

# Iran Sentences Christian Convert to 10 Years in Prison on Political Charges

Mostafa Bordbar, a Christian convert, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for being part of an “anti-security organization” and “gathering with intent to commit crimes against Iranian national security.”

The verdict was delivered to his lawyer on July 31 by a judge from Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, following his trial in June. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has been informed that Bordbar is currently being held in Evin Prison.

Bordbar was arrested on Dec. 27, 2012, along with 50 other **Christian converts** who had gathered to celebrate Christmas in a house in northern Tehran. They were detained, interrogated for several hours and forced to hand over personal details, including Facebook and email addresses and passwords. Most of the group was released; however, Bordbar and Vruir Avanesian, an Armenian Christian pastor, were arrested.

Bordbar had been arrested several years earlier in his hometown of Rasht for converting to Christianity and attending a house church. Branch 1 of the court in Rasht found him guilty of “apostasy” (abandoning Islam), but he was released after posting a bail of 200 million Iranian rials. Despite this, the conviction of **apostasy** remained on his record. When Bordbar subsequently attempted to set up a company, he was refused permission on the basis of this criminal record.

“CSW is deeply concerned at reports of Mostafa Bordbar’s harsh sentence,” says CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas. “Although he was convicted of crimes of a seemingly political nature, it is clear that, as with other Christians who have been recently

imprisoned in Iran, this is nothing more than a means of justifying manifestly excessive or unjust sentences. CSW urges the Iranian authorities to release Mostafa Bordbar and all those who have been imprisoned on account of their faith. We also urge the Iranian authorities to ensure that religious minorities are free to exercise their right to adopt any faith of their own choice, a right that is enshrined in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is party.”

---

## A Message to Heresy Hunters Seeking Strange Fire Where There Is None

Since I was first born again, God has allowed me to witness **spirits of error** and full-blown **deception** over and over. And He's called me to confront it more times than not. I've wept over souls falling headlong into pits of deception and been persecuted for walking away from ministries where **strong delusions** were leading people away from Jesus.

But make no mistake, there's a huge difference between discerning a **spirit of error** that keeps people from a full understanding of Jesus and accusing people of full-blown **heresy** that keeps people from receiving salvation. Even though deception is running rampant in the body of Christ, I shun the work of **heresy hunters** who have made it their mission to discredit anyone and everyone with whose theology they share a small point of contention.

I get emails from **heresy hunters** every day suggesting I expose some ministry or another (and sometimes calling me foul names

for hitting "delete"). Most of the Christian personalities these **heresy hunters** are working to expose aren't heretics at all, though most flow in a measure of error because none of us have it all right all the time. Some are clearly deceived, but they still don't qualify as heretics. I also get emails from **heresy hunters** who sometimes disagree with what I write. But an email last week from a woman named Yvonne took the heresy hunting to a hellish level.

### **A Heresy Hunter Baits Me**

"As I read the seven signs of a cult as outlined by Mike Bickel (sic), I must say my extensive experience with IHOP members, an IHOP church and the written and recorded claims of IHOP founder Mike Bickel (sic), IHOP fits all seven signs of a cult!," she argued. "You should read this online piece from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry."

The **Holy Spirit** prompted me to take the time to click the link and read the material. It was utter nonsense. Noteworthy is the fact that the author of the piece quoted extensively from Pastor John MacArthur's work to discredit the **International House of Prayer (IHOP)** in Kansas City, a 24/7 **prayer and worship** movement led by Mike Bickle. Also noteworthy is the fact that McArthur is organizing a "strange fire" conference in October, claiming that the **charismatic movement** "offers to God unacceptable worship, distorted worship. It blasphemes the Holy Spirit. It attributes to the Holy Spirit even the work of Satan."

Dr. Michael Brown has been pleading with Pastor MacArthur's ministry to sit down and discuss his inflammatory claims about the **charismatic movement**. Brown has appealed to him to embrace God's true fire. Brown noted how Pastor MacArthur's scathing indictment names "fine godly leaders like Mike Bickle and Lou Engle, claiming that they are guilty of blaspheming the Spirit."

## Condemning Me to Hell

Yvonne seems to be coming from the same spirit. Again, after I reviewed the material she sent I told her it was nonsense. Her response to me: "Depart from me I never knew you, is what you will hear when you stand before Him, for promoting and profiting from a heretical cult. I should have realized you were part of it."

How sad for the likes of Pastor MacArthur and Yvonne, both of whom I am convinced love God and His Word, to harass and **persecute** their brothers and sisters in Christ in this manner. Of course, Yvonne was quoting from the passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus told many who will say to Him, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt. 7:22-24)

Yvonne's indictment doesn't bother me a bit. I just look back to the introduction of the Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5: 11-12).

As much as I respect those who are faithful witnesses to the truth—and as much as I acknowledge there is **strange fire** in the **charismatic movement** and deception (and even heresy) in some camps in the body of Christ, we have to be extremely cautious in flippantly condemning someone to hell because they don't agree with us.

When it comes to **heresy** we expose it and refuse to fellowship with those propagating it, but even then we don't chase them down and persecute them. We pray that God will break in with light and expose the darkness that has clouded their minds. To

take any other approach is simply a wrong spirit that could ultimately lead you into a deeper deception than the one you believe they are exposing. Amen.

*Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.*

---

## **Billy Graham Takes Evangelism Strategy Into Canada**

In just three months, believers across Canada will step out in faith, sharing the **gospel** with friends, family and neighbors who haven't had a life-changing encounter with Christ.

My Hope With Billy Graham is a movement that's stretching across North America, from the southern United States to Canada's northwest territories. A project that's centered around relationship **evangelism**, My Hope encourages believers to cultivate authentic relationships with people in their lives.

With a solid foundation of friendship established, this November, Christians will be able to use the My Hope project to share their faith with unbelievers—in some cases for the first time.

"This type of large-scale event has not been done before, and that's why we're quite excited about the potential for this," says Dave Ingram, director of ministry for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) of Canada.

Nearly 2,000 Canadian churches representing each of the country's 10 provinces and three territories have already signed up for My Hope, encapsulating Canada's official motto, "*A mari usque ad mare*"—"From sea to sea."

With so many geographical areas covered by My Hope participants, it may be more appropriate to say, "From sea to sea to sea," as the **evangelism** project seeks to reach people from the Atlantic to the Pacific and up to the Arctic.

One key area is Quebec.

"Quebec is the least evangelized area of North America, and we've gotten some very positive feedback from **pastors** and church leaders about the project there," Ingram says.

Because residents of Quebec are predominantly French speakers, BGEA of Canada is creating a French version of all the major My Hope media, including a 30-minute video called *Defining Moments*.

The original English version features preaching from **Billy Graham**, interwoven with the stories of three individuals who explain how and why they made decisions for Christ. The powerful video may be the most influential part of the My Hope materials. For that reason, it was important not to merely use French subtitles but to find French Canadian Christians who could share their own stories.

The French *Defining Moments* video will be finished later this month and will feature two French-speaking Canadians and an American, along with a message from **Billy Graham** with French subtitles.

Ingram says the video has already proven to be a big help in recruiting churches to participate in My Hope, because it takes the project from an abstract concept to a visible, tangible mission.

“Once people see the video, they say, ‘Oh, *that’s* what My Hope is. That’s really very cool.’ Once the video got out there, that became a tremendous tool for us to utilize for people to get on board.”

Even with the growing enthusiasm for My Hope, there are challenges for the BGEA team in Canada, where evangelistic efforts aren’t always well received.

“Just in the sense that there are a lot less churches in Canada, and Christianity is a little more on the outside looking in,” Ingram says. “Sometimes just to get someone to listen to you about Christ is a challenge.”

The fact that My Hope is based on relationships has helped the project to grow. Organizations like the Salvation Army have voiced support for the mission and are helping spread the word. Several major denominational leaders have also jumped on board, providing momentum to propel the vision across the country.

My Hope will culminate in early November, as Mr. Graham celebrates his 95th birthday. Ingram says the BGEA of Canada has made arrangements with four different cable channels that will show the My Hope programming that week, covering the entire country. My Hope materials will also be available via DVD and streaming on the web.

Ingram hopes thousands of Christians will follow through and participate, inviting their unchurched friends to come to their homes in November.

“Just really pray that this has a tremendous impact on our society,” he says. “On individuals, but also on our society. Studies show ‘no religion’ is the fastest growing faith group in Canada. The proportion of Christ followers is really on the decline. We pray this would be one opportunity for significant impact in Canada.”

My Hope preparation meetings have already been held in 90 cities across the country, dotting the 5,000-mile span from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic.

It isn't easy reaching the second-largest country on earth, but guided by prayer, the BGEA and its partner churches hope to spread the gospel "from sea to sea"—a motto that originated in the Bible: "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!" (Ps. 72:8, ESV).

King David was foreshadowing the reign of Jesus Christ, the Savior whom thousands of Canadians are praying their friends and family will meet—perhaps for the first time—this year.

[Click here](#) to read the original story on .

---

## **Welsh Outpouring Focuses on Jesus**

"Don't fall over. Don't expect an appeal for cash. Don't follow celebrity preachers." These are not the usual announcements at revival meetings. But they're part of the message from the so-called "Welsh Outpouring."

Leaders of the nightly events at Victory Church in Cwmbran, Wales, steer away from the big claims of other renewals, though they report more than 300 conversions in six weeks. They also have muted references to money and manifestations and have placed an emphasis on all ages, not just youth.

These remarkable—and some say refreshing—moves have come under the leadership of pastor Richard Taylor. The 38-year-old minister recently left his church's continuous round of

revival gatherings to speak at the King's Center, Burgess Hill, England—and drew a capacity crowd there too.

Dressed in a smart suit and entertaining in his delivery, Taylor distanced himself from more flamboyant leaders with such sayings as, “I’m not a prophet ... I’m an ex-drug addict who loves Jesus.”

This father of five is no less energetic than other charismatic speakers, but he rejects some of their practices, drawing applause when he slammed the idea of pushing people over in prayer lines. “If another preacher tries to push me over, I’ll punch him in the face,” he laughed.

Yet as much as they downplay the drama, his church has seen attendance boom at its midweek meetings since April 10. That was the day a crippled man allegedly left his wheelchair in the church’s service. Visitors have since come from across the globe.

Taylor offered *Charisma* some context for this outpouring. As he sees it, the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Fla., was about salvation. He went there in 1995 and saw hundreds of people get saved. The Toronto Blessing, he adds, was about blessing Christians.

“What’s happening with us is quite different, because it’s both of those things and something else,” he says. “I think the ‘something else’—as well as blessing Christians and seeing salvation—the other thing is seeing Christians get a real hunger for Jesus again and His presence. The best reports are these: ‘I’ve never been so close to Jesus as I am now—my life has changed.’ When I get those emails in my office, I say to my staff, ‘That’s a miracle.’”

Taylor doesn’t criticize other movements. He’s inspired by the history of revival in his homeland, which has seen many awakenings in the past 200 years.

Church-growth researcher John Hayward has visited the current Cwmbran meetings and finds them no different from other “renewal days” held in Wales over the years. But when he talked to people, Hayward says, “something exciting started to come out, that God is really changing people.”

Hayward acknowledges Victory’s Pentecostal style won’t please everyone. But in his view, the style is almost irrelevant. People are being affected.

One attendee summed up their Cwmbran experience this way: “I don’t understand it, but I feel I’ve won the spiritual lottery!”

Hayward finds similar testimonies from a number of people. “The outpouring is like a window on what God’s been doing over a longer period of time,” he says. He compares what’s happening in Cwmbran not to the Welsh Revival of 1904 but to a previous awakening in the 1700s, which saw “a real movement among God’s people” that led to “real growth and real conversions,” he says.

“You can never tell at this stage of a movement if it’s real,” Hayward admits. “But you can tell if God is changing you.”

And God is already using Cwmbran to affect other churches. “Cwmbran and Richard [Taylor] are part of our story,” says Andy Robinson, pastor of Kings Church, Horsham, England. “It wasn’t the beginning. We’ve been experiencing beginnings of this kind of a move of God in the church. We’ve just started to see some salvations and some healings.”

Robinson’s link with Cwmbran started when he carved out time in his diary for a prayer retreat and decided to check out Victory Church. “What really struck me was, this isn’t that far removed from where we are as a church. But what is it? What’s the difference? It was just that hunger,” he says.

---

# **George O. Wood: 4 Women Who Changed the Course of History**

Click below to watch Assemblies of God General Superintendent George O. Wood deliver the opening service message of the General Council.

---

# **Evangelicals Vow to Denounce Immigration Reform Opponents**

“We are announcing the gospel that welcomes the stranger and we will denounce those that block immigration reform.”

Some would call them fighting words; others, a declaration of faith. They rang out recently within shouting distance of the U.S. House of Representatives, at the church where I serve as pastor, as over 300 leaders gathered for the “Evangelical Immigration Table Day of Prayer and Action for Immigration Reform.”

House leaders of both parties would have done well to come witness the breadth and depth of support for immigration reform: Pentecostals and Baptists; Mega-church leaders and small congregation ministers; Republicans and Democrats; natives of Arizona, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, and other states; and African Americans, Whites, Cuban Americans and other Latinos born and raised in the United States.

White people and African-Americans at the gathering told how they've been converted by experiences with Christ present in immigrants and their families. Immigrants told how they are making compacts across religious, ethnic, and political lines to work for justice and end the cruelty perpetrated by the U.S. immigration system.

Click here to read the rest of this article at .

---

## **George O. Wood Re-Elected Assemblies of God General Superintendent**

George O. Wood was re-elected to a second four-year term as general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Tuesday morning's business session of the 55th General Council.

Thanking the delegates for the election, Dr. Wood said, "It is an enormous privilege to serve you, and I will serve you to the best of my abilities."

He remarked that the epitaphs of his uncle, aunt and parents—Victor and Ruth Plymire, and George and Elizabeth Wood, respectively—express the "principles that guide [his] life." All four were pioneer missionaries to northwestern China and Tibet.

Here are their epitaphs:

- Victory Plymire: "To Do Thy Will"
- Ruth Plymire: "No Regrets"
- George R. Wood: "God's Faithful Minister"
- Elizabeth Wood: "God's Faithful Servant"

Dr. Wood then introduced Jewel, his wife of 47 years; his daughter, Evangeline Zorehkey; her husband, Rick, and son, Jacob; and his son, George Paul Wood, and his wife, Tiffany.

Dr. Wood was re-elected general superintendent with a supermajority of votes on the second electoral ballot.

---

## **Love Doesn't Conquer the Constitution: Gay Marriage Debated in Ill. Court**

Lawyers in Illinois are asking a judge to dismiss two lawsuits brought by homosexual activists challenging the constitutionality of Illinois marriage law, reserving marriage for one man and one woman.

Thomas More Society special counsel Paul Linton argued Tuesday before Judge Sophia Hall to dismiss the two lawsuits from the American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda Legal.

"Today, constitutional scholar Paul Linton cited overwhelming legal authority that contradicts and undermines plaintiffs' ostensible legal basis for their attack on marriage," says Tom Brejcha, president and chief counsel of the Thomas More Society.

"Plaintiffs' counsel repeatedly argued that homosexual couples shouldn't be denied the right to marry because they love each other. But this ignores the purpose of marriage, which is founded on the biological, scientific truth that only male-female unions may be blessed with offspring—little boys and girls—whether planned or unplanned, for which the institution

of marriage affords a stable framework within which these infants may be nurtured, reared and educated to adulthood.”

“Indeed,” Brejcha continues, “arguing that marriage should be available to any human beings who profess to love each other not only ignores unique biological fruitfulness of male and female unions, but it also makes us wonder when—and why—plaintiffs would ever draw the line. Stretching plaintiffs’ rationale to the limits of their logic, why or how could they bar or limit the legality of ‘marriages’ between brothers and sisters, so long as they profess ‘love’ toward one another, or between cousins of close consanguinity, let alone polygamy, or polyandry, or even polyamory.

“Thus, the plaintiffs’ rationale goes far beyond the pale, founders on its own illogic and affords no good reason at all for overturning our traditional, classic understanding of this vital social institution, which so many deem the cornerstone of our civilization and which our Illinois General Assembly recently upheld.”

“Furthermore,” Brejcha concludes, “contrary to plaintiffs’ contentions to the contrary, we hold firm in our belief that every child, if at all possible, should have both a mother and a father and that society should promote this ideal to the fullest extent possible. We stand confident behind our legal arguments, which have been upheld repeatedly in trials and appeals around the country.”

Hall says she will issue her ruling on the Thomas More Society’s motion to dismiss the homosexual lawsuits challenging Illinois marriage as unconstitutional on Sept. 27 at the Cook County Circuit Court in Chicago.

---

# The Dark Side of Wives Submitting to Husbands

During a past ministry trip to Hungary, I heard a painfully familiar story. Through a translator, a tearful young woman living near Budapest explained that her Christian husband was angrily demanding her absolute submission. This included, among other things, that she clean their house according to his strict standards and that she engage in sexual acts with him that made her feel uncomfortable and dirty.

This lady was not demanding her rights or trying to be disrespectful. She was a godly, humble woman who obviously wanted to please the Lord. But she had been beaten to a pulp emotionally, and she was receiving little help from her pastor—who was either unwilling or unprepared to confront wife abuse.

I've heard so many sickening versions of this scenario. In Kenya, several women told me their AIDS-infected husbands often raped them—and then their pastors told them they must submit to this treatment. In some parts of India, even some pastors believe it is acceptable to beat their wives if they argue with them or show any form of disrespect. And in some conservative churches in the United States, women are told that obedience to God is measured by their wifely submission—even if their husbands are addicted to alcohol or pornography or if they are involved in adulterous affairs.

This distortion of biblical teaching has plunged countless Christian women into depression and emotional trauma. I'm not sure which is worse: the harsh words they hear from their husbands or the perverse way the Bible is wielded as a leather belt to justify domestic abuse. Here are three truths we must uncover in order to solve this problem:

**1. Marriage is not a hierarchy.** Traditionalists assume that a Christian marriage is defined as a dominant husband who makes all family decisions while the wife graciously obeys without input. Yet Scripture actually portrays marriage as a loving partnership and refers to the wife as a “fellow heir of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7, NASB). And the apostle Paul taught that in the realm of sexuality, husbands and wives share equal authority over each other’s bodies (1 Cor. 7:4). In other words, submission in this most intimate part of a marriage covenant is mutual, and this same mutuality is the key to any happy marriage; it fosters respect, communication and an enduring bond.

**2. Headship is not a license to control.** Traditionalists also cite Ephesians 5:23 to remind wives that their husbands are their “heads”—and they believe this term requires some type of dictatorial control in marriage. Yet the Greek word used in this passage, *kephale*, does not have anything to do with heavy-handed authority, and it cannot be used to enforce male domination. Neither does it imply male superiority. The word can either mean “source” (as in the source of a river) or “one who leads into battle” (as a protector).

Neither original definition of this word gives room for abuse. Headship, in its essence, is not about who’s the boss. Rather, it refers to the Genesis account of Eve being taken from Adam’s side. The husband is the “source” of the wife because she originated from him, and she is intimately connected to him in a mystical union that is unlike any other human relationship.

**3. Men who abuse their wives are out of fellowship with God.** First Peter 3:7 is clear: “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so your prayers will not be hindered.” Wife abuse is no trivial sin. Any man who berates his wife, treats her as inferior or engages in abusive

behavior (including hitting, kicking, raping, cursing at or threatening punishment) will jeopardize his fellowship with the Lord. He will feel frustrated and convicted until he repents.

(And in the same way, I believe pastors who silently support abusive husbands by refusing to confront the behavior—or by telling women to submit to the pain—participate in this sin and could find their own prayers hindered.)

Truly Christian marriages, according to the apostle Paul, involve a tender, servant-hearted and unselfish husband who (1) loves his wife “just as Christ also loved the church”; (2) loves her as his own body; and (3) loves her as himself (see Eph. 5:25, 28 and 33). He stands alongside his wife in faithfulness, and she joyfully respects her husband because he can be trusted. And the two become one.

If we are to uphold this golden standard, we must confront abuse, shelter its victims and provide the tough love and counseling necessary to heal troubled relationships. And we have no business telling women to stay in marriages that actually could put them or their children in danger.

*J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can find him on Twitter at @leegrady.*

---

## **Understanding the Roles of Israel and the Church: Part 1**

It is of the utmost importance and significance to the kingdom of G-d that at this time the church fully comprehends the unique roles that both Israel and the church are still to play

out before Messiah returns. This would also be inclusive of Jewish believers from within the church who are called to be a light back to their own people.

As the apostle Paul has instructed, we are not to be ignorant to this mystery (Rom. 11:25). Yet there seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding in this regard—not simply toward Jewish believers, in how they should reflect their faith in Yeshua, but also in our reconnection as a spiritual family, as up to this point we are so very separate.

In fact, a good amount of what we hear and read from within the church continues to fuel this separation, either through the doctrine of replacement theology that teaches the church has replaced Israel, or through teachings that promote a continued separation right until the end with G-d dealing with Israel on His own apart from the church. However, with all of my heart as a Jewish believer who has come to love his Gentile family as his very own, I believe both of these teachings and positions to be incorrect.

For one moment, let's look at G-d's family between Jew and Gentile as a circle. The Jews were brought in first into their half and then removed through their unbelief, while the Gentiles came into their half after Christ through a remnant of Israel that started the church. So, from G-d's perspective, His spiritual family between Jew and Gentile has never really co-existed. And yet we hear the cry of Jesus from deep within His heart in John 17 that His family would be one. And it does not take much to read between these lines that Jesus was not just referring to all believers being united here in these Scriptures, but also that His Jewish and Gentile family would be one.

Read it carefully and you will see that first He prays for His Jewish apostles and then, in verse 20, He switches to pray for those who will believe in their message, who up to this point are mainly believers from the nations (Gentiles), that we

would be one. But the devil has ravaged the relationship between the two groups (Jew and Gentile), because he knows what is at stake when we truly reconnect as a spiritual family, which I will explain in more depth in part 2 of this message.

In light of the end times in which we are living, we must stop looking at Israel and the Jewish people as they are currently and start to see them by faith through the word of G-d, which tells us that the veil over their souls is only temporary and that it will be lifted (Rom 11:25-27). Indeed, Israel is a covenant people who must be spiritually restored before the L-rd returns in accordance to His promises to them through His word. We must begin to see them as part of the family of G-d who is yet to be restored to the circle and love them with the Father's heart, a Father who longs for His firstborn children to come home. Nothing less will do. We (the rest of G-d's children in His family) must also begin to see Israel's spiritual awakening as tantamount to G-d's end-time glory plan and begin to take it on as our very own. For isn't that what family is supposed to do for each other? Have we been missing something here?

In fact, I believe that G-d has designed His end-time plan so that neither group can come into its fullness without the other and that we are intricately linked together in His final end time mercy plan to take full dominion over heaven and earth—for Israel to receive salvation and for the church to be G-d's salvific agent to help bring it to pass. If this is truly the case, then we will need to take a good, hard look at what we currently believe, especially if it is keeping us apart from our divine destiny to help the L-rd return to the earth. Church, this is serious stuff!



I know these are challenging words to many of us, but they are written and bathed in the love of Christ so that, at this

time, the body of Messiah through Jew and Gentile would truly unite and understand the depths of their callings to help usher in the final chapter of the book and see Jesus reign upon the earth. For when the church accepts the reality of these circumstances, we will also begin to discover the significance of our own end-time role, which is to help release life back to our firstborn brethren, Israel, and see the family of G-d finally restored. Oh, my G-d, what an honor He is actually bestowing on His end-time church, which is why our generation and the ones that tarry in the church to the L-rd's coming need to make adjustments toward Israel. Now is the time of their restoration and salvation. As Jesus told us, the first would be last and the last first!

### **One, With Distinct Roles**

To still believe the church has replaced Israel when all of the Scriptures regarding Israel's restoration to the land have already been fulfilled is silly. Both Moses and the prophets clearly pointed out that Israel would be brought back first and then spiritually cleansed. You must read these Scriptures, for the Word of G-d does not lie (Deut. 30:4-6; ; Ez. 36:22-28)!

If you honestly believe this or are teaching it to the church, you truly need to repent and allow the L-rd to correct your heart as well as your theology and support of His spiritual family, for there is no condemnation in Christ. I would also really encourage you to read my new book, *The Ezekiel Generation*, which launches in October and addresses this subject in detail where you can find healing and restoration in this regard.

However, there are also many willing believers in the church thinking that the "one new man" in Christ has eliminated any differences between Jews and Gentiles. This also is incorrect. The apostle Paul never meant to eliminate the distinctions between Jewish and Gentile believers, but rather emphasized

that in the Spirit of G-d, we now have complete equality and are co-heirs of the promises of Israel's covenants, both Jew and Gentile alike. This was actually challenging for first-century Gentile believers to process in light of Israel's rich heritage, which is why the apostle Paul worked so hard to communicate this essential principle to them.

If Paul meant to eliminate the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, then why did he adapt himself when he went back to Jerusalem, so he could effectively reach his own Jewish brethren with the gospel (Acts 21:17-26)? If he truly taught that the distinctions between Jew and Gentile were eliminated in Christ, why did he act in this fashion? No, he was a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles, because he fully understood those he was ministering to in the hope that he could reach them for G-d (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

The apostle Paul's emphasis in the Galatian epistle does not eliminate Jew or Gentile but rather focuses us on our position in the Spirit through Christ: "You are all Sons of G-d through faith in Jesus Christ, for all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you are heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

This is why these different references were good for this analogy, as we know that while as men and women, for example, we are now equal in the Spirit through Christ, it does not eliminate the differences between us as men or women or even husband and wives. But in Christ, we are one!

Nor did it necessarily change a slave's rights at that time. But it did in the Spirit, and so it is with Jew and Gentile. There is no longer any difference between us as His children, for we are one and are now co-heirs.

We can also see this unity and distinction within the Trinity

itself. While the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all one, they each play out unique and different roles from within the unity of G-d. And this is also true of G-d's family in the Spirit between Jew and Gentile, which we must now learn to accept and bless to encourage Israel's spiritual awakening, which has to come to pass so that the end may come.

As a result, our roles remain—and thank G-d that they do—which up to this point we have not understood too well. Instead, when a Jewish person has come to faith in the church, we have expected them to conform to Gentile customs. But may this never be, because they have been called and chosen to become lights back to their own people, and so instead we should be supporting and blessing them into this calling to help win the Jewish people to faith.

I am not suggesting that Jews go back to the law for any dependency for salvation, but rather are free to live as Jews in their own heritage in however the Spirit leads them to reach their own. Nor am I criticizing Gentile customs, many of which I now enjoy myself.

But as a believer and follower of Jesus, have I not been set free from the law that I may have liberty in the Spirit? Is it not liberty to move with my Gentile-believing family and liberty to move as a Jew along with my customs and heritage? It is not liberty to celebrate the feasts of the L-rd, most of which focus on Yeshua Himself and the Holy Spirit? In fact, as a Gentile believer, do you not have liberty to celebrate the feasts also? There are appointed feasts and times in the Spirit that I honestly feel we have been robbed of through the church's disconnection from its Jewish apostolic roots and heritage.

In order for this to happen in G-d's body at this time, there must be a spiritual reconnection between us as His children, which is vital for Israel and the church. It is vital for Jews to come into the salvation of the L-rd and for Gentiles to

fulfill their destiny in arousing Israel to envy and releasing the mercy of G-d back to them. Just as G-d used Israel to give birth to the church, now in turn to fulfill His family circle, we would give birth back to them. It makes so much sense when you think of it in this light.

In part 2, we will address the incredible significance of the church's end-time role to bring glory to G-d. We will also address some of the barriers the enemy has placed in our way from the church's past to prevent us from coming into this destiny, some of which are of a sensitive and delicate matter that we will need to face in order to come into this time.

Hold on. It's going to get really good.

**Grant Berry** is a Jewish believer in Yeshua/Jesus and author of *The New Covenant Prophecy and The Ezekiel Generation*. He has founded *Reconnecting Ministries* with the specific focus to help the church reconnect spiritually to Israel and considers it vital to the kingdom of G-d in the last days. His message focuses on the unity, love and healing that the Father wants to bring between Jew and Gentile yet clearly points out the differences and misunderstandings between the two groups. Now is the time to look more carefully into this mystery to make way for healing and reconnection in the Spirit. For more information, please visit .