

A resource of Christian Witness to Israel (N. America)
to challenge, assist and equip in local Jewish evangelism.

THE AC COURSE



Awakening
the
Conscience
of the
Christian
Church

THE HOPE OF HISTORY

3b REWRITING THE RAPTURE

Confusion and Correction

COMPLETE COURSE OUTLINE

The Biblical Burden for Jewish Mission The Hope throughout History for Jewish Redemption Contemporary Connections for Jewish Salvation

THE BIBLICAL BURDEN

<i>The MOTIVE</i>	<i>Psalm 67</i>	<i>The Praying patriarchs</i>
	<i>Romans 9-11</i>	<i>The Praying apostle</i>
<i>The METHODOLOGY</i>	<i>Isaiah 63</i>	<i>The Longing of the prophet</i>
	<i>Luke 4</i>	<i>The Liberation of The Prophet</i>
<i>The MISSIONOLOGY</i>	<i>2Cor 3&4</i>	<i>The Ministry that is glorious</i>
	<i>Acts 20-22</i>	<i>The Ministry that is blessed</i>
<i>The MANDATE</i>	<i>Psalm 150</i>	<i>The Holy hallelujahs</i>
	<i>Rev 4&5</i>	<i>The Cosmic chorus</i>

THE HOPE OF HISTORY

<i>PROTECTIVE PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Past, Present, Future</i>
<i>PIRATES OF PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Expulsion and Expansion</i>
<i>REPLACEMENT AND DEFACEMENT</i>	- <i>Forgotten and Forsaken</i>
<i>REFORMATION AND RE-EMBRACEMENT</i>	- <i>The Puritan Hope</i>
<i>The LIE OF THE LAND</i>	- <i>Too much love will kill you</i>
<i>REWRITING THE RAPTURE</i>	- <i>Confusion and correction</i>

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

<i>The CHALLENGES TO CONNECTING</i>	<i>The separated and the assimilated</i>
	<i>The atheist and the evangelical</i>
<i>The FRAGRANCE OF FRIENDSHIP</i>	<i>The aroma of Christ</i>
<i>The WISDOM OF WORDS</i>	<i>(Un)common language</i>
<i>RABBINIC REINTERPRETATIONS</i>	<i>Jewish objections</i>
	<i>Peter and Pentecost</i>

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. As you begin each study, pray for the Lord's grace and wisdom.
2. Discipline yourself to set aside one hour for each paper.
3. Keep a personal 'physical' notebook.
4. Begin with the questions and in your own notebook, answer each question in one sentence, prior to engaging in the study.
5. Read through the paper in one sitting, with note-taking.
6. Answer the questions again; this time, a paragraph each.

Feel free to send your answers to me, ask further questions, or simply make appropriate comments.

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THE HOPE OF HISTORY

3b: REWRITING THE RAPTURE

Confusion and Correction

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is there such a fascination with The Rapture? Is there a similar fascination for the Redeemer?
2. Is the Galatian error of relevance to Jewish mission? If so, in what ways?
3. What is Dual Covenant Theology and why is it both heretical and damaging to Jewish mission?
4. Are you a paranoid pessimist or a hopeful herald? How does this impact your evangelism?

REWRITING THE RAPTURE

Introduction:

For some people Judaism is more interesting than Jesus; the Land takes the attention more than the Lord, and for others, the Rapture is desired more than the Redeemer.

I don't intend to enter into a theological dispute over the Scriptural veracity of radical dispensationalism. (Sorry to disappoint.) Instead since Jesus said, *'by their fruit you shall know them'*, I want to consider the evangelistic fruit of such eschatological obsessions. In short, I want to simply state that when other 'gods' take precedence over our mind, our passions and our pocket, Jewish mission suffers, the cause of Christ suffers, and I will find you and go after you!

I have repeatedly said that when Judaism is more interesting than Jesus – something is wrong. When the Land takes your attention more than the Lord, Christ has been dethroned and that is idolatry. And when the Rapture sells more books than the Redeemer, the fascination for the reader is in flying away rather than following after.

Let's look at the term: rapture. The dictionary definition of rapture is *'a state or experience of being carried away' – by emotion, by a spiritual experience, or as many Christians understand it, a being carried to a meeting with the Lord 'in the air'*.

My title here is 'Rewriting the Rapture', in the sense that I want us to rewrite our obsession! Instead of a 'fly away' mentality, I want us to be carried up into a Historical Hopefulness in the ultimate redemptive plan of God, for the salvation of Israel and the nations. I want us to be enraptured at this prospect. I want us to be prayerful, laboring, and giving, unto this holy end; Christ and his Bride – both the older sister and the younger sister (Jew & Gentile); both the older brother and the younger prodigal (Jew and Gentile).

I want us to be taken up with the cause of Christ, not the politics of the Middle East. I want to be taken up with the Son-shine of Christ, not the shadows and symbols. I want us to be ecstatic and passionate about Redemption's facts rather than Rapture fiction. For with this rewritten rapturous delight, the kingdom will advance, evangelism will meet with the smile of the Father and His Son will have the pre-eminence in all things.

ANALYZING THE CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH

Where exactly are we on this? As we have already declared (AC #8) the context of our work is 'Captive Israel'- Jewish America and in our 'Providence' lectures (AC #3 & #4) , we considered the stunning hand of God that brought 'Jewish America' into being. The context of our work is also a Confused Church, and we want to examine some of the church teaching that brought about that confusion.

When a doctor asks awkward questions or even identifies bad habits (of diet or exercise...) he is doing so out of a desire for a healthier you! So as we take a probing examination of Church life and belief, we need to be prepared for some awkward questions (from yours truly!), but please be aware it is out of a desire for a healthier Church; and a healthier and more biblical mission to our Jewish neighbors.

It was Jude who began his letter speaking of his eagerness to write about '*our common salvation*', but found it necessary to appeal to his readers to '*contend for the faith*'. I find a similar constraint. I want to say nice things, encouraging things, about our common salvation, and how we must share that with our neighbors, and in particular our Jewish neighbors, but I find it necessary to sound an alarm.

As I have viewed the American evangelical landscape for the past 20 years of traveling here, and almost 10 years of living here, I am torn between delight and distress; between being

optimistic about the potential, and pessimistic about the current reality.

We are here for such a time as this. Both our time and place are divinely providential. More Jewish people are living beside Christians on this piece of dirt than at any other time or place in history... We have about 6 million Jewish people living here beside according to Patrick Johnstone's 'Operation World', 92m evangelicals. (Ok, we know the numbers are much much less – but still considerable!)

Quote from Operation World – p864. *'America's Christian legacy is undeniable and foundational to its identity. The Pilgrim Fathers were determined to establish a land in which they were free to exercise their Christian faith. On that foundation developed one of the largest and most dynamic Christian movements in history... generosity, evangelistic vitality, and ability to dream big are major factors in the surge of gospel progress. Pray that these may be maintained.'*

Now, in the light of that, my question is: What are we Gentile Christians doing to fulfill Romans 11:31 – *'that by the mercy shown to you (Gentiles) they (the Jewish people) also may receive mercy.'* What are we doing? What is our 'Christian Witness to Israel', in the USA?

I want to suggest that we are 'bewitched and bewildered'.

(i) Bewitched

The letter to the Galatians is one of the earliest letters dated around 48AD. Written about 15-20 years after the death of Christ; after Time's crucial event – the shedding of blood from which remission of sins came; the definite complete atonement by the Ultimate Passover Lamb. But 15-20 years on - there's a serious problem. When Jesus said, 'It is finished', some folks were saying, 'it's not quite...'

Paul writing in Galatians, has no opening commendation,

praise, thanksgiving. There's a critical problem about the nature of the gospel, salvation, and justification by faith alone. He needs to expose the error in no uncertain terms; to contend for the faith for the glory of Christ and the well-being of the Church. There is a two-fold aspect to this 'gloves off' approach. Any addition, or distraction from the uniqueness of Christ and His work dishonors the Lord and does damage to the spiritual health and ministry of the believer and the church.

Says Calvin, **'When the glory of justification is ascribed to another... the Saviour no longer occupies his place and the doctrine of the gospel is utterly ruined.'**

This Galatian error, of 'Christ plus circumcision', or the Judaizing tendencies, in Paul's mind was an acceptance of soul damning heresy. 'You fools'; or (JB Philips translation – 'you idiots'). This folly is spiritual, theological treason; the doctrine of devils.

You are out of your mind! You have lost your critical faculties. The Judaizer had cast a spell by his enchanting words. Jesus Christ had been placarded before them. There was a plainness and perspicuity of the true gospel. But says Paul, you are deluded by a different gospel. Who has bewitched you?

(ii) Bewildered

Paul is confused and bewildered at what has happened. *'I am astonished'*. And Gal. 4:20 – *'I am perplexed'*. John Stott says, *'He expresses astonishment at the fickleness and instability of the Galatians'*. You are so quickly deserting (present tense – a clear and present danger!) So easily being diverted to a different gospel. So easily distracted.

One of the commentators says, *'The Apostle's pen is dipped in fire'*. (I'm tempted to say he's got Scots-Irish ancestry!) In Northern Ireland we call a spade a shovel! No 'southern' 11th

commandment – *‘Thou shalt be nice’*

(Gal. 1:8) *‘...if we or an angel of heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be anathema’*, - eternally cursed. You see the pen on fire? - Let him go to Hell! Or perhaps even more graphic – Gal. 5:12 – *I wish those who unsettle you, would emasculate themselves!* Those who insist on circumcision... go one stage further! I wish we had the original manuscript, for Paul’s pen may well have gone through the parchment here!

Now let’s think through this, as it pertains to Jewish mission.

Q. HOW ARE WE BEWITCHED?

Are there two ways to heaven? One for the Jews and one for the Gentiles?

There is a certain ‘missionary organization’ calling itself the largest pro-Israel organization in the US with 3 million members. Quote from its founder: *‘The Jewish people wanted him to be their Messiah, but he absolutely refused... The Jews were not rejecting Jesus as Messiah, it was Jesus who was refusing to be the Messiah to the Jews.’*

This San Antonio mega-pastor also says - *‘I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the Word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.’*

Thus you have Dual Covenant Theology... there are two ways to heaven; Jesus for Gentiles and Torah for Jews. Now if this was just a slight blip on the evangelical landscape I could ignore it. I want to! But I can’t - not with 3 million members! Their stated mission is ‘to educate Christians about their Biblical and moral imperative to support Israel’. I read their 32 page magazine cover to cover. It never mentions Jesus once! Deliberate? – You bet!

Evangelical Church, who has bewitched you?! Some televangelist has put you under their charm; with fancy talk about Israel. But where's the beef? Where's the gospel? Where's Jesus? Remember Calvin's quote earlier? - *'the Saviour no longer occupies his place and the doctrine of the gospel is utterly ruined.'* Where's Jesus?

Paul has some serious words to say to this kind of preaching: *'If anyone is preaching another gospel let him be eternally cursed!'*

How can we stand with Israel, and permit them to go to a lost eternity? How can we support Israel but not tell them about Jesus? How, in the world of this missionary organization can it be said to 'Bless Israel' when Jesus is never mentioned! And how in the world of American evangelicalism does it have 3 million supporters! Who has bewitched you?

Theology matters! For out of theology comes healthy Christian living; and theology matters for mission, because out of our theology comes our missiology. And when we are bewitched concerning the subject of Israel and the Jewish people, our mission will be all over the map!

Q. HOW ARE WE BEWILDERED?

I firmly believe what Operation World says about the USA. There is no other country on the planet like this with a potential for kingdom ministry. But it's a bewildering mess. And when it comes to the subject of Israel and Jewish mission; it's a huge bewildering mess. Send your \$25 to help poor Israelis buy Matzah for Passover. Really? – that's my mission? Come visit the Land! Stand with Israel! Send us several hundred and we'll send you this beautiful Prayer Shawl. We got some wonderful objects to send you if you just send your donation.

Israel is sooo marketable, and you guys are sooo good at selling stuff and gathering stuff! We all want to 'bless Israel',

but we are so bewildered as to how! Buy a tree! Help them return and make Aliyah. Can I ask a simple question? What is the greatest blessing you have received? It can only be Jesus. And how do you bless Israel? Well, that's a no brainer! It's Jesus!

As I look on the confused, bewildered evangelical scene, I say with the Apostle, I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves... I want those empires cut off, destroyed and the little old ladies who fund them (who are being robbed), to find their money going to ministries that really bless Israel with the gospel of Jesus.

Paul said to the Galatians, *'you were running well... who cut in on you?'* We need to identify the cause. We need to name and shame. My announcement? In this bewitched and bewildering mess I want us to leave behind the 'Left Behind'.

(iii) Rewriting the Rapture

When did 'rapture-ology' become the dominant hermeneutic and eschatology? I'm tempted to say, 'Blame the Irish!' as one of the founders of classical dispensationalism was JN Darby (1800-1882) and he was a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and a pastor of the Church of Ireland.

Let's do a little history lesson here. Remember that at the end of the 19th century there was a sense within the Church that they were witnessing the terminal decline of Christendom and they sought to understand from Scripture what was going on. Fundamentalism was fighting German liberalism. Pan-denominational prophecy conferences were being held and in a strange twist of 'providence', the world's leading university press (Oxford) gave its authority to the fundamentalist movement, in return for the vast revenues of the Scofield Reference Bible. (More than 50 million sales!)

However, AW Tozer who was 'weaned on the Scofield Bible', said, *'... one of the greatest spiritual disasters ever to hit the*

Christian Church in the 20th century was the production of the Scofield Bible.

Yet, we must place the Scofield Bible in its day, and see how it was used - for good and ill. Couple the heightened depressive state of the Church with its general ignorance and lack of capable answer to the liberal arguments and the result is a wholesale retreat into a fundamentalist, spiritual monasticism, with Scofield as the Book. As one comic theologian said - *'My hope is built on nothing less than Scofield's notes and Moody Press.'*

Bring this into the 20th century with further evangelical decline and depressions. Throw in the climactic 2nd World War and the anti-semitic Holocaust. Add into the mix, the establishment of the State of Israel and a popularization of the theology of Scofield, by Hal Lindsay in Late Great Planet Earth. Now we're at the 60s & 70's.

People were now not reading Scripture, but relying on Scofield's notes or the preaching from them. Later there was further moving away from a sober study of Scripture to a more popular dumbed down version of End-times with exciting Bible Code 'secrets'. Fast forward through the late 80's and early 90's and then such eschatology of Hal Lindsay faces a problem. We have the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Berlin Wall. It would appear that things spoken of in Late Great Planet Earth were not coming to pass! Hal Lindsay's timeline suddenly became discredited and his prophetic abilities were shown up as false. What to do?!!

Enter Tim LaHaye and things move to another level; not just prophecy speculation, but prophecy fiction. The first book 'Left Behind' came out in 1995. Now we have popularized eschatology based on fiction. The dumbing down continued. The Lord's people are bereft. Don't give us the Bible, give us the Scofield notes. Don't give us the notes, tell it in a popular manner. Don't give us the popular version; make it more

exciting, yes, fiction will teach us, so make it into a page turning story; in fact make a movie!

Now the speculations can truly run wild without the author ever needing to justify his claims with bible cross references. At least Scofield had references! Left behind, well, left those behind! So we have speculation without verification. Market it, make it, mail it!

Says Crawford Gribben, *'Prophecy fiction emerged at the beginning of the 20th century from a pre-defined dispensationalism, but at the beginning of the 21st century it is increasingly attempting to reshape it.'* I would suggest it already has.

By end of 1999 – the Left Behind series had sold 20 million copies. After 9/11 and at the beginning of 2002 it had sold 32 million. Crawford Gribben again rightly points out the fundamental flaw, *'Evangelicalism has historically been a movement that centered on the story of the Cross... but in the vast majority of evangelical prophecy fictions, the cross is obvious only in its absence.'*

More emphasis on Rapture than Redeemer? – Houston, we have a problem.

More emphasis on Land, than upon the Lord? – Houston we have a problem.

More emphasis on Blood Moons than upon a Bloodied Messiah? – you got it, a problem!

RESTORING AN OPTIMISM IN THE CHURCH

Are we interested in flying away or following after Christ? Departure or discipleship? Your answer to these things are crucial to your missiology.

Is there a rabid infectious pessimism that has us bunkered

up till the heavens open? Do we have a siege mentality, pertaining to the kingdom, until *'One bright morning... I'll fly away...'* Is this world a diabolical cosmos from which we need to escape, or an earth that is to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea?

Are we not taught to pray? *'Your kingdom, your will be done... on earth...'* Christ is King, here, now, and we desire Him, to be proclaimed, and worshipped on earth, now! Theological pessimism has no biblical warrant! Go – disciple nations! Go – make the earth full of His glory! Scripture's eschatology is one of victory not defeat! But no, say the pessimists. Let's batten down the hatches, for we're never having those Fonzie Happy Days again!

(i) Paranoid Pessimists or Hopeful Heralds?

In the Christian church, paranoid pessimists are pervasive!! The news media breeds paranoia. It is easy to get depressed, about our fallen world. But we, of all people, should be Hopeful Heralds. Is the gospel light just to flicker out at the end of time? Where has this belief come from? Is that the sentiment of the book of Acts? What mentality spurred the great missionary movements in the 1800s/1900's?

Thomas Brooks: *'There will come a time when in this world, holiness shall be more general and more eminent than it ever has been since Adam fell in paradise.'* Well I would want to hear him preach!

Liberalism at the end of 19th Century, coupled with pessimism after 2 World Wars in 20th, led growing numbers of Christians to envisage a downhill into darkness scenario, and a ghettoized Christianity that kept itself unstained, by living as if in another world. Reformed monasticism is alive and well! Add to this a Rapture-ology fascinated by blood moons and Middle East politics, because 'this might be it!'

I have repeatedly said in these studies, that it was reformed

theology that drove the missionary movements. It was the doctrine of God and his sovereign kingship over this world that inspired great missionary pioneers. It was the Puritan Hope that made churches plead for and see revival. All because they were not Paranoid Pessimists thinking their American dream might fade, but they were Hopeful Heralds of a world changing gospel, to the Jew first and also to the Greek!

(ii) Flying Away or Filling the Earth?

Remember: the Son of Man will return to a wheat field with tares, not a field of tares with a few stalks of wheat! We are on the winning side! Biblical Christianity is victory focused and evangelistically driven. We do not espouse a Greek philosophy of one bright morning, I'll fly away. We espouse a Hebrew mindset. We are those who claim the earth! As the hymn says, we are coming to a King; large petitions to Him bring.

May it not be, *'You have not, because you ask not.'* Instead – *'How much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.'*

Let us do business with God today. Let us restore a biblical optimism. Let us rewrite the rapture... to be enraptured with Christ, His gospel and so let us bring it to his blood brothers, the Jewish people, and unto the nations of the world.

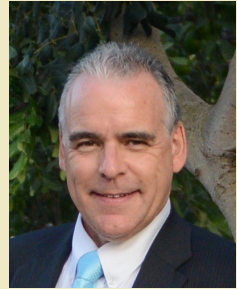
The song went, 'bewitched, bothered and bewildered'. Let us move from being bewitched and bewildered, to being truly bothered, or more accurately, seriously 'burdened', for Jewish evangelism.

Thy kingdom come...

WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

DIRECTOR: STEPHEN ATKINSON

As **Director of Ministry** and 35 years of preaching experience, Stephen has been engaging with churches on behalf of CWI since 2004. With a Biblical mandate, historical reasoning, and present day missionary urgency, Stephen makes the case that every Church must have Jewish mission on its agenda!



MISSIONARY: MITCH TEPPER

As a **Jewish believer** Mitch has the apostle's burden for his own 'kindred after the flesh'. A graduate of Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, his Scriptural knowledge and personal passion drive him in his street evangelism, one on one relationships, and household bible studies, with the singular purpose of 'Telling Jewish people about Jesus'.



International Mission to Jewish People

We have been sharing Jesus with Jewish people internationally for almost 180 years. Today we have missionaries in the USA, UK, Israel, France, Holland, Hungary, Australia, all faithfully witnessing to Jewish communities across the world.



CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL (N America)

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