



PROPHECY *Today* UK

Bringing the unchanging word of God to a changing world

Aryan Jesus?

How denying the Jewishness of Jesus aided Nazism

The appalling history of the Holocaust is well known, but you might have wondered about the role of the German Church. How did Hitler managed to persuade so many Christians to support him? Today, a good minority of Christians advocate for Israel and the Jewish people, but this is a relatively new development.

From ancient times, the Jewish people have been rejected and vilified. Why? Because they are God's specially prepared and chosen people to spread the knowledge of God to the world; without them we would have no Bible, no Saviour ("Salvation is from the Jews," John 4:22). The Enemy of our souls has worked through rebellious humankind to destroy that knowledge and the possibility of redemption through the coming and the return of the Messiah.

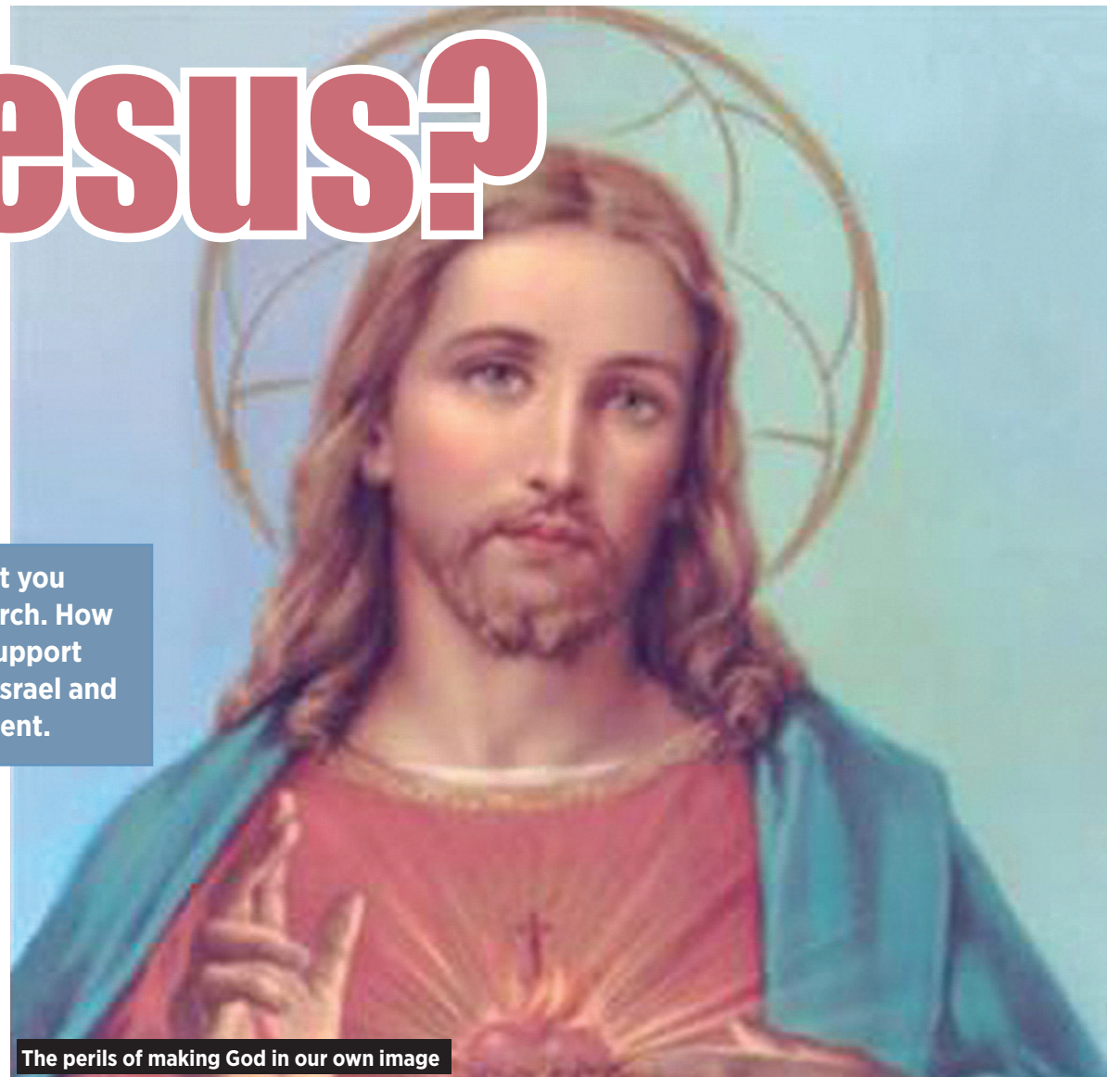
In tragic irony, Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah from the time of the Church Fathers onwards encouraged the rejection of Jews. Despite the flowering of study of the Hebrew scriptures during the Reformation, understanding of the role of God's ancient people and tolerance for their presence in Christian society did not flourish.

Martin Luther himself proved to be an enemy of the Jews, even denying that they could be saved. He wrote about the Jews in the vilest terms, calling their presence in Germany, "a heavy burden, a plague, a pestilence, a sheer misfortune for

our country." His writings created a template for an ongoing Christian narrative of rejection by God and replacement by the Church: "Why, even today they cannot refrain from their nonsensical, insane boasting that they are God's people, although they have been cast out, dispersed, and utterly rejected for almost fifteen hundred years." – quotations from *On the Jews and their Lies*.

Luther's anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism was seized on by Hitler, who described him as one of history's greatest reformers in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler is said to have drawn on Luther's recommendations on to how to treat Jews (Luther: "We are at fault in not slaying them") as support for his own programme of destruction.

Many German Christians were easily swept along by Hitler because, as scholar Susannah Heschel explains, they themselves had created the fiction of an Aryan Jesus.* The Old Testament was rejected by some because of its Jewishness, and along with it the study of Hebrew by trainee ministers. It was argued that the Jews had suppressed the true



picture of Jesus and Christianity, largely aided by the Jewish apostle Paul, and that it was through the spread of this pernicious teaching that Jews had achieved world domination. Others defended Paul and said that he had known the Jews "displeased God and were repulsive to all people" (written by a pastor from Hanover). Jews were no longer welcome in the churches.

The Sermon on the Mount was changed to make it more militaristic: "Blessed are the meek" (Matt 5:5) becoming "Happy is he who bears his sufferings like a man". The Cross was seen as weakness and a result of the so-called weak, feminine influence of Jews.

Post-Holocaust it is easy to condemn

the denial of the Jewish Jesus, but we should not be complacent. Ignorance about anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism persists among Christians. Most are unaware of Luther's appalling legacy, as Christian theologians have ignored or excused Luther's anti-Semitism because the truth is too uncomfortable: how a hero of the faith could be so drastically deceived.

We should also not be complacent because the desire to discredit and distort the word of God to suit ourselves persists today, along with man-centred interpretations of scripture, or the tendency simply to omit the parts of scripture we don't like. Jesus' Jewishness is often downplayed or ignored in Christian

teaching and replacement theology (where the Church replaces the Jewish people's place in God's plans) is still dominant.

Are we blind to parts of God's word? Do we ignore that which does not suit our biases and pre-conceptions? Are we willing to stand against persecution of the Jewish people, as well as all other forms of racism? And is God asking you to speak up for his truth to our communities, nation or world today?

■ Helen Belton

**The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, by Susannah Heschel (2014)



OUR STORY

From 1985 to 2006, Prophecy Today was published in print and grew to become one of the most widely read Christian magazines in the UK. It was an iconic publication renowned for declaring the word of God for our times.

In 2015, Prophecy Today was reborn online as Prophecy Today UK, under the leadership of original founder Dr Clifford Hill, taking a new format but keeping the same vision. Our small but dedicated team is now led by Charles Gardner, a long-time contributor to Prophecy Today, and operates under the umbrella of Issachar Ministries, publishing fresh editions each Friday. You can sign up on our website to receive these straight to your inbox, for free!

At Prophecy Today UK, we believe that God is as involved in the world today as he was in biblical times. We also believe that he longs to give Christians understanding about the world and how he is working out his purposes in it.

These four pages contain excerpts from the contemporary ministry of Prophecy Today UK, which includes commentary on public affairs, teaching articles and book reviews.



Covers of the original Prophecy Today magazine, in print 1985-2006

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A JEWISH MODEL OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Following all the disruption to our usual way of doing church, instead of simply returning to our old model, I believe God wants us to rediscover the life of discipleship that Jesus and his disciples knew: reconnecting with the Jewish framework of rabbinic-style discipleship and community.

This Jewish framework involves a focus on community, proactive learning together and putting faith into action. It is holistic and all-encompassing, not separating the 'spiritual' and the 'natural'. I believe God is longing for a church of disciples whose identity is firmly fixed in their loving relationship with God and one another. So, what does a disciple look like?

Proactive engagement Disciples are not limited by services or programmes; they are not waiting for someone to create the perfect

circumstances for them to encounter God; they are developing their faith for themselves proactively, seeking to follow the master and become like him through their own intention and heart engagement.

Journey Disciples understand that they have not reached a finish line called 'being saved' but have crossed a start line and stepped into the journey of following and becoming.

Questions Disciples are committed to the journey, however messy. They understand that their questions help them grow, and that since life

is a classroom and God the teacher, he welcomes questions and invites discussion.

Humility Disciples walk with humility, knowing they are still a work in progress and extending that grace to others. A community founded on discipleship is therefore one where people can come in and take masks off rather than adopting an artificial Christian identity to fit in.

Discipline Disciples set up their lives and lifestyles with routines to help develop their faith and prioritise what they believe should take first place – a relationship with the living God.

Imitating Jesus Disciples don't look to imitate the customs of the world, but to imitate and become like their master. Anything that helps this is good. Anything that hinders it is not. Passion, not a tick-box, is the driver for disciples.

Community Disciples operate in community rather than keeping their faith 'personal' or 'private' in some secretive way. They know that *"iron sharpens iron"* (Pr 27:17) and only in community can they learn how to love, serve and forgive each other.

Action Disciples are looking to put their faith and love into action. A disciple is more like an apprentice than a classroom student. The emphasis is on 'halakah', lived wisdom, as opposed to just intellectually held beliefs. And this leads to individuals and churches that have a greater impact on those around them.

The challenge for church leadership is to adopt this kind of model, community and mindset, even at the expense of long-held and dearly cherished forms. We must be willing to let go of our old ways of thinking if we are to find the truly exciting journey of transformation that God has for us.

The first step in this journey for leaders is to recognise that their primary responsibility is not to create a programme but to become a person who aims to model Christlikeness and the humility of a true disciple following after God with all their heart. A rabbi is not fundamentally an organiser but an example, an inspiration through their way of living, not just their preaching or teaching. The bar for leadership in Jewish thinking is therefore both higher and, in other ways, more realistic and more empowering of others.

This kind of Jewish model inherently has a less top-down emphasis, and a greater sense of each person's responsibility for their own walk, both spiritual and natural, with evangelism and growth a natural by-product.

Some revivals come from dramatic moves of the Spirit, but often reformation starts with a new paradigm or way of seeing and thinking. God is looking to strip from the church all dead or lifeless ways of thinking and re-grow the healthy, life-giving, fruit-bearing organism that the church is called to be. My prayer is that the church worldwide would come back to the authentic Jewish Jesus, and all that entails.

■ **David Hoffbrand** is the author of *The Jewish Jesus* and the 52 Sabbaths online devotional





LEARNING FROM MINNESOTA'S DAY OF PRAYER

The following little-known story is a highly encouraging testimony of answered prayer, while also showing the deep significance of a National Day of Prayer, very much needed in our day.



A giant plague of starving Rocky Mountain locusts (in reality grasshoppers) descended on swathes of Minnesota in 1873, destroying wheat, oat, corn and barley fields. Grasshopper plagues had occurred before, but this one was much bigger. Although farmers did all in their power to destroy the insects' eggs, 1874 proved even worse than the previous year; and it worsened each year, destroying half-a-million acres of crops in 1876.

There were no pesticides to deal with the problem, which had now become a major crisis across the state. The grasshoppers would completely darken the midday sky as they swooped in and devoured acre after acre of well-tended crop, even attacking cattle.

As the spring of 1877 advanced, the situation was looking desperate. Grasshopper swarms now covered two-thirds of Minnesota. Many farmers were reduced to paupery and some to virtual starvation, as most had no insurance or savings. City and town-dwellers were equally affected by the resultant economic downturn.

The proud Minnesotans were brought to the very end of themselves before they were in a position to seriously consider one remaining option - petitioning the state governor to call a state-wide Day of Prayer.

The governor, John Pillsbury, readily granted their request, himself at pains to find a way out of the crisis. Thursday, 26th April 1877 was officially set as a day of fasting, humility and prayer, with every man, woman and child urged to beseech

God to prevent the impending scourge.

Many mocked the decision, certain it would achieve no good. On the other hand, a small congregation of Catholics from Cold Spring pledged that if God would banish the grasshoppers from their midst, they would erect a chapel to God and give thanks there.

Thursday, April 26th arrived. A hush fell over the state. Shops were closed, bars were empty, and the streets were deserted. Churches, on the other hand, were packed - filled with people of contrite heart, acknowledging their utter powerlessness at dealing with the calamity that had overtaken them, and willing at long last to bow the knee and call on Almighty God to come to their rescue.

Interestingly, the climate across Minnesota on the Day of Prayer was unusually warm and sunny for a spring day in the far north. It was a perfect day for grasshopper eggs to hatch and for little larvae to come wiggling to life. And that's what happened, by the trillion.

Another unusual meteorological phenomenon occurred late that night. It began to rain; and with it, the wind shifted from south to north. The rain changed to sleet and then to snow. The snow and freezing temperatures continued for two full days, being followed on the third by a fully-fledged blizzard sweeping down from Canada. When it all finally

cleared, entomologists found that billions of little grasshoppers had been frozen to death shortly after hatching: the plague had ended.

That these rare weather events should happen from the very day the people called on God was seen as a miracle of biblical proportions. A bizarre coincidence seems unlikely, as, in addition, it normally takes an area subject to a grasshopper plague several years to recover from the recurring crop damage. Yet, the harvest across Minnesota that year was the most bountiful known in the state's history; never had the fields yielded so much grain!

True to their promise, the believers in Cold Spring built their 'Grasshopper Chapel' close to the town, and many a prayer of thanksgiving and praise

ascended from that humble wooden sanctuary.

The story of Minnesota's Day of Prayer serves as an inspiration and encouragement to believers everywhere that God indeed hears our prayers, and that we should never consider any problem too big (or small) for our heavenly Father to deal with (Jer 32:17).

But the story should also serve as a wake-up call to our own nation, which, like the rest of the world, has been facing a different type of plague over the past year. Let us acknowledge God in the affairs of our country, turn to him in humility, and beseech him to have mercy on our sin-soaked land (2 Chron 20:5-12).

■ Tom Lennie

'OUTSIDE IN' - SEEKING TO SERVE 'OUT OF CHURCH' BELIEVERS



In recent years, a growing number of faithful Christians in the UK have become disillusioned with current expressions of Sunday church available to them, or have left altogether.

They are not falling away from the faith, but rather acting in line with their consciences. Unable to find or attend a congregation that affirms the authority of the Bible, they are seeking fellowship with other Bible-believing Christians who now find themselves outside the established church but still very much 'in' the body of Christ.

If you find yourself in this position, and would like to know how we can serve you, including connecting you with prayer groups in your region that seek to stand together 'in the gap', please e-mail outsidein@issacharministries.co.uk or write to 'Outside In' at Issachar Ministries, Office 5, Shannon Court, High Street, Sandy, BEDS, SG19 1AG.

IRANIAN AWAKENING

As British citizens are given a 'roadmap to freedom' from the restrictions of the Covid pandemic, a vast army of Iranians are tasting the delights of a different kind of liberty.

In spite of the severe 'lockdown' on religious observation imposed by the ayatollahs, there are now thought to be as many as several million Christians in the country.

This is in spite of an extremely harsh clampdown on dissenters.

Conversion from Islam is forbidden, as are satellite dishes. But such is the hunger for outside information that many are prepared to risk state sanctions and have thus found freedom in Christ through a satellite TV network headed up by Dr Hormoz Shariat, known as the Billy Graham of Iran.

As a result, huge numbers are now risking their lives practising their Christian faith, which includes

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loving people they have been taught to hate – most notably the Jews.

A Shia Muslim convert to Christianity, Dr Shariat said*: “I was on the streets of Iran in 1979 shouting ‘Death to America!’” After reading both the Quran and the Bible, his life was changed dramatically, and he couldn’t keep it to himself. He told how the regime had murdered his brother. But he did not take revenge. “I felt God saying, ‘Don’t hate these people who killed your brother. The best thing you can do is to share the gospel with Muslims.’ “God has opened the hearts and minds of Iranians. They are questioning Islam and finding out it has not done anything for their lives, their marriages and even for their country.”

He adds: “They’re very open to anything except Islam. Christianity is very attractive because it talks about love and forgiveness.”

In addition, their hearts toward Israel change. “Both the Old and New Testament talk about loving God with all your heart, and loving your neighbour. Jesus calls us to love all people. So they start questioning why they should hate the Jews.”

As you contemplate the impending freedoms, remember those millions of believers around the world suffering under repressive regimes.

For all the joys of communal life, there is no greater treasure than the kingdom of God established through a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the pearl of great price (Matt 13:44-46) for whom true disciples are prepared to give up everything, even life on this earth.

■ **Charles Gardner**

*Interviewed by Jerusalem-based Joel C Rosenberg for All Israel News



REVIEWS

Prophecy Today UK reviews books, DVDs and other resources, both old and new, which we hope will bless your walk with God. Read the full reviews of the books below in the ‘Resources’ section on www.prophecytoday.uk

In His Image: A Biblical Introduction to Social Ethics

Stephen McQuoid

Wilberforce Publications, 2020, 126pp

This is an excellent, compelling and well-written resource from a man whose expertise and experience shine through.

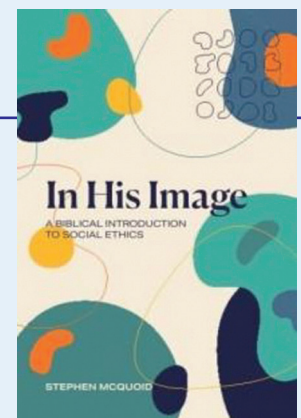
He makes it clear that ultimately only the gospel can bring the transformation that society needs, and that the essential basis for all social ethics is a correct understanding of humankind as the image bearers of our creator. He remarks that by rebelling against God and tampering with his original plan, we have engaged in “an act of self-harm”.

He discusses the difference between morality and ethics, and why Christians hold the views they do. His critique on the various current ethical models is excellent and concludes that, without a firm foundation as to the source of truth, each is flawed and potentially dangerous.

After explaining each of the Ten Commandments in turn, he then examines three specific issues – abortion, the redefinition of marriage and the family, and the transgender culture. He provides helpful frameworks with a non-judgemental approach, pointing out that we are all fallen people.

Lastly, he considers the Christian voice within a secular democracy and the role of the Church as a refuge for the broken, arguing that “we need to speak prophetic truth into society”.

■ **Paul Luckraft**



The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to stay emotionally healthy and spiritually alive in the chaos of the modern world’

John Mark Comer

Hodder & Stoughton, 2019, 286pp

Life has become more rushed and frenetic, and a recovery of the spiritual disciplines will go a long way towards slowing the pace. But does this popular book live up to expectations?

I found there was too much angst-laden detail in the prologue, and the intermission and epilogue add little of worth. But Comer has real knowledge to share and a thoughtful approach.

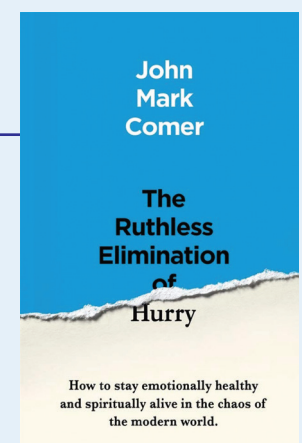
With well-researched information, he first focuses on the problem: hurry. He asks, “What is all this distraction, addiction and pace of life doing to our souls?”

Fortunately, the solution isn’t more time: a relief, since we can’t create more. He advises us to realise we can’t do it all. Then we are to learn from Jesus, who was never in a hurry. Following him should become a rule of life.

He then explores practices that could help. The chapters on ‘Simplicity’ and ‘Sabbath’ are very useful, with a lot to learn from Jesus. ‘Silence and Solitude’ has some useful tips but in rather too many words.

The style won’t please everyone, and it is rather long, but this book is easy to understand and very helpful.

■ **Paul Luckraft**



Prophecy Today UK is a project of Issachar Ministries, a resourcing ministry which derives its name from the Tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 23:32).

Issachar Ministries seeks to provide biblical teaching on current issues by understanding the times, listening to the Lord and knowing what should be done.

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