“Jesus Contradicts the O.T. Law, Especially Regarding Homosexuality!”

You point out that the Old Testament forbids homosexuality. Yes it does, but Jesus’ teachings in the gospels have superseded the primitive teachings of the O.T. For example in Matthew 5:17-34 Jesus systematically rips apart some of the most important Jewish laws. When he says he has come to fulfil the Law, he is not talking about the Pharisees’ law, he is talking about God’s Law. People who say that Jesus agreed with the Jewish laws are completely wrong– even an idiot can see this.

People who practice homosexuality in their own homes, with each others’ consent are not breaking the law “love your neighbor as yourself.” They are not harming anyone! What is harmful though is the constant attack by you so-called Christians on them which provides gay people with much misery. I am not homosexual myself – the reason why I am sticking up for gay people is because I am a Christian. Wake up to the fact that the law of loving your neighbor has replaced the O.T. laws.

Your essays clearly show you have some degree of intelligence – why can’t you see that Jesus’ law is in contradiction to the law of the Jewish scriptures?

Hello _____, Thanks for your e-mail. I will try to respond to your comments as best I can.

> *You point out that the O.T. forbids homosexuality. Yes it does, but Jesus’ teachings in the gospels have superseded the primitive teachings of the O.T. For example in Matthew 5:17-34 Jesus systematically rips apart some of the most important Jewish laws. When he says he has come to fulfil the*

> *law, he is not talking about the Pharisee's law, he is talking about God's law. People who say that Jesus agreed with the Jewish laws are completely wrong – even an idiot can see this.*

I'm sorry, I fail to see which laws Jesus is ripping apart in this passage. What I see is that He is going beyond the LETTER of the law, to the SPIRIT of the law, to make it abundantly clear that Yahweh is concerned with the motives and intentions of the heart and not merely surface obedience. If a person holds to the SPIRIT (or intention) of the law, he will also obey the LETTER of it. This is a long way from "ripping apart" the law.

I do agree with you, however, that the Lord Jesus did not agree with the Jewish laws that were like fences built around the inspired laws of God, but which were not, in themselves, laws of God. Those laws don't appear in the Bible though. The commandments against practicing homosexuality, however, were not Jewish laws, but God's laws.

> *People who practice homosexuality in their own homes, with each others consent are not breaking the law "love your neighbor as yourself." They are not harming anyone!*

Morality aside, ask any physician how healthy the homosexual lifestyle is. Ask the Center for Disease Control how healthy the homosexual lifestyle is. Ask counselors who are trying to help people leave the homosexual lifestyle and get beyond their painful homosexual desires. Talk to the parents, siblings, spouses and children of practicing homosexuals and ask if they are not harming anyone.

Let's put the homosexual issue aside and substitute another deviant sexual lifestyle. Do you think you would write to someone and say, "Men who are attracted to pre-school children and entice them into their homes to have sex with them, are

not breaking the law ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ In fact, these men are loving these children—isn’t that admirable? They are not harming anyone! The men are enjoying the sex, and the children are enjoying the attention…and what child doesn’t enjoy attention?”

I would suggest that you would never say something like this, and I would further suggest that the reason such a large portion of our culture has decided that sex between two men using parts of their bodies that were intended for excretion, not sex, is acceptable, is a result of a carefully-planned disinformation campaign. It is not a result of something normal and natural and God-intended.

> *What is harmful though is the constant attack by you so-called Christians on them which provides gay people with much misery. I am not homosexual myself – the reason why I am sticking up for gay people is because I am a Christian.*

It’s interesting to me that you seem so devoted to the issue of “love,” yet do not hesitate to cast aspersions on my relationship with Jesus Christ by calling me a “so-called Christian.” This doesn’t strike me as very loving, or am I missing something?

I’m also wondering if you read my entire article, or just bits and pieces. Because I strongly believe that the responsible Christian response to the homosexual movement is one of deep compassion for the individuals caught in unnatural, unfortunate desires while not compromising on what God has said about the homosexual ACT. In fact, I have received e-mail accusing me of “sticking up for gay people,” to use your term.

People like me who speak out, agreeing with what God has said about homosexuality, are not causing all the misery gays experience. That happens long before someone even comes out or tells their first friend of these unwelcome feelings and attractions. There is misery inherent in a homosexual

orientation; it means something is wrong, in the same way that there's something wrong with someone who is sexually attracted to small children. And that's why these feelings need to be dealt with and healed, not celebrated as something good and beautiful.

(I will admit, with a great deal of sadness, that there has been a terrible amount of judgmental condescension from Christians towards homosexuals, that has, indeed, caused grief. There is no excuse for not making a distinction between the desires, which are wrong but unasked-for, and the people experiencing them. I know God does.)

> *Wake up to the fact that the law of loving your neighbor has replaced the O.T. laws.*

No, the law of loving your neighbor *sums up* the O.T. laws. At least the moral ones. If you keep all the moral laws of the Old Testament, you will be demonstrating love for your neighbor. Not stealing, telling the truth, not charging usurious interest against your neighbor, and keeping all sexual activity within marriage are all demonstrations of love for one's neighbor.

The law against homosexual actions is part of the moral code; the consequence of death by stoning is part of the civil code, which controlled how the people of God were to conduct their lives in a culture where God was their head and not a law-making king. It makes sense for the civil code to be done away with, because the people of Israel are no longer living under that system. But God has not done away with a single commandment of His moral code, because the moral laws are rooted in the person and character of God Himself.

What is it that makes homosexual activity sin? The fact that God has ordained sex to be the glue that holds *husband and wife* together. Sex is so powerful that it is only safe within the confines of marriage, because it acts like superglue

between two souls. Tear them apart and you have broken hearts. So why not make homosexual marriage legal? Because Ephesians 5 says that marriage goes beyond merely a civil convenience; it is an eloquent word picture that God ordained to help us understand the amazing unity within diversity of Christ and the church. Men and women are so different that it's a mystical union when they come together in marriage. Man and man coming together, or woman and woman, does not provide the dynamic difference that mirrors the "otherness" of Christ-and-the-church. Gay relationships are sameness, not otherness. So gay marriage can never be blessed by God because marriage means far more than simply living together, even having sex together. It's supposed to teach us something about God.

> *Your essay clearly shows you have some degree of intelligence – why can't you see that Jesus' law is in contradiction to the law of the Jewish scriptures?*

Well, I do thank you for the compliment <smile>. . .I don't see it because it's not there. Have you read the whole New Testament? How about just the four gospels? If you look at what the Lord Jesus taught, one thing you'll see is that He mentioned two things people often overlook. One is references to Sodom and Gomorrah as places of judgment, which the Bible makes clear were judged for homosexual sin. Jesus believed in Sodom and Gomorrah, and He believed in the judgment they received. In fact, He was involved in sending the judgment. The other thing is His references to fornication, which means any sex outside of marriage. All homosexual sex is fornication. Even if there is some sort of religious ceremony, it's still fornication because you can't get around God's restrictions on marriage, which is one man and one woman. God is not impressed by our ceremonies when they disregard what He has established.

A lot of people like to talk about Jesus' law of love; what's intriguing to me is how they never balance it with the fact

that Jesus also talked about holiness, and purity, and justice. While it's true that many homosexuals love each other, that kind of love still falls short of God's standard of holiness. There's nothing holy about what God has called an abomination. That is not "the law of Jewish scriptures" as if they were written by scribes and Pharisees; that is the very word breathed by God Himself. There is no contradiction between the Old and New Testament when it comes to what is moral, what reflects the character of God. Homosexual sin is not love as God defines it, regardless of how the culture tries to persuade people it is.

Thank you for reading this far. I hope what I've said gives you something to think about. I also pray that the Lord gives you a higher esteem for the ENTIRE Word of God. Jesus said not one jot or tittle of it would pass away. That's a pretty high value on it. May we all value His word so highly.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

The Tablet of Nabu: Another Confirmation of the Bible

This is a fantastic discovery, a world-class find.
Dr. Irving Finkel, British Museum

The Discovery

A significant discovery related to Biblical history was made in the British Museums great Arched Room which holds nearly

130,000 Assyrian cuneiform tablets.{1} Among the tablets, some of which date back nearly 5000 years, one tablet in particular, measuring only 2.13 inches wide or about the size of a small cigarette pack, was recently translated by Assyriologist and Professor from the University of Vienna, Dr. Michael Jursa. This cuneiform tablet was dated to 595 BC, or the 10th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

When deciphered it named a high ranking official of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar named *Nebo-Sarsekim*. Nebo-Sarsekim is also named in the Book of Jeremiah 39:1-3. The passage reads:

> *This is how Jerusalem was taken: In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it. 2 And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiahs eleventh year, the city wall was broken through. 3 Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar,* ***Nebo-Sarsekim*** *a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.*

Jeremiah identifies Nebo-Sarsekim as a chief officer of Nebuchadnezzar who was with the King at the siege of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Jeremiah records that several of Nebuchadnezzars top officials took seats in the Middle Gate once they broke through the walls of Jerusalem.

The Assyrian tablet identifies Nebo-Sarsekim as the chief eunuch of Nebuchadnezzar, thus confirming Jeremiahs reference. The full translation of the tablet reads:

> *(Regarding) 1.5 minas (0.75 kg or 1.65 pounds) of gold, the property of* ***Nabu-sharrussu-ukin****, the chief eunuch, which he sent via Arad-Banitu the eunuch to [the temple] Esangila: Arad-Banitu has delivered [it] to Esangila. In the presence of Bel-usat, son of Alpaya, the royal bodyguard, [and of]*

Nadin, son of Marduk-zer-ibni. Month XI, day 18, year 10 [of] Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.{2}

The tablet is the financial record of Nebo-Sarsekims gift of gold given to the Temple of Esangila, which was located in the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon.{3} This financial transaction took place in the 10th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar while Nabu-Sarsekim was serving as the chief officer to Nebuchadnezzar. This was nine years before the siege of Jerusalem. Dr. Jursa states, "It's very exciting and very surprising. Finding something like this tablet, where we see a person mentioned in the Bible making an everyday payment to the temple in Babylon and quoting the exact date, is quite extraordinary."{4}

The Significance of the Discovery

The significance of this discovery is that the Tablet of Nabu is a text outside of the Bible that confirms Jeremiahs record of Nebo-Sarsekim as a historical figure. Nebo-Sarsekim is not a prominent figure, but the fact that Jeremiah was accurate on details such as these adds considerable credibility to the Book of Jeremiah. If a writer is accurate on minor details like this, we can be confident that other recorded events which may not have archaeological confirmation are also true. Dr Irving Finkel, assistant keeper in the Department of the Middle East stated, "This is a fantastic discovery, a world-class find. If Nebo-Sarsekim existed, which other lesser figures in the Old Testament existed? A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true. I think that it means that the whole of the narrative [of Jeremiah] takes on a new kind of power."{5}

This discovery of the Tablet of Nabu is yet another among thousands of archaeological findings that confirm characters, places, and events mentioned in the Bible. Not only are major historical figures confirmed, but so have many minor

characters such as Nebo-Sarsekim and others also been confirmed. Dr. Geza Vermes, the eminent emeritus professor of Jewish studies at the University of Oxford, said that such a discovery revealed that "the Biblical story is not altogether invented." He added, "This will be interesting for religious people as much as historians."{6} When a work has so much historical and archaeological confirmation, particularly when it comes to minor details, we can be confident that it is indeed a very accurate historical document. Discoveries such as this tablet continue to confirm the Bibles historical accuracy. Therefore, we can have greater confidence in the historical nature of the events where we may not have extra-biblical corroboration.

Notes

1. Nigel Reynolds, "Tiny Tablet Provides Proof for Old Testament," Telegraph.co.uk., 13 July 2007, tinyurl.com/2bbcac.
2. Ibid.
3. Dalya Alberge, "Museum's tablet lends new weight to Biblical truth," *The London Times* 11 July 2007, www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article2056362.ece
4. Ibid.
5. Nigel Reynolds, "Tiny Tablet."
6. Dalya Alberge, "Museum's tablet."

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Leftist Jewish Journalist

Survives Evangelical Beat

Quiz: What do you get when you take one leftist Jewish journalist, assign him to the evangelical Christian beat for major newspapers on both US coasts, sprinkle in some fiery sermons and politically conservative speeches, mix thoroughly, and bake with the heat of fiercely contested national elections?

Note: This is not a joke.

Sound like a recipe for nitroglycerin shortcake? Maybe you'd expect mutual animosity: "Those wacko God-squaders are at it again, imposing their beliefs and politics on the rest of us sane people." "He's just another example of the biased secular humanist liberal media that's ruining America."

Yet this cake hides no explosives. The leftist Jewish journalist made a significant discovery on the road to meeting deadlines, one he feels can instruct his colleagues and us all.

He says to effectively cover the strange tribe to which he was assigned, it helps to know its members as neighbors and friends. His lesson has affected his writing in ways that have conservative evangelicals commending him for fairness and that provide useful illustrations for managing today's turbulent culture wars.

A Jew Among the Evangelicals

Mark Pinsky's new book, *A Jew Among the Evangelicals: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Westminster John Knox), tells how this "nice Jewish boy from Jersey" ended up attending church "more often than many Christians" and sometimes more often than he attends his own synagogue. During his ten years covering religion for the *Los Angeles Times*, he focused on leaders of major evangelical ministries and had little connection with

local grassroots evangelicals.

When he moved to Florida in 1995 to write for the *Orlando Sentinel*, they were everywhere: In the neighborhood, at kids sporting events, birthday parties, PTA meetings, Scouts, "I encountered evangelicals simply as people, rather than as subjects or sources of quotes for my stories."

Still a committed Jew, Pinsky found they were neither monolithic nor, as *The Washington Post* once claimed, ""poor, uneducated and easy to command." They displayed surprising diversity on a range of issues including the Iraq war, environmentalism, tax policy, women in leadership, and immigration.

The Readable Radical

Disclaimer: Pinsky, whom I've known since our university days, is a personal friend, so I'm biased. But I've also observed a curious development here that merits wider consideration. His *Duke Chronicle* column was entitled "The Readable Radical" and he was at the vanguard of late-1960s campus leftist causes. I didn't always agree with his politics, but I admired his concerns about justice, hypocrisy and the disenfranchised.

He still votes with the Democratic left, but he also understands the Christian subculture he covers better than many of its members. Mutual respect characterizes his relations with its leaders.

Pinsky is not without good natured humor as he highlights evangelical quirks. Example: the Orlando golf club that hyped its Easter sunrise service and "Easter Egg Scramble" golf tournament. And, perhaps-not-so-tongue-in-cheek, he admits he especially likes about evangelical Christians that "if you are sorry, they have to forgive you." He knows their boss said, "When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against{1}.

Lessons for Life in the Larger World

His book draws lessons from his peculiar and unlikely journey for life in the larger world. His stories of "how people just like you wrestle with feelings, values, and beliefs that touch the core of their beings" provide "a glimpse of someone learning to understand and get along with folks whose convictions differ from his own."

Get to know your intellectual and philosophical adversaries, he recommends. Take them to lunch. Ratchet down the rhetoric. Maybe connection can produce understanding and civility can grow into bridgebuilding.

Not bad advice in a world too-often filled with brickbats and name calling.

Note

1. Mark 11:25 *New Living Translation*.

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Judaism Viewed from a Christian Perspective

Dr. Pat Zukeran provides an overview of Judaism from an orthodox Christian perspective, including basic beliefs and practices and some suggestions for sharing one's faith with a Jewish friend.

Judaism Today

Throughout the last several decades, the eyes of the world

have frequently focused on the tiny nation of Israel. What is the significance of this nation and her religion?



The focus of this article is the religion of the Jews. When studying Judaism, however, we must understand that there is a distinction between the Jewish people and the religion of Judaism. Many Jews do not embrace Judaism, but consider themselves to be secular, atheistic, or agnostic.

The term *Judaism* is often used to identify the faith of modern Jews as well as Old Testament Jews. For our purposes, the term is used to refer to the religion of the rabbis established around 200 B.C. and crystallized in A.D. 70. At this time, developments in rabbinic Judaism took place that distinguished it from the Old Testament faith. New institutions arose such as the synagogue (the house of worship and study), the office of rabbi (a leader holding religious authority), and the *yeshivot* (religious academies for training rabbis). One of the greatest changes came with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. Sacrifices and the priesthood came to an end, and the rabbis became the authorities on spiritual and legal matters.

Since the eighteenth century, three main branches of Judaism developed: Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative. Orthodox Judaism upholds the divine inspiration of the Old Testament—giving greater authority to the first five books—and recognizes the Talmud as authoritative for interpreting the Jewish law. This branch continues to observe the traditional Jewish laws as practiced for centuries. An ultra orthodox sect within this branch is the Hasidic movement. This sect adheres strictly to the Law of Moses, and is a separatist group.

Reform Judaism is the liberal wing. It was founded by Abraham Geiger in Germany in the nineteenth century (1810-1874). Geiger was influenced by the Enlightenment, and so viewed reason and science as authoritative. He rejected belief in revelation, messianic hope, and the promise of land. This

branch seeks to modernize what are considered outmoded ways of thinking. The primary focus of Reform Judaism is the ethical teachings of the Jewish Law.

Conservative Judaism is considered the intermediate position between Orthodox and Reform. It was founded in the nineteenth century in Germany by Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875). Conservatives seek to practice the Law and the traditions, but cautiously reinterpret the Law and adapt their practices to contemporary culture.

The existence of these and numerous other sects means a wide variety of beliefs within Judaism. In addition, as a result of the Enlightenment and the Holocaust, secularization among the Jews is increasing rapidly. Because of the wide variety of beliefs within Judaism, it is difficult today to define what makes a person Jewish.

Nonetheless, according to the Old Testament, Jews are the descendants of Abraham. It is these people to whom God has made special promises and who will have a prominent role in redeeming the world.

Basic Beliefs of Judaism

Do Christians and followers of Judaism worship the same God? What is Judaism’s understanding of Jesus? Let’s take a look at some basic Jewish beliefs as compared with Christian ones.

Both religions believe in the Old Testament, the ethical teachings of the Law, and a hope in the coming of the Kingdom of God. However, they differ on some important fundamental doctrines.

Judaism rejects the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and teaches a unified monotheism based on Deuteronomy 6:4.

The main Scripture in Judaism is the Old Testament. Views of

divine inspiration vary between the different branches. Orthodox and Conservative schools view the Pentateuch as the most inspired part, the Prophets and Writings less so. Another important book is the Talmud which includes the Mishnah and Gemara. The Mishnah consists of legal rulings, and was compiled around A.D. 200. The Gemara elaborates on the discussions of the Mishnah, and was compiled around A.D. 550. Most Jews, especially Orthodox Jews, consider the Talmud useful for giving instruction for life but not divinely inspired.

Judaism teaches that man is created in the image of God but without original sin. Study of the Torah can overcome our inclination to evil.

A proper relationship with God comes through repentance, prayer, and obedience to the Law. Jews do not feel they need "salvation" but assume a standing with God through their heritage. Conservative and Reform Jews view salvation as the betterment of self and society.

The Orthodox school holds to a bodily resurrection at death. The Conservative school teaches the immortality of the soul. The Reform school generally has no teaching regarding life after death.

Central to Jewish hope is the Messiah. Orthodox Jews anticipate a personal Messiah, while Reform and Conservative Jews view the messianic concept as the ideal of establishing justice by human effort. A key dividing point between Judaism and Christianity, of course, is their views of Jesus. Judaism recognizes Jesus as a moral teacher, but rejects His claims to deity as a creation of the early church. The New Testament teaches that without accepting Christ, even the sons and daughters of Abraham cannot inherit eternal life.

From our brief survey, then, it is clear that Judaism and Christianity differ significantly on major doctrines. The two

do not worship the same God. They also differ in salvation theology. Judaism is works-oriented and rejects the atoning work of Christ and His divine nature. Christianity proclaims faith in the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross. The New Testament teaches that without accepting Christ, even the sons and daughters of Abraham cannot inherit the hope of eternal life.

The Practices of Judaism

Jewish festivals and holidays are an integral part of Judaism. They memorialize key events in the history of the Jewish people and honor their unique heritage. Here are some important Jewish festivals.

The most significant is Passover, the first observance of which is recorded in Exodus 12. Jews continue to commemorate God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt in the fourteenth century B.C. Passover is observed in March or April and lasts a week.

Seven weeks after Passover comes Pentecost, which observes the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

The festival of Tabernacles occurs in the fall. This festival commemorates the forty years of wandering in the desert when the Israelites lived in tabernacles or booths. The ceremony includes prayer for rain and the reading of the Torah.

Rosh ha-Shanah is the celebration of the Jewish New Year. This joyful festival occurs in September or October and marks the beginning of a ten-day period known as the High Holy Days. Rosh ha-Shanah climaxes on the tenth day which is called Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is a solemn day when Jews fast, attend the synagogue, and recite prayers asking God for forgiveness of their sins.

Hannukah is celebrated in November or December and lasts eight

days. It honors the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian armies of Antiochus Epiphanes and the rededication of the second Jerusalem Temple in 165 B.C. The lighting of the eight-branched menorah is the main feature of this celebration. When Israel was reestablished as a nation in 1948, the menorah became a national symbol.

Purim is a minor holiday celebrated in February or March and commemorates the deliverance of the Jews by God told in the story of Esther.

Not only are the holidays important, but the celebration of events in the life cycle are as well. Circumcision on the eighth day for boys is one. Another is the religious coming-of-age ceremony of Bar Mitzvah for boys at age 13, and Bat Mitzvah for girls at age 12 or 13. Third is the Jewish wedding. Finally, there is the funeral service and mourning for seven days.

These Jewish practices, especially those surrounding the holidays, not only play a key role in the life of the Jewish people, but are significant to the church as well. Major events in the life of Christ and the church in Acts occurred on these days. Christ died on the Passover, and the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. Also, the symbolisms and rituals enacted at these festivals foreshadow what was fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

Witnessing to the Jews

How do we share Christ with our Jewish neighbors? Before preaching the gospel, it would be wise to first build friendships with Jews and learn from them. Second, we should understand the Jewish perception of Christians and Christianity. For a Jewish person to become a Christian means to reject his or her heritage and distinctiveness; in other words, many equate it to becoming a gentile. This is

difficult, for many harbor resentment for mistreatment by Christians and gentile nations.

After building trust, encourage them to read their own Scriptures. Many grow up reciting passages of the Old Testament but not *studying* the Old Testament or the messianic prophecies.

There are many messianic passages to which one could refer. One frequently used passage is Isaiah 53 which describes the suffering servant who takes on the sins of the people. Most Jews have been taught that this is the nation of Israel. However, the context and content of the passage make it clear it is not. A careful study soon reveals that Jesus Christ fits the description of this servant.

Another passage is the prophecy of the seventy sevens in Daniel 9. When properly calculated, the prophecy predicts the Messiah to enter Jerusalem and be crucified in AD 33. Put this date together with Isaiah 53, and who else fits the description but Jesus? Here are two passages that can open the mind of a Jewish friend to begin investigating further the prophecies and the life of Jesus. As you continue to talk, encourage them to read the Gospel of Matthew which was written for the Jews.

There are also many images in the Old Testament and in Jewish festivals that point to Jesus Christ. The Passover lamb is a good example. The lamb was sacrificed and its blood was painted on the doorframe to identify and protect the Israelites from the Angel of Death. In Numbers 9, the Passover lamb was to be without blemish, and none of its bones were to be broken when sacrificed (Numbers 9:12). This is a foreshadowing of Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God who lived a sinless life. His blood was shed and covers the believer delivering us from sin and death. John 19:33 records that the Romans were about to break the legs of the criminals, but finding Christ already dead, they did not break his bones. In

every way, Christ meets the requirements for the perfect sacrifice.

These passages and symbols reveal that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Be sure to explain that not only must one acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, but that one must put all one's faith in His atoning work of sacrifice to be brought into a right relationship with God.

Promises for the Chosen

Are the Jews God's chosen people? What is their role in God's plan for the world? To answer these questions, we must first look at the covenants God established with Israel which are the foundation of His redemption plan.

The first is the Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12. This pledge includes the promises that Abraham will be a father of a great nation; that his descendants will own the land of Canaan forever; that those who bless Israel will be blessed, and whoever curses it will be cursed; and that the world would be blessed through Israel. Israel was to be a light to the world. Through their special relationship with God, and as they lived in obedience to His law, the nations would take notice of this people and come to learn about their God. However, Israel was not able to live in obedience to God and did not fulfill this call.

The second pledge is the Land Covenant in Deuteronomy 30. In this covenant, the promise of the land of Palestine is reaffirmed to Israel. Added to this is a warning that if the Israelites do not obey God's law, they will be scattered from the land and regathered when they return to the Lord.

The third covenant is the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:11. This promise states that a descendant of David would establish an eternal rule of peace and righteousness. This forms the basis of Israel's hope in a future messiah who will deliver

Israel from the rule of the gentiles and bring the Abrahamic Covenant to completion.

Finally, there is the New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31:31-34: “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. . . . It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers . . . I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Israel was unable to obey God’s law because they depended on their strength to live the law. What was needed was a new heart and empowerment to live the law. This pledge provides this, and guarantees that there will be a time when Israel as a nation will turn to her Messiah.

Several aspects of these covenants have been fulfilled. Abraham’s descendants have become a nation. Christ was a descendant of David and fulfilled the old law making it possible for all men to know God. However, other promises are yet to be fulfilled. Israel doesn’t yet possess the promised land in peace, and a Davidic Kingdom hasn’t been established in Jerusalem.

Despite Israel’s failure and rejection of their Messiah, however, God is faithful, and He will fulfill His promises at the appointed time.

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“Why Don’t Jews Believe in Jesus as Messiah?”

Do Jews still observe Old Testament practices like burnt offerings? If Jews believe in a coming savior, why does Christ not meet all of their criteria?

I am not aware of any Jews who currently practice the Old Testament sacrificial rituals. This is at least partly due to the fact that the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. and has never been rebuilt to this day. If, at some point

in the future, the temple IS rebuilt, then we may indeed see some of the orthodox Jews begin practicing the various Old Testament sacrificial rituals once again. But I seriously doubt we would see anything of this kind prior to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

Most Jews no longer believe in a coming Messiah. Of the three main branches within Judaism, only orthodox Jews tend to hold to this hope and they do not conceive of Messiah as divine; he is merely a human being. As for why Jesus does not meet their criteria, there could be many possible reasons offered. However, much of it is probably due both to (what I would consider) a misunderstanding of the Old Testament conception of Messiah, as well as simply to ignorance and misinformation about Jesus' credentials as the promised Messiah. As Louis Lapides, a Messianic Jew and Christian pastor, points out in Lee Strobel's book *The Case for Christ*, most Jews have never bothered to actually investigate the evidence supporting Jesus' claims to be Messiah.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

Mel Gibson's Passion Film Ignites Passions

The storm of controversy surrounding Mel Gibson's film about Jesus death has had many facets. Is the movie anti-Semitic? Too violent for kids? Would Gibsons Jesus get married?

Representatives of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League and the

Simon Wiesenthal Center feared provocation of anti-Jewish feelings and violence. Prerelease screenings found warm response from leaders including Vatican officials and Billy Graham. Others remained skeptical.

Much of the controversy centers on two questions about the film and the history it depicts: Were Jewish people responsible for Jesus death? And, if so, are all Jewish people thereby Christ killers? Anti-Semitisms ugly stains make certain fears understandable.

Raised as a Gentile in Miami, I had many Jewish friends. Miamis Jewish population exceeds that of many cities of Israel. My classmates talked of Hebrew school, synagogue, and bar mitzvahs. In school we sang Hanukah songs and Christmas carols. My parents taught and modeled respect and tolerance. Anti-Semitism makes my blood boil.

After finding faith as a university student, I explored concerns about anti-Semitism in biblical accounts of Jesus death. Jesus was Jewish, as were his early followers. Jewish people who opposed him aligned against Jewish people who supported him. This was essentially a Jewish-Jewish conflict. One faction pressured Pilate, a Roman ruler, into executing Jesus.

Jewish leaders did not physically hang him on a cross; Roman executioners did that. But some Jewish people were part of the mix.

Should all Jewish people bear the guilt for Jesus execution? Of course not. Neither should all Germans bear guilt for the Holocaust nor all Christians for racism or anti-Semitism, pedophilia, corruption, or other outrageous acts of Christians. We all bear responsibility for our own decisions.

But there is another facet to the guilt question. After I spoke in a University of Miami anthropology class, one student asked if Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus.

Absolutely, I replied. Jews are responsible for Jesus death. And so are Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, atheists and agnostics.

Jesus said he came to help plug people into God, to give his life as a ransom for many. He believed his death would pay the price necessary to provide forgiveness for all who would accept it, becoming a bridge linking them to eternity.

According to this perspective, we – all of us – and our flaws are the reason Jesus went to the cross. Are we guilty of physically executing him? No. Was it because of us that he suffered? By his reasoning, yes.

Gibsons film is significant. Of course, I brought my own biases to the screening. I left impressed with the terrible pain Jesus endured, especially poignant because I believe he endured it for me.

Rembrandt, the famous Dutch artist, painted a memorable depiction of the crucifixion. In it, several people help to raise the cross to which Jesus is nailed. Light emphasizes one particular face among the cross-raisers. The face is Rembrandts, a self-portrait. The painter believed he himself was part of the reason Jesus died.

Gibson told the Associated Press, “I came to a difficult point in my life and meditating on Christ’s sufferings, on his passion, got me through it.” The Passion film and story are worth considering and discussing among friends of any faith or of no faith.

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Freudian Slip

His “True Enemy”

In 1937, shortly before World War II, a Jewish doctor had a colleague who urged him to flee Austria for fear of Nazi oppression. The doctor replied that his “true enemy” was not the Nazis but “religion,” the Christian church. What inspired such hatred of Christianity in this scientist?{1}

His father Jakob read the Talmud and celebrated Jewish festivals. The young boy developed a fond affection for his Hebrew Bible teacher and later said that the Bible story had “an enduring effect” on his life. A beloved nanny took him to church as a child. He came home telling even his Jewish parents about “God Almighty”. But eventually the nanny was accused of theft and dismissed. He later blamed her for many of his difficulties, and launched his private practice on Easter Sunday as (some suggest) an “act of defiance.”

Anti-Semitism hounded the lad at school. Around age twelve, he was horrified to learn of his father’s youthful acquiescence to Gentile bigotry. “Jew! Get off the pavement!” a so-called “Christian” had shouted to the young Jakob after knocking his cap into the mud. The son learned to his chagrin that his dad had complied.

In secondary school, he abandoned Judaism for secular science and humanism. At the University of Vienna, he studied the atheist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach and carried his atheism into his career as a psychiatrist. Religion for him was simply a “wish fulfillment,” a fairy tale invented by humans to satisfy their needy souls.

This psychiatrist was Sigmund Freud. He became perhaps the most influential psychiatrist of history, affecting medicine, literature, language, religion and culture. Obsessed with what

he called the “painful riddle of death,” he once said he thought of it daily throughout life. His favorite grandson’s death brought great grief: “Everything has lost its meaning to me…” he wrote. “I can find no joy in life.” He called himself a “godless Jew.” In 1939, he slipped into eternity, a willful overdose of morphine assuaging his cancer’s pain.

What factors might have influenced Freud’s reaction to Christianity? Have you ever been discouraged about life or angry with God because of a major disappointment or the way a Christian has treated you? In the next section, we’ll consider Freud’s encounter with bigotry.

Anti-Semitism

Have you ever observed a Christian acting in un-Christlike ways? How did you feel? Disappointed? Embarrassed? Disgusted? Maybe you can identify with Sigmund Freud.

When Freud was about ten or twelve, his father Jakob told him that during his own youth, a “Christian” had knocked Jakob’s cap into the mud and shouted “Jew! Get off the pavement!” Jakob had simply picked up his cap. Little Sigmund found his father’s acquiescence to Gentile bigotry unheroic. Hannibal, the Semitic general who fought ancient Rome, became Sigmund’s hero. Hannibal’s conflict with Rome came to symbolize for Freud the Jewish-Roman Catholic conflict.{2}

In his twenties, Freud wrote of an ugly anti-Semitic incident on a train. When Freud opened a window for some fresh air, other passengers shouted for him to shut it. (The open window was on the windy side of the car.) He said he was willing to shut it provided another window opposite was opened. In the ensuing negotiations, someone shouted, “He’s a dirty Jew!” At that point, his first opponent announced to Freud, “We Christians consider other people, you’d better think less of your precious self.”

Freud asked one opponent to keep his vapid criticisms to himself and another to step forward and take his medicine. "I was quite prepared to kill him," Freud wrote, "but he did not step up…{3}

Sigmund's son Martin Freud recalled an incident from his own youth that deeply impressed Martin. During a summer holiday, the Freuds encountered some bigots: about ten men who carried sticks and umbrellas, shouted "anti-Semitic abuse," and apparently attempted to block Sigmund's way along a road. Ordering Martin to stay back, Sigmund "without the slightest hesitation … keeping to the middle of the road, marched towards the hostile crowd." Martin continues that his "…father, swinging his stick, charged the hostile crowd, which gave way before him and promptly dispersed, allowing him free passage. This was the last we saw of these unpleasant strangers." Perhaps Sigmund wanted his sons to see their father boldly confronting bigotry rather than cowering before it, as he felt his own father had done.{4}

Jews in Freud's Austria suffered great abuse from so-called Christians. No wonder he was turned off toward the Christian faith. How might disappointment and loss have contributed to Freud's anti-Christian stance?

Suffering's Distress

Have you ever been abandoned, lost a loved one, or endured illness and wondered, "Where is God?" Perhaps you can relate to Freud.

Earlier, I spoke about Freud's Catholic nanny whom he loved dearly, who was accused of theft and was dismissed. As an adult, Freud blamed this nanny for many of his own psychological problems.{5} The sudden departure—for alleged theft—of a trusted Christian caregiver could have left the child with abandonment fears{6} and the adult Freud with disdain for the nanny's faith. Freud wrote, "We naturally feel

hurt that a just God and a kindly providence do not protect us better from such influences [fate] during the most defenseless period of our lives."{7}

Freud's daughter, Sophie, died suddenly after a short illness. Writing to console her widower, Freud wrote: "…it was a senseless, brutal stroke of fate that took our Sophie from us . . . we are . . . mere playthings for the higher powers.{8}

A beloved grandson died at age four, leaving Freud depressed and grief stricken. "Fundamentally everything has lost its meaning for me," he admitted shortly before the child died.{9}

Freud's many health problems included a sixteen-year bout with cancer of the jaw. In 1939, as the cancer brought death closer, he wrote, "my world is . . . a small island of pain floating on an ocean of indifference."{10} Eventually a gangrenous hole in his cheek emitted a putrid odor that repulsed his beloved dog but attracted the flies.{11}

Like many, Freud could not reconcile human suffering with a benevolent God. In a 1933 lecture, he asserted:

> *It seems not to be the case that there's a power in the universe which watches over the well-being of individuals with parental care and brings all their affairs to a happy ending. On the contrary, . . . Obscure, unfeeling, unloving powers determine our fate.{12}*

Freud's suffering left him feeling deeply wounded. Could that be one reason he concluded that a benevolent God does not exist? Do you know people whose pain has made them mad at God, or has convinced them He doesn't exist? Intellectual doubt often has biographical roots.

Spiritual Confusion

Hypocritical Christians angered Sigmund Freud. The deaths of

his loved ones and his own cancer brought him great distress. His loss and suffering seemed incompatible with the idea of a loving God. So what did he think the main message of the Christian faith was?

In the book, *The Future of An Illusion*, his major diatribe against religion, Freud outlined his understanding of Christianity. He felt it spoke of humans having a "higher purpose"; a higher intelligence ordering life "for the best"; death not as "extinction" but the start of "a new kind of existence"; and a "supreme court of justice" that would reward good and punish evil.{13}

Freud's summary omits something significant: an emphasis on human restoration of relationship to God by receiving His free gift of forgiveness through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for human guilt.

Discussions of the biblical message often omit or obscure this important concept. I used to feel I had to earn God's love by my own efforts. Then I learned that from a biblical perspective, no one can achieve the perfection necessary to gain eternal life.{14} Freud's view of Christianity at this point seemed to be missing grace, Jesus, and the cross.

Two years after he wrote *The Future of An Illusion*, he seemed to have a clearer picture of Christian forgiveness. He wrote that earlier he had "failed to appreciate" the Christian concept of redemption through Christ's sacrificial death in which he took "upon himself a guilt that is common to everyone."{15}

Freud also attacked the intellectual validity of Christian faith.{16} He objected to arguments that one should not question the validity of religion and that we should believe simply because our ancestors did. I don't blame him. Those arguments don't satisfy me either. But he also felt the biblical writings were untrustworthy. He shows no awareness of

the wealth of evidence supporting, for example, the reliability of the New Testament documents or Jesus' resurrection.{17} His apparent lack of familiarity with historical evidence and method may have been a function of his era, background, academic pursuits or profession.

Perhaps confusion about spiritual matters colored Freud's view of the faith. Do you know anyone who is confused about Jesus' message or the evidence for its validity?

Freud's Christian Friend

Freud often despised Christianity, but he was quite fond of one Christian. He actually delayed publication of his major criticism of religion for fear of offending this friend. Finally, he warned his friend of its release.{18} Oskar Pfister, the Swiss pastor who had won Freud's heart, responded, "I have always believed that every man should state his honest opinion aloud and plainly. You have always been tolerant towards me, and am I to be intolerant of your atheism?"{19} Freud responded warmly and welcomed Pfister's published critique. Their correspondence is a marvelous example of scholars who differ doing so with grace and dignity, disagreeing with ideas but preserving their friendship. Their interchange could well inform many of today's political, cultural and religious debates.

Freud's longest correspondence was with Pfister. It lasted 30 years.{20} Freud's daughter and protégé, Anna, left a glimpse into the pastor's character. During her childhood, Pfister seemed "like a visitor from another planet" in the "totally non-religious Freud household." His "human warmth and enthusiasm" contrasted with the impatience of the visiting psychologists who saw the family mealtime as "an unwelcome interruption" in their important discussions. Pfister "enchanted" the Freud children, entering into their lives and becoming "a most welcome guest."{21}

Freud respected Pfister's work. He wrote, "[Y]ou are in the fortunate position of being able to lead . . . [people] to God."{22}

Freud called Pfister "a remarkable man a true servant of God, . . . [who] feels the need to do spiritual good to everyone he meets. You did good in this way even to me."{23}

"Dear Man of God," began Freud after a return home. "A letter from you is one of the best possible things that could be waiting for one on one's return."{24}

Pfister was a positive influence for Christ. But in the end, so far as we know, Freud decided against personal faith.

People reject Christ for many reasons. Hypocritical Christians turn some off. Others feel disillusioned, bitter, or skeptical from personal loss or pain. Some are confused about who Jesus is and how to know Him personally. Understanding these barriers to belief can help skeptics and seekers discern the roots of their dilemmas and prompt them to take a second look. Examples like Pfister's can show that following the Man from Nazareth might be worthwhile after all.

Notes

1. Much of this article is adapted from Russell Sims Wright, *Belief Barriers and Faith Factors: Biographical Roots of Sigmund Freud's Reaction to the Christian Faith and Their Relevance for Christian Ministry*, unpublished M.Th. dissertation, University of Oxford (Westminster College), May 2001.

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3. Sigmund Freud; Ernst L. Freud (ed.); Tania and James Stern (translators), *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873-1939* (London: Hogarth, 1961[1970 reprint]), pp. 92-94.

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5. Sigmund Freud, Letters 70 (October 3-4, 1897) and 71 (October 15, 1897) to Wilhelm Fliess. In *S.E., Volume I*, pp. 261-265.

6. Sigmund Freud, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, 1901. In *S.E. Volume VI*, pp. 49-51.

7. Sigmund Freud, Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood, 1910. In *S.E. Volume II*, pp. 136-137; quoted in Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *Why Did Freud Reject God? A Psychodynamic Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 241-242. The bracketed word is apparently Rizzuto's.

8. Ernst Freud, Lucie Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, eds., *Sigmund Freud: His Life in Pictures and Words* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), p. 220.

9. Sigmund Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud,* ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania and James Stern (New York: Dover, 1960 [1992 unaltered reprint of 1960 Basic Books edition]), pp. 343-344.

10. Max Schur, M.D., *Freud: Living and Dying* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1972), p. 524.

11. Ibid., pp. 526-527.

12. Armand Nicholi, Jr., M.D., "When Worldviews Collide: C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud: A comparison of their thoughts and viewpoints on life, pain and death," Part One, *The Real Issue* 16:2, January 1998, p. 11.

13. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of An Illusion,* ed. and trans.

James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961 edition of the 1928 work), pp. 23-24.

14. Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 1-5.

15. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961 edition of the 1930 work), pp. 99-100.

16. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of An Illusion,* p. 33.

17. See, for instance, Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).

18. Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud, eds., Eric Mosbacher trans., *Psycho-Analysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister* (London: Hogarth Press/Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1963), pp. 109-110.

19. Ibid., p. 110.

20. Nicholi, loc. cit.

21. Meng and E. Freud, op. cit., p. 11.

22. Ibid., p. 16.

23. Ibid., p. 24.

24. Ibid., p. 29.

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Six Months in Paris that Changed the World

Decisions have consequences. Our own lives and world history confirm that. The 1919 post-World War 1 Paris Peace Conference made decisions that echo in today's headlines. Fascinating stories about Iraq, Israel, Palestine and China prompt us to consider the impact of our own daily choices.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Carving Up the World

Think about the really important decisions you have made in your life: choices concerning your education, vocation, spouse, or friends; your spiritual beliefs and commitments. Are you happy with the outcomes? Have you made any bad choices in life that still haunt you?

Choices have consequences and how we make decisions can be critical. In this article, we'll look back more than eighty years ago at a fascinating gathering of world leaders who made significant decisions that touch our lives today.

In 1919, leaders from around the globe gathered in Paris to decide how to divide up the earth after the end of World War 1. Presidents and prime ministers debated, argued, dined, and attended the theater together as they created new nations and carved up old ones. Margaret MacMillan, an Oxford Ph.D. and University of Toronto history professor, tells their captivating story in her critically acclaimed bestseller, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*.{1} *The Sunday Times* of London says, "Most of the problems treated in this book are still with us today indeed, some of the most horrific things that have been taking place in Europe and the Middle East in the past decade stem directly from decisions made in

Paris in 1919."{2}

The cast of characters in this drama was diverse. The Big Three were leaders of the principal Allied nations: U.S. president Woodrow Wilson and the prime ministers of France and England, Georges Clemenceau and David Lloyd George. Joining them was a vast array of "statesmen, diplomats, bankers, soldiers, professors, economists and lawyers . . . from all corners of the world." Media reporters, businesspersons and spokespersons for a multitude of causes showed up.{3}

Lawrence of Arabia was there, the mysterious English scholar and soldier wrapped in Arab robes and promoting the Arab cause.{4} Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, not yet leaders of their governments, played supporting roles. A young Asian man who worked in the kitchen at the Paris Ritz asked the peacemakers to grant independence from France for his tiny nation. Ho Chi Minh – and Vietnam – got no reply.{5}

This article highlights three of the many decisions from the 1919 Paris Peace Conference that still influence headlines today. They concern Iraq, Israel, and China. Fasten your seatbelt for a ride into the past and then "Back to the Future." First, consider the birth of Iraq.

Creating Iraq

During the first six months of 1919, U.S. president Woodrow Wilson along with French and British prime ministers Clemenceau and Lloyd George considered exhausting appeals for land and power from people around the globe. At times, they found themselves crawling across a large map spread out on the floor to investigate and determine boundaries.{6} The challenges were immense. Clemenceau told a colleague, "It is much easier to make war than peace."{7}

Eminent British historian Arnold Toynbee, who advised the British delegation in Paris, told of delivering some papers to

his prime minister one day. To Toynbee's delight, Lloyd George forgot Toynbee was present and began to think out loud. "Mesopotamia," mused Lloyd George, ". . . yes . . . oil . . . irrigation . . . we must have Mesopotamia."{8}

"Mesopotamia" referred to three Middle Eastern provinces that had been part of the collapsed Ottoman empire: Mosul in the north, Basra in the south, and Baghdad in the middle. (Is this beginning to sound familiar?) Oil was a major concern. For a while back then, no one was sure if Mesopotamia had much oil. Clues emerged when the ground around Baghdad seeped pools of black sludge.{9}

Mesopotamia's British governor argued that the British, largely for strategic security reasons, should control Mosul, Basra, and Baghdad as a single administrative unit. But the three provinces had little in common. MacMillan notes, "In 1919 there was no Iraqi people; history, religion, geography pulled the people apart, not together."{10} Kurds and Persians chafed under Arabs. Shia Muslims resented Sunni Muslims.{11} (*Now* is this sounding familiar?)

Eventually geopolitical realities prompted a deal. In 1920, the Brits claimed a mandate for Mesopotamia and the French one for Syria. Rebellion broke out in Mesopotamia. Rebels cut train lines, attacked towns and murdered British officers. In 1921, England agreed to a king for Mesopotamia. Iraq was born. In 1932, it became independent.{12} Today . . . well, read your morning paper. Decisions have consequences.

Creating A Jewish Homeland

Another major decision made at the Paris Peace Conference affected the Jewish world and, eventually, the entire Middle East.

In February 1919, a British chemist appeared before the peacemakers to argue that Jews of the world needed a safe

place to live. Jews were trying to leave Russia and Austria by the millions. Where could they go? Chaim Weizmann and his Zionist colleagues thought they had the perfect answer: Palestine.{13}

Zionism had a powerful ally in British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour. Balfour was a wealthy politician with a strange habit of staying in bed all morning. "If you wanted nothing done," reflected Winston Churchill, Balfour "was undoubtedly the best man for the task."{14} Son of a deeply religious mother, he was fascinated with the Jews and Weizmann's vision.{15}

Prime Minister Lloyd George was another fan. Raised with the Bible, he claimed to have learned more Jewish history than English history. During the war, Weizmann, the Jewish chemist, provided without charge his process for making acetone, which the British desperately needed for making explosives. In return, Lloyd George offered Weizmann support for Zionism. Lloyd George later hailed that offer as the origin of the declaration supporting a Jewish homeland. The French posed an alternate theory: Lloyd George's mistress was married to a well-known Jewish businessman.{16}

In October 1917, the British issued the famous Balfour Declaration, pledging to help establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In 1919, Weizmann and other Zionist leaders made their pitch to the Paris peacemakers. But there was a problem. The Brits had made conflicting promises. During the war, they had supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. They had also encouraged the Arabs to revolt against Ottoman rule, promising them independence over land that included Palestine.{17}

President Wilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was sympathetic to Zionism. "To think," he told a prominent American rabbi, "that I the son of the manse should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people."{18} But the peacemakers postponed a decision. In 1920, at a separate

conference, the British got the Palestinian mandate (a form of trusteeship) to carry out the Balfour Declaration. Palestinian Arabs were already rioting against the Jews.{19} And today? Well, check your radio news.

Decisions have consequences. Next, how Paris 1919 influenced the great Asian dragon.

China Betrayed

U.S. president Woodrow Wilson once described a negotiating technique he used on an associate. "When you have hooked him," explained Wilson, "first you draw in a little, then give liberty to the line, then draw him back, finally wear him out, break him down, and land him."{20}

A Chinese-Japanese conflict would challenge Wilson's negotiating skills.{21} The Chinese had joined the Allies and hoped for fair treatment in Paris. Many Chinese admired Western democracy and Wilson's idealistic vision.

Shantung was a strategic peninsula below Beijing. Confucius, the great philosopher, was born there. His ideas permeated Chinese society. Shantung had thirty million people, cheap labor, plentiful minerals and a natural harbor. Shantung silk is still fashionable today. In the late 1890s, Germany seized Shantung. In 1914, Japan took it from the Germans.{22}

In Paris, Japan wanted Shantung. Japan sported a collection of secret agreements that remind one of a *Survivor* TV series. China placed hope in Wilson's famous Fourteen Points, which rejected secret treaties and included self-determination.{23}

The Chinese ambassador to Washington called Shantung "a Holy Land for the Chinese" and said that under foreign control it would be a "dagger pointed at the heart of China."{24} Wilson seemed sympathetic at first, but the decision on Shantung had to wait until late April as the Allies finalized the German treaty. By then, an avalanche of decisions was overwhelming

the peacemakers. When the Japanese forced their hand, Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George conceded Shantung to Japan in exchange for Japan's concession on another significant treaty matter.{25}

Chinese blamed Wilson for betraying them. On May 4, thousands of demonstrators rallied in Tiananmen Square. The dean of humanities from Beijing University distributed leaflets. May 4 marked the rejection of the West by many Chinese intellectuals. New Russian communism looked attractive to some. In 1921, radicals founded the Chinese Communist Party. That dean of humanities who had distributed leaflets became its first chairman, Mao Tse-tung. His party won power in 1949{26} and today . . . have you listened to the news recently?

Iraq, Israel, Palestine, China . . . Paris 1919 influenced them all. What does all this mean for us?

Decisions, Consequences, and You

As they departed Paris in 1919 after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Woodrow Wilson told his wife, "It is finished, and, as no one is satisfied, it makes me hope we have made a just peace; but it is all in the lap of the gods."{27}

As the journalists and delegations left Paris, the hotels that had become headquarters for the conventioneers reopened for regular business. Prostitutes groused that business dipped.{28}

The big three peacemakers did not last much longer in power. Lloyd George was forced to resign as prime minister in 1922. Clemenceau ran for president in late 1919, but withdrew in anger when he discovered he would face opposition. Wilson faced great resistance in the U.S. Senate which never ratified the Treaty of Versailles. In October 1919, a massive stroke left him bedridden and debilitated. In December, he learned he

had won the Nobel Peace Prize.{29}

Iraq, a nation patched together in Paris and its aftermath, still boils with religious, ethnic, and cultural dissent. Israelis and Palestinians still clash. China still distrusts the West. Certainly many decisions in intervening years have affected these hotspots, but seeds of conflict were sown in Paris.

What is a biblical perspective on Paris 1919? I don't claim to know which peacemakers may or may not have been following God in their particular choices, but consider three lessons that are both simple and profound:

First: *God's sovereignty ultimately trumps human activity.* God "raises up nations, and he destroys them."{30} He also "causes all things to work together for good to those who love" Him.{31} History's end has not yet transpired. Once it has, we shall see His divine hand more clearly.

Second: *Decisions have consequences.* "You will always reap what you sow!" Paul exclaimed.{32} This applies to nations and individuals. We all face decisions about what foods to eat, careers to pursue and life partners to select, about whether to become friends with God and to follow Him. Our choices influence this life and the next. Our decisions can affect others and produce unforeseen consequences. So . . .

Third: *We should seek to make wise decisions.* Solomon, a very wise king, wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths."{33}

Decisions have consequences. Are you facing any decisions that you need to place in God's hands?

Notes

1. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the*

World (New York: Random House, 2001). Most of the historical material in this article is drawn from MacMillan's research.
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3. Ibid., xxvii.
4. Ibid., 388-395 ff.
5. Ibid., 59.
6. Ibid., 255, 275.
7. A. Ribot, *Journal d'Alexandre Ribot et correspondances indites, 1914-1922* (Paris, 1936), 255; in Ibid., xxx.
8. A. Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (London, 1967), 211-12; in MacMillan, op. cit., 381.
9. MacMillan, op. cit., 395-96.
10. Ibid., 397.
11. Ibid., 400.
12. Ibid., 400-409.
13. Ibid., 410.
14. Ibid., 413.
15. Ibid., 413-415.
16. Ibid., 415-16.
17. Ibid., 416-21.
18. Ibid., 422.
19. Ibid., 4; 98; 103; 420; 423-427.
20. Ibid., 194.
21. Ibid., 322-344.
22. Ibid., 325-27.
23. Ibid., 328-29; 336; 338; 322; 495-96.
24. Ibid., 334.
25. Ibid., 330-38.
26. Ibid., 338-341.
27. T. Schachtman, Edith and Woodrow (New York, 1981), 189; in MacMillan, op. cit., 487.
28. MacMillan, op. cit., 485.
29. Ibid., 487-92.
30. Job 12:23 NLT.
31. Romans 8:28 NASB.
32. Galatians 6:7 NLT.
33. Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT.

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