

JACOB'S LADDER

Communicating with God's people



In This Issue of the Jacob's Ladder:

Life Lessons

What about the accusation that the Jewish people killed Jesus?

What About the Temple? Part 2

News about our latest "Light to Israel" trip

LIFE LESSONS

Recently I was talking to a consultant and he asked me what I had learned over the course of thirty years in ministry. That question resonated in me and I have been thinking about it a great deal. There are many lessons learned, many things that could be said, but I've narrowed the list to five and I want to share them with you in this issue.

#1 PURPOSE - Accept God's calling for your life.

Who we are as individuals is a combination of nature and nurture. We are not accidents. Our DNA was designed a certain way by a Divine Designer. Then we went through a whole set of relationships and experiences through the growing-up process. There were good moments, painful moments, noble moments and defining moments. The sovereignty of God is an important doctrine to keep a proper perspective on our past. Just as God was tending to our design, He was guiding our journey. God doesn't cause evil but He certainly uses it. I love what Joseph says to his brothers as he applies God's sovereignty to his own pain. "What you did you meant for evil, but God meant it for good." (Genesis 50:10) God's ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8) This simply means to me that I cannot always understand God, but I can always trust Him. He is God and I am not!

There are bookshelves full with books on personal happiness and fulfillment. Even Christians can fall into the lie that "you can be anything you want to be." The truth is you can't be anything you want to be but you can

be everything God wants you to be. You and I have purpose and it is eternally linked to God's glory.

One of the greatest men who ever lived was John the Baptizer. But at the height of John's ministry, he was eclipsed by Jesus. Some of John's followers were jealous for John. They came to John and said "everyone is flocking to this new teacher." John's answer is profound. "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven." (John 3:27) John's ego had been tamed by God's plan and he was content.

#2 TRIALS - Accept God's trials for your life.

Over the course of ministry, I have observed an enormous amount of human behavior. The most revealing time of our lives is when we are going through trials. If you want to know what a person is really like, observe them in difficult circumstances. God is at work and is using all the circumstances of our lives for His purpose, for His glory. That doesn't mean that the pain of our trials is eliminated but it does mean that we can face them without being overwhelmed. Often my first response to trials is "Why is this happening to me?" It's okay to say that thought, it's not okay to keep it.

After the Resurrection, Jesus met the disciples by the seashore. After a miraculous catch and a fish dinner, Jesus began a discussion with Peter that ended with an allusion to Peter's own crucifixion. Peter had just gone through an excruciatingly painful trial in which he had betrayed the Lord and he was told that his life would end on a Roman cross. What was Peter's reaction to this news? His question to Jesus was, "What about him?" as he pointed to John. "Why is this happening to me?" and "What about him?" flow from the same river of comparison and insecurity. We say things like 'misery

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

loves company' because the Fall of Genesis 3 makes us really believe that our trials won't be as painful if someone else is facing similar difficulties.

Jesus' words to Peter are words for you and me. In essence, He says, "What if I have different plans for him, what is that to you? You should be focused on My plans for you." I get into trouble and I get discouraged when I compare my journey, my purpose and especially my trials with others. Church history tells us that Peter was crucified upside down while John lived to be an old man. God has trials for every life but they're not the same. Accept the ones that God has for you for His calling, for His glory.

#3 RELATIONSHIPS - Surround yourself with healthy, high quality people.

There are always two groups of people in your life that you need to keep straight in your mind. There are people that you "minister to" and there are people that you "minister with." The people that you "minister to" are often unhealthy people. You must love them but at the same time you must be wise in your relationship to them. People can be toxic and if we are not careful, their irresponsible ways can infect us. If we become irresponsible, we can no longer carry out the work of ministry.

The Apostle Paul used teamwork to do the work of ministry and the teams that he put together were made up of healthy, high-quality people. On one occasion one team member, John Mark, was irresponsible and childish. Even though Barnabus wanted to keep John Mark on the team, Paul dismissed him. Later on, Paul finds John Mark to be helpful and useful, but that only happened because Paul was willing to do the hard thing and remove him from his ministry.

There is often mediocrity in our lives and ministry because of a failure to be wise. We don't discern between "ministering to" and "ministering with." We need to be sure that we are ministering with healthy, high-quality people.

#4 SPIRITUAL HEALTH - You are as healthy as your transparency.

The Fall of Genesis 3 did great damage to our whole being, especially our spiritual health. Adam and Eve's first reaction to God's presence was to hide, and mankind has been hiding ever since. We were not designed to hide from God or from one another. We were made to live in community. In life and ministry we can be surrounded by people and yet feel "all alone." The lie that we tell ourselves is that if we're alone, we're safe.

People who are hiding are not safe because they actually increase their capacity for self deception. I lie to myself and so do you. These lies produce blind spots. Colin Powell has said, "Every company needs an individual to tell the king that he's not wearing any clothes." We need someone like that in our lives. Confession allows us to be open and honest with God. Transparency allows us to be open and honest with one another. We'll never be perfect, but we should be honest with one another. The more secrets you have, the healthier you are.

#5 FAITHFULNESS - It's always too soon to quit.

I Corinthians 15:58 is the hardest command in all of scripture. "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because your labor is not in vain." I remember the very first chapel service that I attended as a freshman at Baptist Bible College and the speaker quoted the verse, "It is required of a steward that he be found faithful." The Holy Spirit anchored that truth in my soul and I determined to be faithful. Thirty years later I am still trying. When I fail, I try again. When I fall down, God picks me back up. When I fall off the horse, He tells me, "Let's do this together." Perseverance - that's the chief requirement of life and ministry.

The story of my early childhood is similar to John Grisham's book, "The Painted House." When I was five years old and my parents were middle-aged, they left failed farming in Tennessee and came to work in factories in Chicago. My parents stayed eighteen years and raised my sister, my brother and me. They retired and moved back to Tennessee with a small pension and social security. My father was thrilled. We were just as happy for them. In 1985, at age 76, he died. I did the eulogy and my words about my dad were transferred to the marker on his grave... "Steadfast, unmovable, always abounding." May that truth mark us all.

Cordially,
John Bell, President

What About the Accusation that the Jewish People Killed Jesus?

Throughout the centuries one of the greatest reasons given to justify the persecution of the Jewish people has been the charge that they were responsible for the death of Jesus. There is more to this than simply blaming the Jewish people for the death of Jesus. Lopsided views can lead to gross error, and, in the case of the Jewish people, anti-Semitism. According to the scriptures, those responsible for the death of Jesus are:

- Herod (Acts 4:27)
- Pontius Pilate (Acts 4:27)
- Gentiles (Acts 4:27)
- The people of Israel (Acts 2:36; 4:10, 4:27)
- God the Father (Isaiah 53:6; Acts 2:23)
- Satan (John 13:2; Genesis 3:15)
- Each Humanity's sin (Is. 53:6; 1 John 2:2)

Gentile responsibility

While the Jewish people called for the crucifixion, and thus bear responsibility, we must remember that without participation from the Gentile nation of Rome, the actual crucifixion could not have happened. (John 18:31-32) Pilate knew that Jesus was an innocent man yet he succumbed to the pressure of the Jewish leadership. He certainly had the power and authority to prevent the crucifixion. In addition to Pilate's culpability, the Roman soldiers were especially cruel in their treatment of the Lord. (Matthew 27:27-36)

Jewish responsibility

The Jewish leadership did insist upon the death penalty. They clearly are responsible for their actions. (Luke 23:24; Matt. 26:59-60; John 19:1-22) However, this does not mean that all Jews in Jesus' day were responsible for His death. Nor does it mean that all of the Jewish leaders were responsible. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were two notable exceptions.

There is likewise no support for making all Jews forever responsible. Many have quoted Matt. 27:35 in which the Jewish leaders cry out "His blood be on us and on our children." This verse has been used to substantiate the claim that the Jews have been punished throughout history for the death of Jesus. To say that God would hold all Jewish people responsible for this statement is a failure to understand the character and grace of God. Did God honor Pilate's words in Matt. 27:24 regarding his statement of innocence of the blood of Jesus? Would God listen to the cry of an angry Jewish mob and not to the prayer of His Son on the cross when He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"?

The biblical meaning of the death of Jesus is found in the images portrayed in the sacrificial system which foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In order for an individual to have atonement and forgiveness he had to first lay his hands on the offering, symbolically placing his sin on the sacrificial animal. Then after receiving instruction from the priest, the person seeking to be reconciled to God had to kill the animal. The blood from the animal was then offered by the priest on the altar. God would acknowledge the blood and forgive the sinner.

This helps us to understand the truth of who is responsible for the death of Jesus. Just as the sinner who wanted to be reconciled to God had to kill the lamb, so too we must acknowledge that it was our sin that put Jesus on the cross. In order for us to find atonement we, as individuals, must lay hands upon God's Lamb through faith and confess that it was our sin that killed Jesus. In truth we must apply His blood to our lives or we cannot find atonement. Only a true understanding of the death of Jesus coupled with personal responsibility and confession will bring about redemption and reconciliation.

-Roy Schwartz

WHAT ABOUT THE TEMPLE? PART 2

Since the establishment of the modern state of Israel, rumors have abounded concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. In the last issue of *Jacob's Ladder*, we looked at whether or not the Jewish people wanted to rebuild the Temple. We saw that secular Jews might want to see the Temple rebuilt as a national shine to Israel's great history. Meanwhile the religious Jewish community is divided over whether the Temple should be rebuilt to bring in the promised Messianic Kingdom or if they should wait until the Messiah comes to build the Temple.

While these differences may hinder any massive, organized effort to rebuild the Temple, there is an even greater roadblock to the rebuilding of this special place of worship. Muslims claim the Temple Mount and the surrounding Old City as their third most holy sight after Mecca and Medina. Any attempt by the Jews to build a worship place on the Temple Mount would result in a call for the Muslim world to destroy Israel and her allies. Even the rumor of such an attempt to rebuild is enough to cause riots as it did in 1990.

The Muslim claim to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount is intriguing in light of the fact that Jerusalem is mentioned 669 times in the Old Testament and 136 times in the New Testament as the center of Jewish life and worship, BUT the word *Jerusalem* is not mentioned once in the Koran or in Islamic liturgy.

Even in religious practice and belief, Jerusalem is a secondary city to the Muslim. While religious Jews face Jerusalem when they pray, the Muslim faces Mecca. The Muslims believe Abraham attempted to offer up Ishmael (not Isaac) as a sacrifice not on Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem) but in Mecca. So how can the Muslims claim that Jerusalem is their third most holy site?

Dr. Daniel Pipes, an expert on Islam and Middle East politics, writes that part of the answer has to do with



Temple Mount aerial from south - BiblePlaces.com

politics. You could call it the “toy in the corner” syndrome. A toy in the corner is ignored by the children playing in the living room until one goes and claims it as his own. Then the others challenge his claim to the toy. So it is Muslims take a religious interest in Jerusalem when it is politically practical to do so. When the political need wanes, so does the religious interest. In an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (7/21/2000), Dr. Pipes lists several times in the history of Islam that Jerusalem was politically important.

Jerusalem in the time of the Prophet -

Around 621 AD Mohammed sought to convert the Jews living in his area so he adopted several Jewish practices including not eating pork and praying toward Syria (in the direction of Jerusalem). When his overtures were rejected by most of the Jewish community, it was written in the Koran that one should turn his back to Syria and face Mecca when one prays. Thus Jerusalem became important to win over the Jews, but when that failed so did Jerusalem's importance fade. When Caliph Omar, Mohammed's successor, conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines a little over a decade later

Mecca and Medina were already well established as holy cities. Upon visiting the Temple Mount ruins Omar deliberately went to the southern edge of the temple platform to face south to pray toward Mecca as he did not want anyone to mistakenly think he was praying toward a Jewish holy site.

Jerusalem during the Umayyad Dynasty-

After the death of Omar, the Umayyad Dynasty rose to power with their seat of power in Damascus. After losing control of Mecca, the rulers wanted to enhance the Islamic importance of the territory still under their rule. This resulted in the construction of a shrine (the Dome of the Rock) on the traditional site of the Jewish Temple in 691AD and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 715AD on the southern end of the temple platform where some say Omar prayed toward Mecca.

An interesting fact concerning the Dome of the Rock is that the rotunda has the exact same measurements as the rotunda in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (traditional burial site of Jesus) which is a short distance away. This has led some historians to speculate that another reason for the

“Dome’s” construction was to build a Muslim shrine as dominant as the famed church.

By calling the mosque “Al-Aqsa” the Umayyad were tying Jerusalem to the Koran. In Sura 17:1 of the Koran it is written: “*Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque (al-masjid al-Aqsa), whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).*”

In the beginning “farthest mosque” was unidentified or as some taught an expression for heaven. Once the Umayyad named the mosque on the southern end of the Temple Mount “Al-Aqsa,” Muslims began believing and teaching the passage is referring to Jerusalem even though the mosque did not exist in Mohammed’s day.

After the Umayyad Dynasty collapsed, Jerusalem once again became an insignificant location in Muslim thinking. Even the glorious structures built to Allah fell into disrepair resulting in the collapse of the Dome of the Rock in 1016 AD.

Jerusalem during the Crusades -When the “Christian” Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099 AD, once again Muslim literature extolling Jerusalem began to reappear. When Jerusalem was back in Muslim hands 88 years later, she once again became an insignificant community with a declining population and collapsing infrastructure.

It is interesting to note that this is the only time Jerusalem was in non-Muslim hands from 638 AD to 1917 AD. During that time, not once was Jerusalem made the capital of any government other than that of the Crusaders who were non-Muslim.

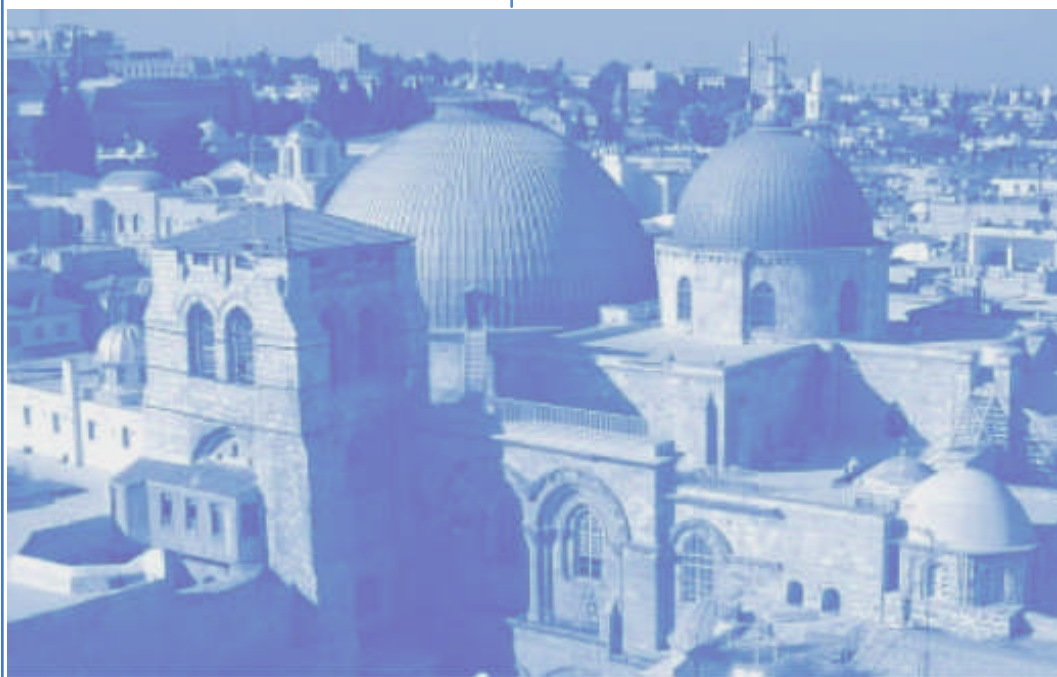
Jerusalem under British rule - In 1917, the British defeated the Ottoman Empire and took control of Jerusalem. Once again Muslim interest in Jerusalem was reawakened. This time

the concern was not only over taking Jerusalem but also preventing Jews from returning to their homeland (Zionism).

Again Muslim interest in Jerusalem waned when Jordan conquered the city from the newly founded State of Israel in 1948. Interestingly, the city once again fell into disrepair and the Muslim shrines remained unvisited by Muslim leaders. Dr. Pipes in his above mentioned article writes, “Taking out a bank loan, subscribing to telephone service, or registering a postal package required a trip to Amman. Jordanian radio transmitted the Friday sermon not from Al-Aqsa but from a minor mosque in Amman. Jerusalem also fell off the

the advent of modern communication, the response by the Muslims took the form of an advertising campaign (blitzing the media with what you want people to hear so soon the people will believe what you have to say is fact).

Though the revised 1968 PLO Covenant (English translation) does not mention Jerusalem, Allah, or Islam, these have been increasingly referred to by the Palestinian leadership as they discuss a future Palestinian State. The draft constitution proposed in January 2003 for a future Palestine includes East Jerusalem as its capitol, Islam as its official religion and rule by Islamic law as its government.



Holy Sepulcher from Lutheran tower - BiblePlaces.com

Arab diplomatic map: the PLO covenant of 1964 did not mention it. No Arab leader (other than King Hussein, and he rarely) visited there.”

Six-Day War in 1967 - For the first time in over 2000 years the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount came under Jewish control. Of course once again, Muslim interest in the historic city began to resurface. This time, with

To further complicate matters, there has been a massive effort to revise history. For example, Dennis Ross, former U.S. diplomat to the Middle East, shared that Yasir Arafat "never offered any substantive ideas, not once" during the Camp David talks in July 2000. However, "He did offer one new idea, which was that the Temple didn't exist in Jerusalem, but it was in Nablus."

Another example of an effort to revise history is an article published in the Jordanian daily Al-Ra'i written by Lina Nabil titled, "Jerusalem. 5,000 Years of Arab History." In this article the author claims the Jebusites were Arabs and there is great doubt that there was an Israelite kingdom ruling out of Jerusalem.

In an interview on the Palestinian Authority TV, Dr. Jarir Al-Qidwah, Head of the PA Public Library and Arafat's Advisor on Education said, "Solomon's Temple, I believe, was built by the Canaanites who were the neighbors of the Israelis, the Israelites... I want to state several words clearly: the Bible became an archival document, not representing what the Israelis and the first Jews were, but what they thought they were, what they imagined. The Temple is the fruit of their imagination. In any case, when our nation or our Canaanite forefathers came to Palestine, they built the Temple...a temple in Jerusalem."

Other public statements by the Palestinian leadership include:

"Abraham was not a Jew."

"The Jews never lived in ancient Israel."

"Jews never had any connection to Jerusalem."

"Jerusalem was never a Jewish city."

"There never was a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem."

"The Western Wall is not a Jewish holy site."

"The Tombs of Rachel and Joseph are actually Muslim sites."

Sadly, this effort to make Jerusalem and the Temple Mount Muslim sites in the eyes of the world, particularly the Muslim world, has virtually eliminated all legitimate negotiations for peace. No Muslim leader is willing to give up "holy ground" to non-Muslims. It will take a "super politician" respected both in the Muslim world and non-Muslim world to broker a peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem." And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:1-3) (NKJV)

In our next issue we will look at the various theories on where the Temple was located on the Temple Mount.

-Larry Jaffrey

NEWS about our latest "Light to Israel" trip

"They Are Going To Do It For Free!?!"

This was the response of a couple of Israeli teenagers when they were told a group of volunteers was coming from the States to paint the home where they were staying. So began our first project in Mevasseret just outside of Jerusalem.

The astonished teens are part of a group of adolescents from abusive situations who could not imagine anyone doing a kind deed without requiring something in return. You see, families in Israel have the same difficulties as families in the U.S. When a familial situation becomes "high risk" for the children, they are placed in a group home environment with house parents. The homes are only partially funded by the Israeli government and more funding is required from outside the government for the rest of their needs. As a result, finances are very tight. When the house mother told the teenagers we were

coming to paint their group home, they were very skeptical. When the house mother convinced them that we were even buying the paint and not a penny was going to be used from the home's limited budget, they quickly packed their clothes and books away so we could paint their bedrooms.

Our group of fourteen washed, taped and painted three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a "rec" room, a stairwell/hallway, living room and kitchen. For the organization that runs the homes, a Christian group coming from the States voluntarily to paint one of their homes (they have over 20) was a real tangible blessing. Please pray with us that it will not only be a material blessing but that the seed sown by our Messiah living through us will result in a great spiritual blessing as well.



Our Israeli friend who found this project for us sent the following note:

It was wonderful to get to see your team and to have y'all at our home. MEM seems to draw such quality of people to come here to bless the people of this land. Thank you ... for your faithful commitment to His purposes here. Debbie [the home director] called me again this week to rave about the work and how delighted everyone was with the project. Even Slava, the maintenance man was amazed by the task and what was "given freely." I hope that we'll be able to accomplish wonderful things for Messiah in this land.

When we finished painting the children's home our work was not done. We then headed for the heart of Jerusalem where we painted the trim of a school where English as a second language is taught. Though the last five days of our trip were set aside for full-time sightseeing, the first six days were not all work and no play. In



fact, we worked and played as the team was privileged to see the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem, Hebron, Tel Aviv and to take a dip in the Mediterranean Sea.

On my last day in Israel, I stopped by Makor HaTikva (the school we painted last year). What a joy to see our paint job was holding up and to hear the Vice-Principal share that presenting the school to prospective students and parents is a much easier task because the school looks so much nicer. In fact, next term the school's enrollment will be double what it was just a year ago.

Won't you join us next year in Jerusalem?

Because you will be going to minister as well as to see the land, you will have unforgettable experiences. Those who have gone have expressed how wonderful it is to really get a feel for the land and the situation there by visiting in homes and attending Messianic congregations. And what could be better than showing the love of Jesus to those He so greatly loves?

We plan to take another Light to Israel trip in June or July of 2007...more information will be announced later. Please make your plans and sign up early as space is limited.

-Larry Jaffrey

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News You May Have Not Heard

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Jacob's Ladder is published four times a year by Middle East Ministries.

You may send all letters and inquiries to our administrative office:

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www.MiddleEastMinistries.org

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