

MaozNews No. 14

Published every 4 weeks or so
February 2009

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Some have inquired about help to Gaza residents. The best address which I can provide is: https://www.donate.bt.com/bt_form_gaza.html?p_form_id=TRF

This help will not reach Gaza Christians.

Parting Sermon

On Saturday evening, December 27th, Grace and Truth Christian Congregation bid me adieu as I ended my term of service as Pastor of the church. Representatives from the churches in Israel were invited to attend. Following are my parting words. I had addressed the church earlier that day. It was the first time a local Pastor in Israel had completed his term of service and retired and this message was meant for brethren across the country.

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Isaiah spoke of the day in which **none but the Lord would be exalted**, for which purpose the arrogant pride of man will be suppressed: *The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled. The LORD alone will be exalted in that day* (Isa. 2:17). Jeremiah also spoke of this when he said, *This is what the LORD says: Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD* (Jer. 9:23-24).

We have done well this evening, and will do well in the future if we accord God the honor that is rightly his. He has accomplished all our accomplishments for us. Without his blessing, nothing of what has been achieved would have been achieved. *Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain* (Psa. 127:1).

To my joy, Grace and Truth Christian Congregation has always been driven by a **sincere interest in the welfare of all evangelical congregations in the country**, always sought to serve them all and always strived for unity based on God's truth, the work of Messiah for and in us, and a recognition that we belong one to another in spite

significant differences between us. It is wonderful to see here this evening a body of people representative of a broad, variegated body of those who fear God, expressing unity by their sheer presence. Thank you for this wonderful gift, this blessed way to part from my task as the Pastor of one of your congregations.

I thank God and every one of the congregants of Grace and Truth for the privilege, the challenge, the blessing and the hardships that were associated with the task they laid upon me. I plead: **continue in the ways you have been taught** – on condition that you are convinced that they are God's ways, and God's ways for today, not just for yesterday. Do not hesitate to change, to improve, to correct or to set aside anything that should be set aside, corrected, improved upon or changed. Make sure that any such modifications are the product of courageous, careful thinking in accordance with the word of God, but dare to change all that requires changing.

Sisters and brothers, we live in an age that values human relations more than the truth of God, in which those who call upon others to change their conduct or their views is accused of pride, harshness and lack of love. Do not be intimidated by empty accusations. **Stand for the truth**, for morality and for the love of God above all other loves. Honor every individual, but honor God above all.

Some seek to lay on the followers of Messiah a yoke neither we nor our fathers could bear, that cannot provide salvation and is void of true spirituality. **The roots of our faith are in the Bible are not in pharisaical tradition.** Traditional Judaism is far from being true to the scriptures and we must admit that national identity adds nothing with regard to blessing from God or to spiritual life. It is by grace that we receive grace, and by grace will we enter the kingdom of heaven. We can add nothing to the amazingly perfect work of Messiah. This is the foundation on which we are one in Messiah, Jews and non-Jews. That is the unity of the Spirit, and we are commanded to strive to preserve that unity. We can only do so if we cultivate it.

Christian unity is not primarily organizational but the fruit of a unity of hearts among those who choose to focus on God's word, and who have decided not to allow altruistic considerations, self interest, comfort and human relations to determine matters of Faith and of practice. May the day soon come when all the congregations that are faithful to Messiah in the country – those who function in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, Amharic or any other language – will be united in a unity of hearts and of organization, working together to strengthen each other, learn from each other and, when necessary, correct each other on the foundation of a shared, carefully broad understanding of the fundamentals of our Faith. May we avoid compromising the essentials, while making room for differences among us in non-essentials.

I thank God that more and more is done among the congregations with serious reference to the word of God in matters of **church structure and function**, the content of our Faith, motives and methods for discipline and the importance of

teaching. There is still room for improvement in these areas. I believe it will come. Thank God for those who dare lead, even if they must swim against the tide.

We should not hesitate to declare: **God is one who is three**. Messiah is God the Son, who took on our humanity in every respect but sinfulness. He now sits at the right hand of the Father as God and as man, a full partner in the Father's kingdom until all his enemies are made to be his footstool.

God created the world in six days. He does not love only Jews but, and to the same measure, gentiles too. The leaders of rabbinical Judaism deviated from God's way and established ritual, hypocrisy and national pride in place of the fear of God, morality and humility. They changed the holy scriptures and, so long as they reject Messiah and his teaching, they cannot be our instructors.

Heaven and hell exist. We can do nothing to ensure or complete our salvation, and need not do anything: **Jesus did all that is necessary**. We must acknowledge our sin and inability, cast ourselves on God's grace, and receive from him a blessing that exceeds imagination. Eyes have not seen, ears have not heard the things God has prepared for those who love him. That being so, our duty is to sanctify ourselves, to live in a manner characterized by the fear of God, a high morality and a continual aspiration to be good to all men and much better than ourselves.

Let's join in believing the Gospel and being saved by it. Let's declare the Gospel from the rooftops! We should do as did the prophets and call upon the nation as a whole rather than just to individuals: **Israel, open your eyes**. You've slept enough. Look, here is king Messiah! It is not enough to recognize his Messiahship, we must recognize our national sins, the oppressive selfishness that characterizes us, the promiscuous hedonism that is permeating every part of our society, the national arrogance that has transformed "you have chosen us from among the others" into "we are choice in compared to all others".

God will judge us as a nation for our deeds and, if we do not hasten to repent and serve him as he has commanded, we may well witness the destruction of our State and our people's exile once again from the land. *If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God (Deut 28:1–2). However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:... Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other (Deut. 28:15, 63–64).*

Israel needs nothing more than the Gospel. Nothing can transform the nation and ensure its future and its blessing than the Gospel. It is committed to us, let's declare it courageously, with appropriate devotion and sacrifice, in spite of the price.

Finally, sisters and brothers, friends, let's **love one another**, all citizens of our State be they Jewish, gentile or Arab. *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light* (Rom. 13:8-15).

Thank you for the privilege and serving you and alongside you. Thanks to all who supported, trusted and worked alongside me, and to those who challenged, corrected and taught me. I am greatly in your debt. I wish God's blessing to all present this evening, to Israel and the Palestinians salvation, to the church of Messiah. To Grace and Truth Christian Congregation I wish much more of God's blessing than we enjoyed together.

My thanks are given, once again, to the Elders, Deacons, Evangelists and congregants of Grace and Truth, at whose side and from whom I have learned over the years. Thanks to the congregants, to the friends from whose kindness I have benefited over the years. Thanks abundant are due before God and in the presence of this body to my wife and children, who bore the burden of my service more than most realize.

Above all, thanks and praise and worship to God our Father, to Jesus our Lord and to the Holy Spirit, our comforter and sanctifier. May the day soon come when all Israel will be saved as it is written, *a redeemer will come out of Zion and turn ungodliness away from Jacob*. Amen.

World's Oldest Hebrew Inscription?

Based on material from The Associated Press 30/10/2008

An Israeli archaeologist digging at a hilltop south of Jerusalem believes a ceramic shard found in the ruins of an ancient town bears the oldest Hebrew inscription ever discovered, an important glimpse into the culture and language of the Holy Land in Bible times. The five lines of faded characters written 3,000 years ago. The ruins of the fortified settlement where they were found, are indications of a powerful Israelite kingdom in King David's time, says Yossi Garfinkel, the Hebrew University archaeologist in charge of the new dig at Hirbet Qeiyafa.

Other scholars are hesitant to embrace Garfinkel's interpretation of the discovery. Scholars suggest it is difficult – perhaps impossible – to conclude the text is Hebrew and not a related tongue. Garfinkel bases his identification on a three-letter verb from the inscription meaning "to do", a word he said existed only in Hebrew.



"That leads us to believe that this is Hebrew, and that this is the oldest Hebrew inscription that has been found," he said. Hebrew University archaeologist Amihai Mazar said the inscription was very important, as it is the longest proto-Canaanite text ever found, but suggested that calling the text Hebrew might be going too far. "It's proto-Canaanite," he said. "The differentiation between the scripts, and between the languages themselves in that period, remains unclear."

Hirbet Qeiyafa sits near the city of Beit Shemesh in the Judean foothills, once the frontier between the hill-dwelling Israelites and the coastal Philistines. The site overlooks the Valley of Elah, scene of the showdown between David and Goliath, and Goliath's hometown, the Philistine metropolis of Gath.

The curved pottery shard is 15 centimeters by 15 centimeters. It was found near the stairs and stone washtub of an excavated home and was later discovered to bear five lines of characters known as proto-Canaanite, a precursor of the Hebrew alphabet. Carbon-14 analysis of burnt olive pits found in the same layer dated between 1,000 and 975 B.C., the golden age of David's rule in Jerusalem. The shard is now kept in a University safe while philologists translate it, a task expected to take months. Several words have already been tentatively identified, including judge, slave and king.

Scholars have identified smaller Hebrew fragments from the 10th century B.C., but the script, which Garfinkel suggests might be part of a letter, predates the next significant Hebrew inscription by 100 to 200 years. History's best-known Hebrew texts, the Dead Sea scrolls, were penned on parchment 850 and more years later.

The finds have not yet established who the residents were, says Aren Maier, a Bar Ilan University archaeologist who is digging at nearby Gath. It will become clearer if, for example, evidence of the local diet is found, he said:

"Excavations have shown that Philistines ate dogs and pigs, while Israelites did not." He went on to say, "The nature of the ceramic shards found at the site suggest residents might have been neither Israelites nor Philistines but members of a third, forgotten people," he said. "If the inscription is Hebrew, it would indicate a connection to the Israelites and make the text one of the most important texts, without a doubt, in the corpus of Hebrew inscriptions," Maier said. "But it has great importance whatever the language turns out to be," he added.

Archaeology has turned up only scant finds from David's time in the early 10th century B.C. Garfinkel believes fortifications like those at Hirbet Qeiyafa could not have been the fruit of local initiative: The walls would have required moving 200,000 tons of stone, an impossible task for the 500 or so people who lived in the city. It would have required an organized kingdom like the one the Bible attributes to David.

Gaza School Hit by Israel

The United Nations has reversed its stance on one of the bloodiest incidents of the recent Israeli operation in Gaza, saying that the IDF did not hit the United Nations Relief and Works Agency schools after all.

The UN has been under pressure to put the record straight. Maxwell Gaylord, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Jerusalem, said on Monday, February 2 that the IDF mortar shells fell in the street near the compound, not on the compound itself.

Gaylord said that the UN "would like to clarify that the shelling and all of the fatalities took place outside and not inside the school." UNRWA, an agency whose sole purpose is to work with Palestinian refugees, said in response on Tuesday that it had maintained from the day of attack that the wounded were outside of the school compound.

Our website, www.TheMaozWeb.com is **now online**. In following months, we shall place articles and books for downloading. Please note the website address (URL) above. Someone hijacked our preferred name (TheMaozPage), forcing us to change our URL. Changes in the letterhead will follow.

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