family left Germany long before the war, but my mother had actually been smuggled out of the country during the Holocaust. I knew that it had been an awful experience and that it had something to do with being Jewish. I felt like I always had to be wary of Gentiles, because there was no telling what they would do to me.

It's not that I knew many Gentiles, because the people in both my school and my immediate neighborhood were all Jewish. However, the few non-Jews I met didn't help my attitude. One day when I was around 11 years old as I walked home from school, two girls leaned out a window above me.

I must have looked strange to them with my stark black clothes, *yarmulke* (skullcap), and the fringed garment worn by religious Jews hanging conspicuously from beneath my jacket.

"Hey, Jew," one of them shouted. "Yeh, you dirty Jew. You killed Jesus."

I was amazed. I didn't kill anyone! The Jews weren't the killers: they were the ones who *got* killed. I ran all the way home and told my dad about it. He got a sad look on his face and shook his head. "I don't know what they're talking about," he said. "Jesus was a Jew."

I got the idea that Jesus was another misunderstood Jewish person, someone whom people hated.

I suppose I should have known that there was a world out there that believed in Jesus. I was vaguely aware of Christmas, a holiday that Gentiles celebrated, and every year my dad and sister and I went down to Macys and looked at the window displays. Somehow, though, without ever being told, I knew it was part of their world. Something that didn't affect me.

Then one day in the playground a little girl came up and slugged me. I might blame it on the fact that I looked different, but it was probably just childish horseplay.



As an ABMJ missionary in Dallas, Jeff is busy telling other Jewish people that they are not too Jewish to believe in Jesus. Praise God that many are listening!

At any rate, she hit me hard enough that it really hurt, and that night her father came over to our house to apologize. While he was there, he told my parents he'd like to take me and my sister to church with him. He must have said it in a friendly, neighborly way, because my father agreed to let us go.

When we entered the church I was relieved that there were no statues to bow down to. Still, I sensed a difference. The preacher was talking about heaven and hell. He wrapped up his sermon by asking, "Who wants to go to heaven?"

Lisa, my sister, although old enough to know better, was young enough to be frightened by the description of hell. She raised her hand. I knew

better, but was curious to hear more. So the next night we went back to the church.

In the middle of the service, my father walked in. I'll never forget how determined he looked when he walked right up to the front of the church where the pastor was preaching.

In a firm but not unpleasant tone, he said, "Look here. You have your religion and we have ours. I appreciate what you're doing, but these are my children and we're Jewish." Then he walked over to us and took us by the hand. As we exited, the church members just sat there staring in amazement.

So that was my encounter with Christianity until I was a teenager, out of high school, and working at a hotline counseling center. One day I was walking down the street, and a young person came up to me. Normally I ignored people who tried to tell me about Jesus, but this fellow was very likable and seemed quite sincere.

"Look, I don't believe in Jesus," I explained.

"Why not?" he asked.

There was really no good answer. I shrugged my shoulders and said, "I don't know."

"Do you know what the Scriptures say?"

I knew a lot about the Bible from my days at the *yeshivah*, but I didn't know specifically what the Bible said about Jesus. "No," I answered honestly.

"Would you like to?" he asked.

"Sure," I said. Maybe it seems funny that I was so open, but I was really interested. He kept telling me about Scripture and asked me to read certain passages. He showed me Isaiah 53:5 and read, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed."

cont'd. on following pg.

"What about this?" he asked.

"Sure seems like it's about Jesus," I admitted.

Then he showed me Psalm 22 and several other passages. When he asked me what I thought, I could only say, "This looks true."

He asked me if I wanted to receive Jesus.

"Yes, I'm going to do it!" I said.

After we prayed, I had a wonderful feeling, like a wrapping had come off my heart. I knew something significant had happened in my life. Slowly, as I read the Bible and learned about it, I began to appreciate what had actually occurred that day.

Sure, there have been rough times since then. At one point I seemed to just coast in my faith, more accurately, to coast backward, but God brought me around. I moved to Chicago, and as I felt God beginning to stir in me, I attended the Olive Tree Congregation.

Barry Berger, the pastor at that time, introduced me to John Bell. Later, John encouraged me to attend Moody Bible Institute. I took his advice, and when my studies ended, I realized I was called to full-time ministry. I applied for the ABMJ Summer Training and Evangelism Program (S.T.E.P.), and during that summer, I really saw what it was like to be a missionary. With this training completed, I was accepted on ABMJ/Chosen People Ministries' full-time staff.

Sometimes when I witness to people, they'll say, "I'm Jewish and I don't believe in Jesus." "Why not?" I'll ask, just as someone asked me once. After all, I know that if He can open my heart, He can do the same for them.

□

What is the meaning of **THE RENT VEIL?**

By DR. DANIEL FUCHS

The death of our Lord is the greatest miracle in history. The fact that He who created the world and by whom "all things consist" should ever die is one of the greatest wonders of revelation. It is not surprising, therefore, that just at the moment our Lord died, other miracles happened.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Mt. 27:50-53).

In the account of the open graves, we have an example of the extreme accuracy of the Scriptures. Although the graves were opened at the time of our Lord's death, the bodies "came out of the graves after his resurrection."

The Lord Jesus Christ is "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5), and He is the One who fulfills the type of the Feast of Firstfruits (see Lev. 23:9-14). He is "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). The opened graves at Calvary were a prophecy of His resurrection.

The opened graves, as important as

they are, are mentioned only by Matthew. However, all of the Synoptic Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell about the veil of the Temple being torn in two. This fact is important.

Herod's Temple, like the original Tabernacle, was divided into three parts. There was the outer court, which was open to all Israel; the sanctuary, usually called the Holy Place, to which only the priests had access; and the Holy of Holies, which only the high priest could enter one day a year, on the Day of Atonement.

Between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies a beautiful embroidered veil was suspended by clasps from four pillars; on it the figure of the cherubim was ornately fashioned on blue, purple, and scarlet material.

Actually in Herod's Temple there were two veils that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This was because the Sanhedrin could not agree whether the original veil in Solomon's Temple hung from inside or outside the Holy of Holies. (See the drawing of the floor plan.)

"... there was not any wall between the Holy and Most Holy Place, but the space of one cubit, assigned to it in the former Temple, was left unoccupied, and one Veil hung on the side of the Holy, the other on that of the Most Holy Place. According to an account

dating from Temple-times, there were altogether thirteen Veils used in various parts of the Temple—two new ones being made every year. The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 300 priests to manipulate each. If the Veil was at all such as is described in the Talmud, it could not have been rent in twain by a mere earthquake or the fall of the lintel, although its composition in squares fastened together might explain, how the rent might be as described in the Gospel."

Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 611.

It was at Jesus' death that the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. The allegorical commentators of an older generation interpreted this miracle as a token of God's grief at Calvary. In the Scriptures, the rending of clothing is frequently used to express grief and deep sorrow.

But this symbolism is not valid. Isaiah is eloquent as he tells us that God was not grieved at the cross! "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; . . . the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in

his hand" (Isa. 53:10).

Early in His ministry, our Lord hinted about the real meaning of the rent veil. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But he spake of the temple of his body" (Jn. 2:19, 21). At Calvary our Lord proved His claims. He was the fulfillment of what the Temple really was—the dwelling place of God with man—and the place of accepted sacrifice was on the cross. The enemy believed that he was destroying "the temple of his body." But our Lord had promised, "In three days I will raise it up."

From Matthew's account, it seems that just as the Lord died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain" (Mt. 27:51). Just think what effect this miracle must have had upon the priests who were ministering in the Holy Place! It must have been at the time of the evening sacrifice. As they carefully observed the ritual, little did they realize that just outside the city's wall in a place called Golgotha the real Lamb of God was being sacrificed.

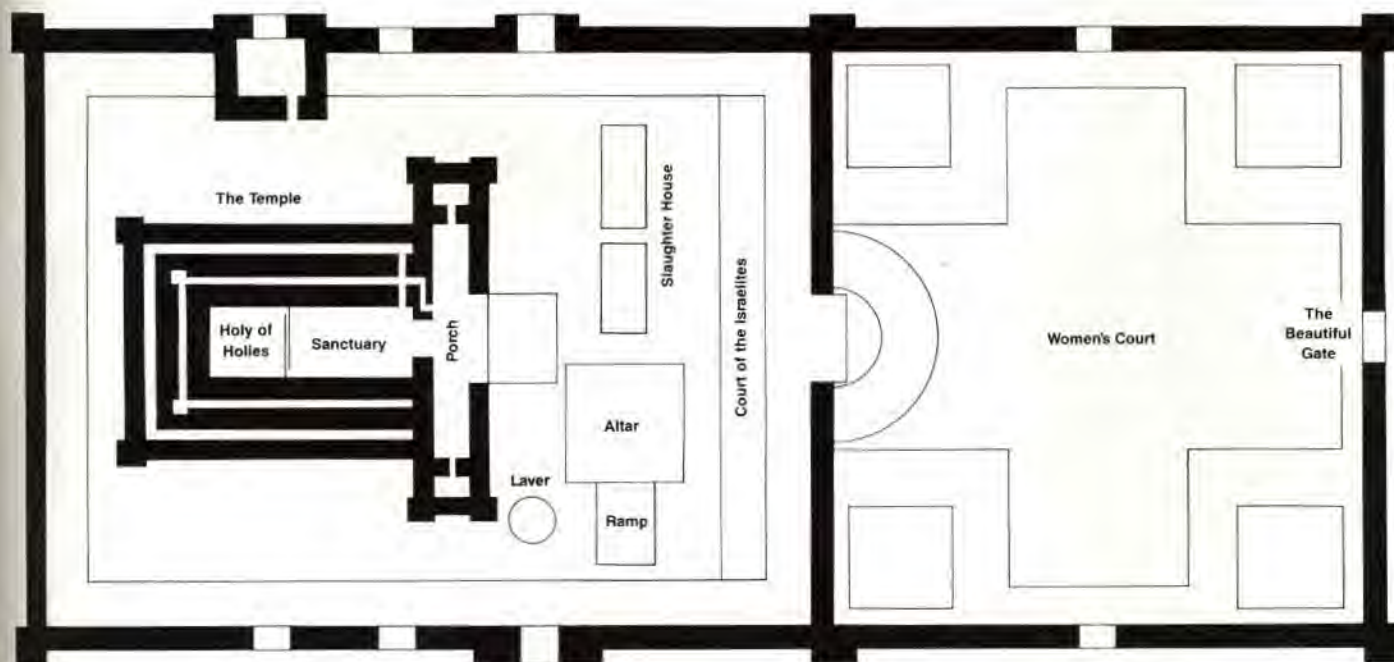
Suddenly, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, and the priests could look into the Holy of Holies! In Israel's early history, there was only one man alive at one time who ever peered into the Holy of Holies. Suddenly, this was changed!

All of the priests who were ministering in the sanctuary could see inside beyond the veil.

In the first Temple, inside the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant stood covered by the Mercy Seat. Above it, the visible presence of the Lord, the Shekinah Glory, rested in a cloud. But in Herod's Temple, there was neither the Shekinah glory nor the Ark. All was empty. The Glory had departed, and their house was left desolate.

What is the meaning of the rent veil? The Letter to the Hebrews explains its truth. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22). The Scriptures plainly teach that the torn veil of the Temple symbolizes the broken body of our Lord.

The Letter to the Hebrews is anonymous. We don't know who the human author was, nor do we know the geographical location of those to whom it was written. However, from the



continued from previous page

letter itself, we learn much about them. There is no question that they were Jewish Christians who had some deep spiritual problems.

They were "dull of hearing" (5:11), tempted to be "wearied and faint" in their minds (12:3), and many were neglecting their church responsibilities (10:25). They were tempted to cast away their confidence (10:35). They grieved their church authorities (13:17).

They failed to mature spiritually (5:11-14). They were in danger of coming short of God's promises (4:1) and of slipping away from what they had heard (2:1). They were on the verge of apostasy (3:12). In their bitterness, they were tempted to reject God's grace (12:15). They were in danger of falling into "the hands of the living God" (10:31).

It seems as if they had become disenchanted in their faith. They had expected a new earthly, visible kingdom, and they were keenly disappointed. Their families and their fellow Jews rejected them; their faith was ridiculed. The Temple was still standing (see Heb. 10:11), but the Hebrew Christians had to suffer "without the camp." They were sorely tempted to return to Judaism.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to exhort the Jewish Christians who were wavering in their faith to "hold fast" (3:6) and "to go on to perfection" (6:1).

The key word is "better" (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; etc.). This letter contrasts the wonderful things of Judaism with the "better" things of the Lord Jesus Christ. The key teaching of this letter is found in 8:1, 2: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

In other words, the Lord Jesus is a "better" high priest, He is seated on the right hand of God, and He ministers in the "better" Tabernacle, the one God made and not man. Besides this, the author argues that the Taber-

nacle Moses made was just a model of the true Tabernacle in heaven. "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5).

When our Lord died for our sins, the veil of the Temple was rent. In the earthly Temple, there was emptiness behind the veil—no ark; no cherubim; and, worst of all, there was no Shekinah. "Ichabod" (there is no glory!) was being written.

It was different in the "better"

Suddenly, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. In Israel's early history, there was only one man alive at one time who ever peered into the Holy of Holies. Suddenly, this was changed.

Tabernacle. Our Lord, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). The term Majesty on high is used only one other time in the Scriptures in Hebrews 8:1, 2, where we have seen that our Lord, our High Priest, the minister of the sanctuary and true tabernacle, is now seated on this throne.

The message of the rent veil is this: Christ died for our sins, His sacrifice has been accepted, and there is no other atonement. He is enthroned in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly Tabernacle. Because of this, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can confidently and boldly enter into the Holy of Holies.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). □

APRIL SHOWERS

When the income tax filing deadline arrives each year, almost everyone wishes there were a way to reduce this annual burden and vows to attempt some tax planning before the end of the next calendar year.

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Questions and Answers

QUESTION: What ever happened to the Ark of the Covenant? Was it destroyed or hidden?

ANSWER: There is no Scripture reference nor historical document available at the present time that sheds light on the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant. The appearance of the Ark in the heavenly temple (Rev. 11:19) is not meant to give one the impression that the Ark of the Covenant established in Solomon's Temple was somehow transported to heaven and there now resides. Rather, the reference in Revelation 11 serves to symbolize God's covenantal faithfulness and to assure His people that He will indeed fulfill His promises of judgment upon the wicked and of deliverance for the righteous.

It is quite possible that the Ark of the Covenant was destroyed in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar razed Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (cf. 2 Ki. 25:8-10). In the Apocryphal work entitled 2 Maccabees, a legend is preserved that Jeremiah the prophet took the Ark of the Covenant, the tent

of meeting, and the incense altar and hid them in a cave upon Mt. Nebo, the mountain from which Moses saw the promised land before he died (Dt. 34:1-4). According to this legend, the Ark was to remain hidden until, "God finally gathers His people together and shows mercy to them. Then the Lord will bring these things to light again, and the glory of the Lord will appear with the cloud, as it was seen both in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the temple might be worthily consecrated" (2 Macc. 2:7, 8).

QUESTION: How were the Old Testament books selected for the canon?

ANSWER: It should be understood at the outset that the inclusion of a book into the canon did not determine nor cause it to be considered as inspired. Rather, inclusion into the canon was man's recognition of the already divinely inspired nature of the book being evaluated. Thus, we find the Holy Spirit both inspired the writing of the Holy Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16;

2 Pet. 1:21) and guided man in the recognition of it.

The Scriptures were collected and kept by God's people. The Law was written (Ex. 24:3-8) and then put into the Ark of the Covenant (Dt. 31:24-26). Joshua, after compiling his book, added it to the Book of the Law of God (Josh. 24:26). Samuel put his book before the Lord (1 Sam. 10:25). This may refer to both the books of Judges and Ruth. No later than 1000 B.C. was the collection of the Torah firmly established (1 Ki. 2:3). The Samaritan version of the Pentateuch bears witness to the Law by the time of Hezekiah (725 to 695 B.C.). And, during the reign of Josiah around 625 B.C., the Law is read before the people (2 Ki. 23:1, 2, 21). Thus, the Old Testament Scripture was continually growing, although it was complete at every stage. The first body of Scripture to be recognized as authoritative was the Law of Moses. Later, the rest of the Old Testament was recognized as being divine in origin.

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