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**Israel Today**

Palestinian reaction to the present impasse between the conflict is having extremely negative effects on both societies. The Palestinian Authority, lead by Mahmoud Abbas, is not directly engaged in attacks, but it is perpetually creating an environment which encourage them. Incitement to violence in the carefully controlled public media is rampant. Children at school are taught to hate Jews (not just Israelis). Streets are named after those who carry out attacks and their families receive generous monthly allowances while Israel is described as “murdering” those who perpetuate attacks. Abbas then washes his hands in professed innocence and claims, “my hands have not spilt this blood.”

On the other hand, Israeli policies give the Palestinians no hope. The likelihood of an independent Palestinian State grows increasingly remote as Israeli settlements encroach on more and more territory. On the assumption that time is working in their favor, neither side seems ready to enter meaningful negotiations. The Israeli public is increasingly angry, its daily life disturbed by lone wolf attacks with knives, axes, guns and car ramming by men and women, young and old. Hate crimes never seen before are still few but increasingly evident among Israelis.

When in opposition, the present Israeli Government blamed terrorism on the lack of governmental vision and an inability to act. Whom can it blame now? If any resolution to the conflict is to be achieved, a change in leadership is needed on both sides. Israelis and Palestinians need leadership that will dare challenge the mainstream, change course and lead in new directions.

**God's Infinite Love and Evangelism**

There are many possible motives to evangelism. For some, the propagation of their views over those of others is a means of self-defense. As long as there is anyone anywhere in the world who holds to a different view, they consider themselves threatened. Jeremiah faced this in his day, when Hananiah could not bear to see the faithful prophet being heard so widely, and faced him with a prophecy of his own (Jer.28). Most fundamentalist regimes and many fundamentalist churches are motivated by thoughts of this kind. Their evangelistic endeavors are driven by a sense of insecurity.

For others, the propagation of their views is a means of self-aggrandizement: the more there are who subscribe to their views, the more influential, rich or powerful they can be. The court prophets of the Old Testament were of this sort, cravenly serving the wishes of the king. Such also is the motivation of some modern evangelical churches, who engage in evangelism because, they think, the larger the congregation, the more successful its members and Pastor appear to be.

Some might be tempted to engage in evangelism to win credit in the eyes of God or of their fellow men – after all, a life of sacrifice, valor and conquest is not to be despised. That is what characterized great men of God in the past. Surely, both God and men will honor such achievements. Paul speaks of those who took advantage of his imprisonment to preach the Gospel, hoping to add to his afflictions and establish themselves in their contest with him (Phil. 1:15-18).

There is only one legitimate motive for evangelism: God's infinite love. All other motivations are selfish, unworthy of the message that biblical evangelism is meant to convey. The extent to which we understand this is a measure of the extent to which we have understood the Gospel.

There are many examples of God's love in the scriptures. They all provide the drive for faithfulness and energy in evangelism. Let us, then, think of that love. The classic text from which to preach the love of God is John 3:16-17: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him".

Three are spoken of here: God, his Son and the world.

### **God is Gloriously Self Sufficient**

God is the eternally glorious one who has need of none and yet loves all. He did not create this world out of need, because God is not dependent on any but himself. He is the all-sufficient one to whom nothing can be added, from whom nothing can be subtracted, for whom nothing need be done. He is what he is and ever shall be: eternal, perfect, terrible in holy majesty, never in need of any kind. His happiness is uncontingent; his strength derives from no source but his own glorious essence; his knowledge and wisdom encompass all that is, was, shall be and ever could be. The greatest of nations, all the nations put together from every corner of the globe and from all the generations of human existence are, in comparison to him, less than a single grain of sand is to all the sand on the seashores of the world; less than the film of water that remains when a bucket is emptied (Isa. 40:15). Who can compare with this glorious God?

### **Holy Beyond Description**

Scripture employs imagery in order to give us a sense of what it cannot explain. When the glory of God appeared to Ezekiel, the prophet tells us, *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking* (Ezekiel 1:4-28).

God is pure, so pure that nothing can be compared to him. The angels cringe before the beauty of his awful holiness, shielding their faces lest they look at that ultimate glory. Earth shakes at his appearance, the heavens darken and nature responds with fear and wonder. When He gave his holy law to Israel, *there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled... Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder... When the people saw the thunder and lightning, and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will all die'* (Ex. 19: 16-19, 20:18-19).

This is not a God to be trifled with. He is compared in scripture to a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; 9:3). His is a furiously jealous God (Josh. 24:19; Hosea; Nah. 1:2; Zech. 1:14, 8:2) who brooks no competition, demands man's all (Deut. 11:13; Jer. 29:13) and is not open to compromise or negotiation. He created hell and stokes its fire with the righteousness of his anger, and he will cast the unbelieving, the morally defiled and all the cowardly sinful into a lake of scorching punishment that will never go out until his infinitely insatiable holiness has been exhausted (Rev. 21:8).

Such is the Father who so loved the world and who gave his only begotten Son.

### **God's Son Equal to the Father**

God's Son is equal to his Father in everything. There is not an iota of deity enjoyed by the Father that is not shared by the Son. Like the Father, he is from the beginning. *In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God and The Word was God. He was with God from the beginning* (John 1:1). Like the Father, he has life in himself (John 5:26) and like the Father, life comes from him: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life and that life was the light of men* (John 1:3-4). All the hidden treasures of knowledge and wisdom are in him (Col. 2:3), so that nothing can be understood truly unless considered in relation to him, who sustains the universe by his powerful word (Heb. 1:3).

Like the Father, all that exists, ever did exist and ever will exist was made for him (Col. 1:16). In other words, he is the reason and the goal of everything (Rev. 22:13). Creation, whether material or spiritual, earthly or heavenly, finds its purpose in him. Like the Father, he also is holy (Mark 1:24; Luke 1:35; Acts 3:14; Heb. 7:26; Rev. 3:7), so that sinners shrink before his all-seeing eyes. Even in his humanity, no one could condemn him of sin (John 8:46).

John saw him in his glory and reported that he saw *someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His hair and his head were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in*

*a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead (Rev. 1:12-17).*

Later on in his book John describes Jesus as the Lord of life and death, of heaven and of earth, of the angels, the devils and of all men, *with justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a blazing fire and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:11- 16).*

Now he seats enthroned with his Father, sharing his reign and his glory (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Heb:1:3), and he will return in that glory with his myriads of angels (Mark 8:38) to be glorified in his saints (I Thess. 1:10)

### **The Father's only Son**

Jesus is also God's only begotten Son. Others are sons by divine creation, but Jesus is not included in that order of things (Col. 1:16-17). He holds in relation to creation a position of primacy that none can share (Col. 1:15). Jesus is the Son by virtue of his eternal deity. John describes him as *the only begotten God* (John 1:14) – a strange term, the very strangeness of which draws our attention to the wonder. Jesus was not adopted, not deified, did not obtain a special infusion of the Spirit which lifted him above the ranks of humanity. The wonder of Jesus' savior hood has to do with God stooping to assume humanity, not otherwise. *Being in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness (Phil. 2:6-6).*

The Word, that eternally divine being in the presence of the Father, who is both God and who was with God at the beginning (John 1:1-2), *became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

### **His Father's Eternal Delight**

John describes Jesus as being in the Father's bosom (John 1:18). To be in one's bosom is to be an object of particular love and delight. When Moses described the task of love with which God had commanded in care for the people of Israel he said that God had instructed him to *carry them in [his] bosom as a nurse carries an infant* (Num. 11:12). When Nathan described the affection that the poor man of his parable had to his slain ewe, he tells David that the ewe *even slept in his bosom* (so the Hebrew – II Sam. 12:2-3). We are granted an inkling of that relationship in Proverbs 8, where the Word, eternal Wisdom, is described as the daily delight of God, "rejoicing always in

his presence” (vs. 30).

Jesus is the Father’s eternal delight, for God delights in himself and none reflects nor can reflect the Father’s glory more than does the Son, for he is *the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being* (Heb. 1:3). The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. So it is, so it shall be unto a thousand generations, without fluctuation of the slightest shadow of change. The Father is *well pleased* in his Son (Luke 3:22) – and so should we be, for who is like our blessed savior, glorious, perfect, holy and everlasting? Such is the Son whom the Father gave for the salvation of the world.

### **The World**

*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

The world is described here as the object of God’s love. In scripture, “the world” has a plethora of meanings. In John’s writings, when not speaking of the material world or when used as a synonym for mankind, it is used in a pejorative sense. “The world” is that which is in opposition to God. It declined to acknowledge the Son when he came into the world (John 1:10), it hates Jesus (7:7) and his disciples (15:18), is ruled by Satan and will be judged by God (12:31). It cannot receive the Spirit because it does not know Jesus (14:17) and is juxtaposed with those who believe (17:14) and with those moral qualities that come from the Father (I John 2:16). Christians are not to love the world, for such a love is a contradiction of love for God (I John 2:15). The world is given to lust and will not endure (I John 2:17), it rests in wickedness (I John 5:19) and will be *overcome* by those who believe (I John 5:4). In other words, “the world” is mankind as governed by Satan and in opposition to God. This is the world God loved in such an amazing way that he gave his Son in order to save it.

### **Sinful**

The world is sinful, riddled with lust, ambition, arrogance, selfishness and pride. It gives not a thought to the honor of God and not a whisper to loving and serving him, whom the angels delight to serve.

It is a world in which the laws of God are not kept, in which every man lives for himself. Kindness, humility, honesty, purity and justice are seldom sought in the world, seldom cultivated. Instead, men and women vie with each other without moral compunction except where it is socially unacceptable or commercially unprofitable. The natural uses of life are transformed into means for the gratification of animal desires. Horoscopes, actors, singers, idols and money evoke more interest than the message of divine truth. Children are sacrificed to the Molochs of human ambition, and the truth of God is made into a lie. Those who dare speak faithfully in the name of God are hounded, heckled, made into laughingstocks or thrown into prison.

It is not that mankind does not know the truth. The truth is inscribed on the heart of human nature. It is visible in the world God has made. But mankind

suppresses the truth it knows. It enlists all the powers of self-persuasion it can possibly call upon to deny what, deep down in its heart, it knows to be true. As a result, the light in the hearts of men and women has become darkness and all are left without excuse. Their ability to observe, analyze, consider meanings and draw right conclusions is severely damaged, while they are inclined to justify the most extreme abnormalities. Evil, greed, murder, strife, wars, jealousy, covetousness, insolence, unreliability, cruelty, arrogant boastfulness, theft, lies and rebellion against parents have become as commonplace as leaves are on a tree. Ultimately, all mankind knows that whoever conducts such a life deserves to be punished, but most not only live in such a manner but also approve of those who do likewise (Rom. 1:19-32).

### **In Rebellion**

This world is in rebellion against God. Mankind refuses to honor God or obey him, refuses to submit to his holy requirements. Instead, it flaunts its purported independence and insists on the right to live as it pleases. Man, deceived by the promise to become godlike, free to determine for himself what is good and what is evil, has succumbed to a course of headstrong rebellion that can only culminate in the fires of hell. Who dare rise against JHVW?

*In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am god. I sit on the throne of a god, in the midst of the seas'. But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hid from you? By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud (Ezek. 28:2-5). What does such rebellion deserve: God says, that he will see to it that the proud are brought down to the pit and that they die a violent death in the heart of the seas. Will you then say, 'I am a god' in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a man and not a god in the hands of those who slay you (ibid, vv 6-9). God has a way of crushing the rebellious.*

### **Unworthy**

The world is unworthy of divine favor. *Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other Gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my name, and say, "We are safe" Safe to do all these detestable things?! Has this house, which bears my name, become in your eyes a den of robbers? Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel (Jer. 7:9-12).*

No, the sinful, rebellious world is liable justly to only one thing: punishment. *'Shall I not punish them for this?' declares the Lord. 'Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?'* (Jer. 5:29).

Such is the world God has loved: sinful, rebellious and wholly unworthy.

### **God So Loved the World**

Yet God loved the world. God so loved this sinful world that he acted on its

behalf. The term *so* means “in such a way”. It refers to the manner of the love, not to its extent: God loved the world in such a way that his love moved him to send his Son into the world, but he did not do so to condemn the world – as it well deserves – but *so that whoever believes in God’s only begotten Son will not perish but have eternal life*. God is love. He is moved by love. He finds no delight in anger – not even justified anger – or in the death of the wicked due to his sin. Instead, God desires that the wicked world would repent and be saved. He has not turned his back on this sin-sick world, but chose to seek its welfare and the salvation of those who rebel against him.

That is love. That is how God loved the world.

This is not altruistic love, the product of prospective gain. We have already seen that God has no need. He exists in and of himself. Nor can man add anything to him, for all that man has comes from him.

God’s love is not due to obligation. The world has no claim on God, no right to his love. Having rebelled against God, defaced the earth on which God placed him, perverted the image in which God made him, man is in no position to expect anything good from God – and yet God gives an unimaginable good, freely and willingly. He gives salvation, the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing of defiled consciences and the sure hope of eternal life in his presence, a hope confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

Love is best expressed in what it gives, what it bears, what it is willing to forgive. God so loved that he gave, and gave more liberally than man could imagine in his wildest dream. He also bore more and forgives more than heaven’s angels thought possible. God is patient and is kind. Although he rightly demands of his creatures that they honor him, he does not envy them their joys and happiness. His boasts are neither empty nor vain, his pride is fully justified and his self-seeking is the very purpose of the universe. Yet he is never inappropriate in his actions, is not easily angered, is happy to forget wrongs, loves the good and not the evil, always protects and perseveres with those whom he has chosen to love. His love never fails. It is perfect love, undeserved, unimaginable, unlimited and non-contingent.

This is the way God has responded to the world’s awful sin and this is the goal of God’s love for the world: he sent his Son into the world to save.

### **He Gave**

But there is more to God’s love than that. We are told that God so loved the world that, in order to secure its salvation, he *gave his only begotten Son*. What did it mean for God to give his Son?

We need to remember what that giving entailed. It meant handing the Son over to suffering and death – an ignoble death on the cross. It meant making him, beloved of the Father, who always did his Father’s will most perfectly and in whom the Father had such pure and eternal delight, to be sin for us, to bear the curse of our sin in his own body on the tree.

Can we fathom what we have just said? The Son, ever in the Father's bosom, cherished, loved and adored before the world began, was transformed into the very embodiment of sin, rebellion and everything that God the Father hates, for which he created hell and its enduring fire.

Suddenly, the Son becomes repulsive to the Father, who forsakes his Son in holy horror. He is made to be a curse, the object of all the Father's hatred for sin and righteous anger against it.

No wonder the heavens darkened, earth shook and the very dead rose from their graves! Could anyone ever imagine such love? The Father killed his Son so that sinners might live. The Father turned his back to him whom he loved so dearly, to turn his face toward those who rebelled against him. The Father emptied heaven of its choice joy that he might inhabit it with miserable sinners, saved by grace through the shed blood of the Father's beloved Son. Is such love not amazing? Are we not struck dumb when we remember that we, and others like us, are its objects?

Such is God's love – the grounds and logic of the Gospel and the driving force of all we do in the ministry of evangelism. Any less is pure sham.

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Such is the amazing love of God. Such is the biblical motive for evangelism, and it should be the one that moves us out of our armchairs, into the highways and byways of life in order to sound the message in the ears of sinful modern man.

*How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss, the Father turns His face away,  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.*

*Behold the Man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers,  
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished:  
His dying breath has brought me life – I know that it is finished.*

### **Ministry and Family News**

Most of the month has been given to translating the BOOK ON CHURCH HISTORY. The author often makes reference to individuals, circumstances, events and places unfamiliar to an Israeli reader, requiring extensive research and annotation to ensure that the book is truly helpful. I am beginning to see the end to this thankless task and will be happy when it is completed. It has taken far too much of my time, at the expense of writing projects that have now been delayed.

On the other hand, writing DAILY DEVOTIONS has been a boon and a pleasure. So far, I have written 54 daily devotions on the first 4 chapters of Peter's first letter. Upon completion, I intend to proceed to the second letter and then offer both as a unity for publication. Next will come John's three

letters, then James and Jude.

The itinerary for our trip to the US is almost full. There still are a few openings, particularly while in Georgia, as we drive to Kansas and from Kansas to Indiana. Interested churches are welcome to write my colleague, Leah, who is responsible for tour arrangements at [administration@themaozweb.com](mailto:administration@themaozweb.com) We hope to depart for the US in March, stopping by in the UK to visit a church and a long-time friend who has prayed for us since the 1960s (!).

Caitlyn and Elinor Thompson, Yotam, Avishai and Eliya Richardson all have proximate birthdays. We give God thanks for these sweet grandchildren and for the privilege of watching them grow – even from afar.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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**COME LET US REASON TOGETHER** (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church), P&R. This book presents Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation.

**JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN**, Shepherd Press. A devotional commentary on the book of Jonah.

**MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS**, A devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. **Presently unavailable**. To be republished by Founders Press in 2016.

**The devotional commentaries are well suited for personal devotions and group Bible studies**

Baruch's sermons may be heard on [Sermon Audio](#)

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