

# Perspectives: Are Christians Missing A Miracle?

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October 13, 2007

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Christian commitment in America is a paradox: passionate for faith and tradition, but lacking biblical knowledge.

*I pulled into Nazareth, I was feelin' about half past dead;  
I just need some place where I can lay my head.  
"Hey, mister, can you tell me where a man might find a bed?"  
He just grinned and shook my hand; "No!" was all he said.*

The Band's masterful lyricist, Robbie Robertson, often used allegorical references to the Bible in the songs he composed, and "The Weight" is a classic example. The meandering story begins with a weary fellow looking for a place to stay. Robertson intentionally replaced Bethlehem with Nazareth -- for his own artistic reasons -- and so on. There is a slight allusion to Joseph and Mary's fateful night in the village of King David's birth. "The Weight" later references Luke "waiting on the Judgment Day."

One suspects that if he doesn't live it, Robertson knows the Bible. It is distressing that within the conservative Christian community, such is not always the case.

My recent trip to Israel and subsequent conversations with fellow evangelicals convinces me that in large measure, the Church has missed one of the great stories of this or any other era.

The Bible is clear that after a period of long exile, the nation of Israel will be reborn in a moment of time. After thousands of years -- which somehow negated the promises to the Jews, in the minds of certain church fathers -- God brought this to pass. At 4:00 in the afternoon of May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion read modern Israel's declaration of independence in Tel Aviv. This fulfillment of Isaiah 66:8 was so startling, the ramifications still cause aftershocks internationally.

I visited Independence Hall, a stone's throw from the Mediterranean shore, and felt in some way that it was a holy moment. When one considers the extreme malevolence that has hunted Israel for millennia, it is almost beyond the scope of human reason to understand the miracle that is modern Israel.

Just before this year's Yom Kippur, I saw with great pleasure a reality I never tire of:

Jewish homes on the mountains of Israel. This is not Palestine. It is not even, in some sense, the Holy Land. It is the Land of Israel.

It also occurred to me that I like the Israel Defense Forces very much. I like seeing Jews with guns, because it not only means they can defend themselves, finally. It is also a fulfillment of Ezekiel 37.

God did not preserve the Jews because they are better than other people. He did not retain a remnant because they were large in number; this is stated quite clearly also in Ezekiel.

Yet Jews thrive, prosper, *live* in Israel today and this reality is so breathtaking, one wonders why Christians are indifferent, ignorant, or hostile to the fact.

Can we not see that this display of God's power by extension means that He will keep His promises to us, the Christians?

Showing some photographs to a group of Christians upon my return illustrated that the depth of biblical knowledge among many Christians is wafer-thin. A woman, on seeing images of the Garden Tomb just north of the Old City of Jerusalem, asked, "Is that the Garden of Eden?"

Well, no. For one thing, if one reads and believes the Bible, a global flood in the time of Noah obliterated Earth's surface. Yet this woman, who grew up in the Bible belt during World War II (when ostensibly the culture was biblical), thought for some reason that the Garden of Eden was in Jerusalem. Mind-boggling.

This is not an isolated incident -- not by a long shot. I'm constantly amazed by the number of Christians who think the Dome of the Rock is the Jewish temple. In fact, the Temple was destroyed by the Romans just a few decades after Christ's resurrection (he predicted this would happen, by the way). The Islamic shrine that now occupies the spot was built much later.

This isn't a problem of stupidity. Americans are smart. Most people are quick studies; they can grasp and process information. The problem lies in the bias (or laziness) of some church leaders and seminary professors who, incredibly, teach that the Bible isn't true. Witness the attacks in recent years on the veracity of the New Testament, and the centuries-old assault on Genesis. The latter paved the way for the former and the result is a collective ignorance of Scripture.

Ask yourself this question: in all your years of sitting through Sunday sermons, how often have you heard a pastor speak of the beautiful fulfillment of prophecy as personified in the establishment of Israel? Once? A few times? Never? Jack Hayford said last year that he senses ambivalence on the part of church leaders in the U.S. to acknowledge the miracle, Israel. The average Christian in the pew today will hear sermons about relationships, personal fulfillment, or some other self-serving topic. A

constant diet of that sort scratches the itch. It leaves the church member with a smile as he leaves the house of God. But it doesn't acknowledge the majesty and power of the Creator God, who, among other things, has revealed himself to us in spectacular fashion by keeping his people and returning them to their ancient home in the fullness of time.

For me, the saddest byproduct of this lack of knowledge is the continued opposition to the State of Israel. Visible spokesmen like John Piper and Chuck Colson minimize the relationship between modern Israel and the ancient promises to the Jews, while mainline leaders happily embrace the late Yasser Arafat's bizarre propaganda that Jesus was a Palestinian.

Jesus was and is a Jew.

Israel has returned. The ingathering has commenced and continues. I encourage all Christians to read the Bible for themselves and draw their own conclusions about that fact. Study the Jewish roots of Christianity. Take some time each day to be informed and read the news. Connect the dots.

The Jews today are harassed, hated, and held hostage by the continued anti-Semitic biases of the international community, particularly Islamist radicals. How sad that the people who should stand with them in solidarity -- Christians -- have such abysmal knowledge of the situation that they can't see the greatest story of our time.