

From At-Risk Youth to Children of Promise

A bar and bat mitzvah is one of the most significant lifecycle events in the life of a Jewish person, and certainly the most significant for teens and young adults. What happens when teens who come from troubled homes, whose parents cannot care for them properly, and who are considered "at-risk," reach this milestone in a year of war and trauma? How can the scars and trauma of war be erased so that this special time in their lives will only be remembered as one of joy?

In May, Israel suffered a war/conflict/battle with Palestinian Arab terror groups in Gaza. For two weeks, Israel was bombarded when over 4,300 rockets were fired by the terrorists at Israeli communities. Millions of Israelis of all backgrounds lived with fear of rockets being launched at them at any minute. For two weeks, many didn't leave their homes to stay near their bomb shelters. Children didn't go to school. In addition to the death and injury to many people, and damage to property, many more suffered trauma that still remains.

Overlaying that with a population of at-risk Israeli youth coming of age at a time that's meant to be celebratory, yet now finding even their safe space is not safe, trauma and anxiety breed. With the support of numerous Christians from all over the world, the Genesis 123 Foundation's Israel emergency relief fund stepped in to help take care of the most vulnerable impacted the most and still suffering because of the war. While the rockets stopped, the trauma remains.

The Genesis 123 Foundation stepped up to sponsor the bar/bat mitzvah celebration for a special group of children, thanks to the generosity of all those who donated. Genesis 123 was privileged to become the largest sponsor of the bar/bat mitzvah celebration, joining many others who donated cash,

time, gifts, dress clothes and more to make this celebration something joyous that the children will remember for the rest of their lives.

Boys received new clothes including white shirts that they wore with the creases still visible. Girls were able to pick from among dozens of dresses donated so they looked and felt special and had a pretty dress to take home. Professional hair stylists and makeup artists made the girls look and feel extra special, donating their time and lots of tender, loving care.

At the party, the children were radiant. Their parents and siblings joined for the celebration. Even though the immediate trauma of the war passed, now, thanks to so many who donated generously, the milestone year of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah will not be overshadowed by a war that prevented their celebration. Despite the war, they will always be able to look back on this year as one of joy.

Maybe we cannot change their circumstances, or prevent other wars, but we can change things in the lives of those who need the most help, so they will no longer be looked at as youth at risk but children of promise.

We pray that there will be no more war and trauma in these children's lives and that this milestone will be the beginning of a new chapter in their future as young adults, stable parents and responsible citizens.

Listen to this episode of *Inspiration From Zion with Jonathan Feldstein* on Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}

Jonathan Feldstein was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He is president of the Genesis 123 Foundation which builds bridges between Jews and Christians and writes regularly for a

variety of prominent Christian and conservative websites. Inspiration From Zion is the popular webinar series and podcast that he hosts. He can be reached at inspirationfromzion@.

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Stephen Strang's New Book Offers Compelling Insight Into Today's Cancel Culture

Stephen E. Strang, award-winning journalist, bestselling author and founder of Charisma Media, has announced the forthcoming publication of his compelling new book, ***God and Cancel Culture: Stand Strong Before It's Too Late***, out on Sept. 7, 2021. His views of today's cancel culture and its nefarious purposes are bold, thorough, candid and faith-infused—and he is urging God's believers to stand up against them.

“Cancel culture isn't new,” notes Strang, a widely read author and Christian businessman who wrote *God and Donald Trump* (2017), along with other books. “Its purpose has always been to silence opponents and control society by dominance and intimidation. But we Christians must not retreat. We must advance and be strong in the face of cancel culture.” He adds, “It matters to the Lord that we respond rightly, with courage and vision.”

Strang further reveals why he's written *God and Cancel*

Culture: “We must take ground in the face of cancel culture. We cannot say, ‘Woe is us,’ and opt out or accept defeat. God can never be defeated. We must find ways to remain effective and engaged. Paul wrote that all things work together for those who are ‘called according to His purpose’ (Rom. 8:28). That calling is active. It is purposeful and energetic. Each of us can take initiative and move forward from where we are. The body of Christ is a big, diverse family—and we must choose to cheer each other on rather than become a circular firing squad.

“Christians must not lose heart,” Strang emphasizes. “We must believe God for a great awakening.”

Featuring keen insights from a cross section of leaders, *God and Cancel Culture*” also pointedly:

- Documents what is happening to many conservatives across the country right now.
- Shares effective ways believers can respond.
- Explains why we can look to the future with hope.
- Helps readers understand that no matter how bad things may seem, God always comes through.

Says Strang, “We are called according to His purpose. The kingdom of God always overcomes cancellation.”

☒ *God and Cancel Culture* will help Christians realize the seriousness of the battle before them and illuminate the present circumstance for the purpose of doing good—to bring hope. It will document what is happening in the country, how believers can respond and why they can look expectantly to the future.

Stephen E. Strang is the bestselling author of *God and Donald Trump*. The founder and CEO of *Charisma Media*, Strang was voted by *Time magazine* as one of the 25 most influential

evangelicals in America. He has interviewed four U.S. presidents and has been featured on Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, CBN, Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and the and in many Christian outlets.

God and Cancel Culture is published by FrontLine, an imprint of **Charisma House**, which has published books that challenge, encourage, teach and equip Christians, including 15 *New York Times* bestsellers.

The book will be available in hardcover, paperback and e-book formats. *God and Cancel Culture* is set to publish on Sept. 7, and you can pre-order it on . When you do, you'll get \$120 worth of free gifts, including four e-books and a subscription to *Charisma* magazine. {eoa}

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Prophetic Word: August Is the Month of Reset

The prophetic word for August 2021 is like a healing balm of Gilead for your soul.

These are the two words the word the Lord spoke to me for August 2021:

A Month of Health

The Lord says, "You have been listening to me about the health changes I have told you to make, and you are starting to change accordingly. The changes you are making are taking effect; your taste buds and habits are changing.

“Change is a long process, but you are doing the work I commanded you to do. Have I not told you to be strong and take courage? I am helping you become strong, and I am helping you to become healthy.

“In August, I want you to pursue ‘strengthening your arms’ and body, like the Proverbs 31 woman does. This applies to both men and women; it applies to both young and old.

“Physical strength is a virtue,” the Lord says. “It honors Me and allows Me to use you for greater purposes. Physical strength also allows you to fight the good fight of faith, laying hold of that for which I have laid hold of you.

“You can run with endurance when I strengthen your heart; but to strengthen your heart, I need you to cooperate with Me. Make yourself strong in the month of August!” the Lord says.

A Month of RESET

The letters of . stand for the following:

- Receiving.
- Engaging.
- Stillness.
- Energy.
- Transition.

And the Lord says this about each of these key words:

Receiving

“I have given you a holy premonition—an advanced word of knowledge—about what I want to do for you this month. I had to do this because the things I want to do for you are so big.

“You have been a faithful steward.

“You have asked me several times if you have messed things up, but I tell you today that I see your heart, and it is pure.

You have been a faithful steward and, although you still may make mistakes occasionally, I am rewarding you for the purity of your heart," the Lord says.

"Remember My Word in Psalm 18:24: 'Therefore the Lord has repaid me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His view.' You will find in this month of August that I am rewarding and paying you back for all your trouble. According to the cleanness of your hands I will hand out your reward, and I say to you again that your heart is pure.

"Count on Me to give you double for your trouble!" the Lord says.

Engaging

"In the month of August, you will find Me engaging you in the work I have prepared for you at a greater level.

"You just noticed yesterday that 'you're back'; that you feel rested and refreshed and 'like yourself'—in fact, better than the concept of yourself that you had gotten used to. And that is in fact true; you are operating as yourself at a higher level than you previously have, and it's all because of My rest.

"In August, you are going to continue resting; in fact, you will never leave this state of rest," says the Lord.

"Now that you have learned to rest, you will never be able to function without rest again. Rest is a magnet; it is a higher way. Once you have found it, My rest keeps you because I keep you. Remember that I am your keeper, and that is a very real thing (Ps. 121). As you have asked Me to teach you to rest, so have I done, and you will be resting the rest of your life.

"However, at the same time, you will also be engaging in a whole new way in August," the Lord says.

“You will be engaging with the things that really matter. You will be engaging with new relationships, for I have heard your cry for covenant friendships,” says the Lord. “Trust Me to set things aright and to lead you in the way you should go. Look to Me for guidance, wisdom and instruction—but be prepared to plug in and function as I always intended you to function. The time is now,” says the Lord.

Stillness

“You have also set aside time for stillness, and I am going to honor that,” says the Lord.

“When you are still before Me, I can speak to you in a new way. During this time of stillness is when you will see the manifestation of My Word in Proverbs 1:23: ‘Turn at my reproof; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.’”

“In this season of stillness, things may feel like they are not moving at all, but I am launching them to you at lightning speed. I am hearing your total rest; the sound of your peace is ascending to My nostrils like a fragrance, and I am receiving your peace and rest as an offering to Myself,” the Lord says.

“As you are still before Me in the month of August, I will make things happen on your behalf that you could never make happen at all. Be still, and know that I am God,” says the Lord; “I will be exalted in the heavens; I will be exalted in the earth! I will be exalted in your situation, and My name will be glorified as I break through for you!”

Energy

“You are getting your energy back through the healthy choices you are making,” says the Lord. “I am also refilling you with hope, and you will find that a lot of strength and energy will come to your body because you have hope and joy again.

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. In August, you will begin to see some of your desires fulfilled—desires you have longed for, but have not thought were possible. This is only the beginning, but you will see it and begin sensing that I am indeed at work in your situation.

“I have been at work all along,” says the Lord, “but you did not see it. In August, however, you will see it, and your joy will be replenished. It is only the beginning, but it is a beginning. Be encouraged!”

Transition

The Lord said, “I am moving you into a place of My glory. I am bringing you back onto the ancient paths and restoring the joy of your salvation. I am reminding you of who I am and of how important it is to seek Me, and I am making it possible for you to do all these things more faithfully.

“This month, I want you to seek Me with all your heart over your transition. Petition Me for open doors that cannot be closed and for closed doors that cannot be opened. Ask Me to show you My ways and to instruct you and teach you along the way you should go. Ask Me daily for wisdom; wisdom is key,” says the Lord.

“I am moving you into a place where you will not always be able to see what is next, but I will give you grace for today.

“Only I know how tomorrow will work out. You do not need to know that; you only need to know Me—and to know what to do in this moment, at this hour, right now,” says the Lord.

“Trust Me to illumine your darkness as you need to know. Some things are too weighty for you; I hide them in My clouds, and they cannot be discerned until My Spirit discloses them to you. You have not been praying big enough; I repeat: You have not been praying big enough,” says the Lord.

“In August, follow the leading of My Spirit to pray.

“Pray often and pray well; pray the words of My holy Scriptures back to Me. Dig deeply into the Scriptures and search for hidden things; I will make you to know them.

“These are the keys and strategies you will need to overcome in August: rest, peace, joy, My might, My guidance and My wisdom.

“I am with you always, to keep you. I will never let you go nor leave you without support. I am your shelter, and you are My child and My beloved servant—My excellent one, in whom is My delight.

“Seek Me with all your heart, and you will find Me,” says the Lord. “I am right here with you, and I say to you today: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matthew 5:8).”

Response

If this word resonates in your heart and confirms what God’s precious Holy Spirit is already saying to you, then pray this with me as we respond to this prophetic word for August 2021:

“Dear Abba Father in heaven, in Jesus’ name I boldly approach You, and I say thank You! Thank You, Abba Father! I receive and take every bit of this word! Father God, please help me to remember this word and obey it; to seek You and rest in You; to follow all Your guidance and receive Your wisdom and instruction. Let it be unto me according to Your Word. Thank You, heavenly Father. In Jesus’ mighty and precious name I pray, amen.” {eoa}

Jamie Rohrbaugh is an author, speaker and presence-seeker whose heart is for the local church. Called to intercession and prophetic ministry, her passion is to see sons and daughters transformed by the love of Abba Father. Jamie blogs

for a global readership at , where she writes about prayer, personal revival and the supernatural lifestyle, and she has written for various ministry outlets. She holds a master's in biblical studies from Berea Seminary and is a grateful member of the Redbud Writers Guild. Jamie serves as a domestic missionary in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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Iconic Shoemaker Converse Shocks Many, Now Selling Shoes With Pentagram

Following rapper Lil Nas X's lead, popular shoemaker Converse has collaborated with fashion designer Rick Owens to feature a pentagram instead of its iconic Chuck Taylor star on a limited edition brand of its sneakers.

The sneakers, according to , were released last week and are part of a exclusive collection of "Satan shoes."

CBN News reported that Owens said in a quote posted on Instagram that he has "been using this pentagram for a long time because, obviously, it has adolescent occult

associations.”

The new brand of shoes is called Drkshdw and comes in different styles, but the main feature is the pentagram, often associated with Satan and satanic worship.

“I like geometric diagrams like that because, in a very primal way, they are a culture’s grasp for control,” Owens says. “And a way to organize thoughts and systems. And a pentagram, in this day and age, with al of its associations ... I like the fact that it refers to an alternative system. And that suggests openness and empathy.

“It suggests the pursuit of pleasure, this pursuit of sensation,” he adds. “But one of the main things that I think it suggests is empathy and a consideration of systems that might not be standard. So that leads us to be more accepting and tolerant of other systems, which I think it is a good thing.”

The Goth artist’s new creation met with disdain from some online consumers:

Christina Cross said on Twitter: “No longer supporting @Converse. Satan is no longer hiding. Jesus is the only one that I serve.”

Amanda said on Twitter, “I’ve never been big on the boycott bandwagon, but I do draw a hard line at straight up supporting satan ... later days.”

And Alisha said on Twitter: “Sooo done with Converse! My family is burning the as we speak! Satan worshippers! Check it out for yourself [link to the Converse Instagram post]. {eo}

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Playing With the Dark Side

If you visit a psychic, engage in tarot card readings, dive into horoscopes or play dark games, you are playing with the dark side. These things may seem harmless and enjoyable, but you are actually inviting the presence of demonic spirits into your life when you participate in these activities. In fact, you give them permission to invade and influence your mind, your relationships and your home.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people perish for a lack of knowledge."

Ignorance and willful disobedience bring suffering. God is endeavoring to protect you from harm, but you also have to make wise choices. You can't go on blaming immaturity or a lack of understanding for your bad decisions. The Bible is filled with warnings and insights to guide your life and keep you from needless spiritual attacks.

What do you do if you have played with the dark side, even unknowingly?

First, get rid of any ungodly items in your home now. Remove any objects, books, games, tokens or decor that hold an unbiblical value. If you are experiencing nightmares and demonic manifestations in your home, you most likely have invited the presence of demons into your life. Start with getting rid of the physical things you have acquired right away.

In Acts 19, many of those who believed in Jesus Christ came and openly confessed their evil deeds. The ones who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. In other words, they destroyed and removed the occult objects from their lives.

Ignorance does not absolve us from the guilt of our sins, but we can repent and obtain mercy! Repentance from the heart and changing your ways shuts the door on the devil. Repentance is the first step you must take spiritually to be freed from any unwanted demonic presence in your life.

After you have repented, asked God's forgiveness and removed the evil from your life, don't allow the enemy to continue to condemn you. You must tell the enemy, with your own mouth, "Go! Leave me and my house in Jesus' name!" All authority to resist the enemy is in the name of Jesus. Jesus paid an extreme price for us to exercise this God-given authority.

Make new choices today! Move forward with God. Spend time renewing your mind with the Bible. Pray and ask for continued discernment and awareness. You are a child of the Most High. Follow Jesus and don't look back or fall into old habits or the devil's traps. {eoa}

Bill Wiese is the author of New York Times bestselling book, *23 Minutes in Hell*, the story of his life-changing visit to hell in 1998. Bill has since authored six additional book titles and continues to share his experience around the world. He and his wife, Annette, founded Soul Choice Ministries in late 2006 and have dedicated their lives to reaching the unsaved. For more information about Bill Wiese and Soul Choice Ministries please visit us at [www.soulchoice.org](#). You can find more of Bill's teachings on YouTube [here](#).

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The People I Saw in Hell

In 1998, God gave me a life changing vision of hell. I receive so many questions about my experience from people all over the world. One of the things that I'm often asked is, "Who did you see in hell?"

I know there are others who say they've had a similar experience and mention specific people they saw in hell. Some say they saw children, and some say they encountered celebrities. Some also share that they observed Christians who didn't tithe or women who wore jewelry or colored their hair. I saw none of this.

In fact, none of those claims could be true because none of them are biblically accurate. People go to hell only because they reject the saving name of Jesus Christ. Choosing not to tithe will not send a person to hell. Jewelry, hair, makeup or any type of clothing will not send a person to hell. These outward acts are not the reason people go to hell.

The people I observed in hell were nameless and faceless. These people looked like skeletons. I didn't know their history, their politics or their skin color. I did not know if they were someone famous or a beggar from the streets. No matter who they were, it didn't matter. Each of them was truly alone amid a sea of tormented souls. They have no purpose, no identity; they are forgotten.

Another thing I want to make very clear is that children are not in hell according to the Scriptures. Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He also said in Matthew 18:3, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven."

During my time in hell, I could see the outlines of people through the flames. From the outlines I saw that they seemed

to be fully-grown or adult in size. In addition, the screams I heard were not the screams of children; they were mature voices. I will say that I also had an impression, an unexplainable internal feeling, that there were no children there.

I'm reminded of the devastation of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. Rather than face the 2,000-degree heat, some people decided to leap out of a window. Those people chose to plummet to their death rather than face the intensity of the flames for even 15 seconds. According to the Bible, hell is deep down in the earth, and scientists say it is 12,000 degrees at the earth's core. Try to imagine this state of existence for those in hell and the fear that never ceases for even one second. This isn't just for 15 seconds but for all eternity, and there is no way to escape it.

Each of us must know for certain that we will not end up like the desperate souls I witnessed in hell. We must warn others of this horrifying place and share the message of Jesus Christ with them. {eoa}

Bill Wiese is the author of New York Times bestselling book, *23 Minutes in Hell, the story of his life-changing visit to hell in 1998*. Bill has since authored six additional book titles and continues to share his experience around the world. He and his wife, Annette, founded Soul Choice Ministries in late 2006 and have dedicated their lives to reaching the unsaved. For more information about Bill Wiese and Soul Choice Ministries please visit us at [www.soulchoice.org](#). You can find more of Bill's teachings on YouTube here.

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How We Should Live in This Season of Jesus' Return

The arrival of the global community introduces the season of Jesus' return. As Jesus gives us these signs of His Second Coming in Matthew 24, He then teaches us how we should live in this season. He begins with the parable of the fig tree in which He emphasizes that His followers should know when they have entered into the time of His return. It is obvious and clear He expects us to be aware the season has begun.

The next parable instructs us that we should be alert and watchful, looking for Him to come again and not be like those who were unaware as in the days of Noah. The third parable teaches us the difference between the wise and faithful servant as opposed to the evil servant in the Master's house.

The fourth parable contrasts the wise virgins and the foolish virgins in who will be welcomed into His wedding feast from those who will be shut out. The last parable inspires us as to how we are to use our God-given resources to prepare the way for our coming deliverer.

In the next articles we examine more closely what these parables mean for us.

Jesus then completes His prophetic teachings with His judgment of the nations. He divides them into the sheep and goat nations. Those who have obeyed His command to minister to the least of these contrast against the nations who have failed to help those in need. This judgment is also tied to whether the nation has blessed or cursed Israel.

All of these prophetic words we will glean in depth as to how

we should live in this season of Jesus' return to prepare the way for our King to come. As the old hymn says,

*O the King is coming
The King is coming
I just heard the trumpets sounding
And now His face I see
O the King is coming
The King is coming
Praise God, He's coming for me*

When I was in Zambia several years ago, we were holding crusades across the northwest part of the nation as well as planting churches. We left Chief Kanyama and his kingdom full of fire and faith as we witnessed numerous miracles and prophecies come forth from heaven. We traveled to our last town called Kabompo, a beautiful village on the magnificent Kabompo River full of crocodiles and hippos.

I was exhausted from several weeks of preaching and ministering with our team. I lost my voice, but every time I went to preach it came back to life. God continued to do miracles and save souls and baptize many in the Holy Spirit.

Since there was no power in the newly constructed but half-finished church, we held our final service in the daylight of the late afternoon. Before the service I was extremely blessed to see one of the elderly ladies sweeping the church.

When we first arrived and were greeted by the people, I remembered that she had been hunched over and in great pain. Yet now she looked like a teenager full of joy and spry as a young woman.

I was amazed at her sparkling countenance, so I asked her what happened? With a broad smile as wide as the Kabompo River, she said Jesus healed me, and she began to dance. What joy filled our service that day!

Many came forward to repent of the double lives they were living to give their full surrender to live for Jesus. Many others were healed and even more baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When it ended, I was so tired I had no more to give. Then the leader stood up and said the presence and power of God had been so evident they needed to hold one more service that evening in the dark.

He looked at me for affirmation. My flesh said no, but the Spirit said yes. We would hold one more service before we would head home.

That night God continued to move to transform lives for Jesus. His light drove away the darkness. By the end of the ministry time we saw so many more miracles of life come forth from the hand of God I knew it was well worth holding another time of worship. Now I could go to our little room to rest for the night.

I was so spent all I wanted to do was sleep. As soon as my head hit the pillow within the mosquito netting I was out.

Before sunrise, I was still asleep, when suddenly someone started ringing the village bell that woke me up. It had not rung all week. Now someone was ringing it, and he would not stop, as though it was his job to awaken the entire village.

I pleaded with God to make him stop, but he kept on ringing and ringing. I cried out, *"Please cease ringing the bell,"* but he went about his task as though his life depended on it.

I just wanted to go back to sleep. Then the Spirit spoke clearly to me that He wanted me to hear this bell and be awakened. For I was just like His church wanting to stay comfortably asleep while His Son prepared to return. He commanded me to ring the bell to awaken His people and to awaken the nations, sharing with them that Jesus was coming.

From that time forward I have shared that message across the globe to hungry men and women who stood on pews and shouted, "I will ring the bell! I will ring the bell! Wake up; Jesus is coming!"

Will you join us to ring the bell, announcing the King is coming?

Author's Note: The Presence of God lives in us. The Word tells us the Holy Spirit comes into our lives the moment we are born again. We also know that the Father and Son abide in us as they have made Their home in us. This life we have in Jesus is a glorious one. We are being changed from one degree of glory to another to be like Jesus. We hunger for less of us and more of God to fill us completely. There are also moments when God's presence fills the atmosphere where we worship as our Lord did when Solomon dedicated the temple or when Isaiah saw Jesus, the Lord of Hosts, in the temple, or when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Cornelius' house in the book of Acts. When God acts in His glory, lives are transformed to live for His purposes and plans to redeem the world.

We have set our hearts on God to come in His glory at our "Hosting His Presence" event on Sept. 9-12. We do not want only an encounter with God but for Him to remain, so it is not just a visitation but a habitation that draws us daily to Himself. This glory moment will inspire us with dreams and visions to go into the world as Jesus sent His apostles and disciples to the nations of the earth. Begin praying now for this Holy Spirit gathering, that Jesus will be exalted, and we will see a nation transformed for Jesus.

Our gathering is free. You can register at .

*Once a professional baseball player with the Chicago Cubs Organization, **Blake Lorenz** was called to Asbury Seminary after a radical encounter with Jesus, where he received his master's degree. He has pastored in the Orlando area for 33 years and*

has been blessed with the opportunity to evangelize globally, visiting five continents and preaching the gospel to tens of thousands. Blake has also helped plant 500 churches. He has been working in Israel for the past 20 years, includes serving on the board of the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast in connection with the Knesset. In 2020, and the Awaken podcast launched to teach and challenge others to join him on a journey of anticipating the return of Jesus. He has used the three books he's written in his seminars and conferences. He and his wife, Beverly, share three children and six grandchildren.

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The Global Prophecies of Jesus From Matthew 24, 25

Every person—and perhaps every family—has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Death, sickness, unemployment, loss of income, foreclosures on homes, bankruptcy of businesses, suicides, emotional distress, fear and loss of hope have marked lives around the world in the past year and a half.

I believe we began to think in terms of the global community just a century ago. The first cannon shots of World War I, then the Spanish flu, the League of Nations, followed by the

economic crash of 1929, united the world in its global thinking. The increase of globalization grew with World War II, the United Nations, world communications, global economics, civil and governmental unrest, more pandemics, global pollution and climate change.

We have forever lost the isolation of nations, continents or individuals. We are world travelers on a world stage where kingdoms and nations war against one another for dominion in territories, economics and government (see Matt. 24:6). The increase of knowledge has grown exponentially. We are connected by the internet, social media, science and technology beyond our control.

The United States funds a lab in China, and the world is brought to its knees. Suddenly the threat of world annihilation stares us in the face in ways we have not seen since the end of the Cold War. Hollywood and the movie industry around the world seem to come up with an end of the world scenario every six months.

Yet Jesus told us all this would happen and more. One study of Matthew 24 and 25 foretells the state of world affairs. God, who became man, has given us His revelation of the future and our present-day dilemmas.

I believe one of the most missed aspects of prophecy in the Bible is that Jesus taught in global terms before anyone understood what it meant to be a world community. He came to die as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world (John 1:29). He commanded His followers to make disciples in every nation of the earth (Matt. 28:18-20). He foresaw global and cosmic events in ways we are just seeing unfold now (Matt. 24:6-13).

He said the season before He would return would be a time of lawlessness where our love would grow cold. Lawlessness is not the absence of law but the replacement of the laws of God with the laws of men. False teachers and false prophets would

deceive and lead even the elect astray. He warned of fake news before Trump was ever born.

He prophesied the intense hatred of Jews and Christians on a global scale (). The gospel of His kingdom would be preached to all the world as a witness to the nations, and then the end will come ().

If you connect the prophecies of the rebirth of Israel and reestablishment of Jerusalem as her capital, the world as a global community becomes the beginning of the season of His return.

The end of this age truly is upon us. Matthew 24:30-31 outlines this truth from the mouth of Jesus. "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." That triumph of our Lord will circumvent the globe with His glory and majesty.

Jesus then tells us in the parable of the fig tree that He expects us to know this season of global events. "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-at the doors! ... Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:33-35, NKJV).

We may not know the day or hour (Matt. 24:36), but our Savior says we should be able to anticipate this season of His return. We had better be alert and watchful and have our house in order, for "the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44).

Jesus then gives us five parables to teach us how we should live in the season of His return. We will examine these lifestyles in the weeks ahead because His return is imminent.

Supernatural Encounter

I had a dramatic encounter with God 14 years ago that changed my ministry and my life in connection with the return of Jesus after a momentous trip to Israel.

My wife and I led a team of 30 people to travel from one end of Israel to the other to pray for the outpouring of His Spirit on this sacred nation. We gathered in seven locations from Galilee to Jerusalem to Eilat to cry out for God to awaken His people to the Messiah as Paul prophesied in Romans 11 that all Israel would see their deliverer come out of Zion and be saved.

When we prayed on the Temple Mount, our team of 30 joined with a group from Asia to pray and prophecy. The Spirit of God fell on us as we spoke in tongues declaring the glory of God. We began to lay hands on each other and prophecy.

Armed guards surrounded us as we cried out the name of Jesus over this sacred mountain. They never tried to stop us, but stood as angelic sentinels to protect us.

When our new friends from Asia had to leave, they walked away about 200 feet. Then their leader ran back to us. As she had turned to look at us one more time, she saw us engulfed in the flames and fire of the Holy Spirit. More prayer and prophecy broke out.

When I returned to America from this incredible journey, I was in prayer and study for about three hours when the Spirit told me to go on my daily run along the canal near our house.

As I was running, the Spirit came upon me and said, "The return of Jesus is imminent. I am sending you to Israel, to the church and to the nations to call people to repent and believe in Jesus, be baptized in the Holy Spirit and deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Jesus."

The impact from this encounter was so life-changing that I retired from my pastoral position to go into full-time world evangelism to speak the words of the Spirit and to awaken a global community asleep to the signs of His imminent coming.

If this is true, then we should know how we should be living in this season of His return as taught to us by Jesus. Please join me in this marvelous study and journey over the next several weeks as we prepare for Jesus' Second Coming.

Author's Note: The Presence of God lives in us. The Word tells us the Holy Spirit comes into our lives the moment we are born again. We also know that the Father and Son abide in us as they have made Their home in us. This life we have in Jesus is a glorious one. We are being changed from one degree of glory to another to be like Jesus. We hunger for less of us and more of God to fill us completely. There are also moments when God's presence fills the atmosphere where we worship as our Lord did when Solomon dedicated the temple or when Isaiah saw Jesus, the Lord of Hosts, in the temple, or when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Cornelius' house in the book of Acts. When God acts in His glory, lives are transformed to live for His purposes and plans to redeem the world.

We have set our hearts on God to come in His glory at our "Hosting His Presence" event on Sept. 9-12. We do not want only an encounter with God but for Him to remain, so it is not just a visitation but a habitation that draws us daily to Himself. This glory moment will inspire us with dreams and visions to go into the world as Jesus sent His apostles and disciples to the nations of the earth. Begin praying now for this Holy Spirit gathering, that Jesus will be exalted, and we will see a nation transformed for Jesus.

Our gathering is free. You can register at . {eoa}

*Once a professional baseball player with the Chicago Cubs Organization, **Blake Lorenz** was called to Asbury Seminary after*

a radical encounter with Jesus, where he received his master's degree. He has pastored in the Orlando area for 33 years and has been blessed with the opportunity to evangelize globally, visiting five continents and preaching the gospel to tens of thousands. Blake has also helped plant 500 churches. He has been working in Israel for the past 20 years, includes serving on the board of the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast in connection with the Knesset. In 2020, and the Awaken podcast launched to teach and challenge others to join him on a journey of anticipating the return of Jesus. He has used the three books he's written in his seminars and conferences. He and his wife, Beverly, share three children and six grandchildren.

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Heart Cry of a Generation

True to its name, Maverick City Music has taken the Christian worship industry by storm with a fresh perspective and an ardent commitment to authentic, Spirit-led worship. Though the worship group was only founded three years ago, many of its songs can already be found in church worship setlists worldwide, including "Promises," "Jireh," "Million Little Miracles" and "Man of Your Word." Acclaim has come not only from churches but from secular media outlets as well. In May,

the group received two separate nominations for the Top Gospel Album at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, ultimately winning for their album *Maverick City, Vol. 3 Part 1*. And this fall, the group will embark on its first stadium tour, which has already sold out most of its venues.

Yet perhaps most stunning of all is the way the group managed to maintain its momentum and fervency in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the initial wave of shutdowns, *Maverick City* has released five albums and four EPs of original music. No one can accuse the collective of resting on its laurels, and the group's hard work has paid off.

Naomi Raine, one of *Maverick City*'s lead singers and songwriters, says the group's rapid ascent has been stunning for the members.

"Our heads are spinning by the speed of it and by the weight of what we're carrying," Raine says. "But one reason it is easier for us is because there are so many of us. If Dante [Bowe Jr.] was leading a worship night by himself, he would have to carry all of the moments, but we don't have to do that when we're all together. We carry it together. And that's what makes it much simpler."

Maverick City Music's members view the collective's size, diversity and tightly knit unity in the Spirit as its greatest strength. Though its impact cannot be denied, describing what exactly *Maverick City Music* is can be challenging. It's all at once a music record label, a publishing company for corporate worship music and a collective of over 100 different musical artists. That's not to say that this fall's tour will feature 100 people onstage at once; rather, *Maverick City Music* is made up of many distinct groups (or "little families," as Raine calls them) that often collaborate and intermix with one another. These groups include *TRIBL Music*, *Maverick Español* and the *Maverick City Choir*.

Dante Bowe Jr., a Bethel-affiliated singer-songwriter who has been with Maverick City Music since the beginning, believes the group's success is the result of talented people faithfully following the Holy Spirit.

"For me, I've been a student of worship since I've been alive," Bowe says. "But I don't know if I've ever heard such vocal skill from a group in the contemporary space. It just feels so skillful and Spirit-led, and I think that resonates. ... I think people can hear and see the skill, and also hear and see the Spirit of Jesus."

Unity Through Diversity

Bowe says he first got involved with Maverick City Music as part of a group text with Tony Brown, who invited him to get together with friends in Atlanta—including Raine, Alton Eugene and Chandler Moore—to write worship songs. The artists assembled were not yet called Maverick City Music; they didn't even expect to formally record the songs they were writing. Raine says the collective began as a publishing company, with a goal to write songs, record demos and then sell them to other worship artists. But when they all arrived in Atlanta, Bowe says the writing process became very relaxed and free. Between recording demos of the songs they had written, artists would break out in spontaneous worship during soundchecks.

"We were just demoing songs [in the studio], hoping maybe artists would want to sing the songs we were demoing," Raine says. "But then it became, 'Wait—these songwriters are actually artists too. Let's put [these demos] out.'"

That album of demos—Maverick City, Vol. 1—released in July 2019, and its minimalist title reflects its unexpected creation: "We didn't even have a name for the first album," Raines says with a laugh.

But if the first album was a happy accident, the names included in that initial invitation were not. Brown and

Jonathan Jay—both members of the Atlanta-based worship band Housefires—started Maverick City Music as a way to increase opportunities for diverse voices to create worship music for the corporate church. Raine says that, within the worship music genre and even the larger contemporary Christian music space, about 10 people were writing 98% of the most popular songs. Maverick City Music's founders shook up the industry by giving people of diverse backgrounds an opportunity.

For Bowe, that commitment to diversity has been a game-changer. He says Maverick City has given him opportunities and a platform he never would have been able to receive otherwise.

“Being a young Black kid and a Christian artist, I thought I'd never sell a stadium out,” Bowe says. “Because I never saw it. I never saw a single Black man or a Black woman like Naomi leading the worship movement. But now ... people are tasting heaven, and this is what it's going to sound like. This is what it's going to look like. Everybody—different tribes, different creeds, different tongues—singing the same song to Jesus.”

In many ways, Maverick City's diversity parallels the diversity of the next generation of Christians. Thus, in many ways, the racially diverse, Spirit-empowered leaders of Maverick City reflect the future of the church. Perhaps this is why, in an era when many people are quick to talk about and signal their support for diversity, Bowe says living out diversity comes naturally.

Maverick City Music is continually growing, adding new songwriters and artists; Raine likens it to a high school, where there are always new freshmen classes. And the group's commitment to diversity expands beyond public optics. Though he was reticent to talk much about it (saying they prefer to do this part privately), Bowe mentioned that Maverick is involved behind the scenes in local community causes and prison reform.

Raine describes Maverick City as a unified “family,” one where everyone gets a chance to shine and where competition is eschewed in favor of cooperation. The leaders pray for each other, worship together and even eat, shop and laugh with one another. They seek to embody the concept of the unity of the Spirit.

“We are family,” Raine says. “We fight. We disagree. We don’t like certain things that happen with each other. But we always sit down and talk about it. ... But you love your family because y’all have worked together. You’ve sweated together, prayed together, cried together, eaten together. ... We get to be a part of something that’s bigger than us individually.”

Space for the Spirit

For all Maverick City’s diverse makeup, something about its music itself has resonated with millions of listeners. Its writers and artists have tapped into the heart cry of the next generation, which is bringing them before the altar to worship. So what is Maverick City Music doing differently?

Raine’s theory may surprise you.

“I’m going to be honest: Most worship artists right now are singing vertical songs to the Father,” Raine says. “They’re lifting Him up. We’re all singing and worshipping Jesus. There’s nothing so special in terms of [our lyrical] content. We’re loving on God; everybody’s doing that. But I think what sets Maverick apart is that you can hear the room.”

She says the final recording is left extremely raw. Listeners can hear it all: The chatter between musicians. Clothes rubbing against each other as people pack tightly into the studio. People chewing gum. A singer working out a spontaneous moment mid-track and the choir fumbling to figure out how to follow her. The creaks in the floorboards. Raine says the recordings are not “stripped and filtered down to perfection” so Maverick City can maintain the authentic worship encounter

in all of its rawness.

“I think it’s the actual sound of real people in a room together that has really ignited the hearts of people in worship,” Raine says. “I think when people are alone, on YouTube in their room, listening to that recording, it makes them feel like they’re gathered with the saints. I think that when people are on a stage on a Sunday morning, they are able to pull from that corporate sound of this whole group of people lifting their voices, loud and unashamed, to worship God. And I think that’s the secret sauce. That’s what makes Maverick special.”

If the room noise is part of the “secret sauce,” the atmosphere that produces each song is also a critical ingredient. Raine says she wishes people could see or hear their songwriting and rehearsal sessions because of how powerfully the Spirit moves there.

Bowe walks through a normal day in the studio: “We wake up in the morning. We start with worship, and we start with the Word. Naomi will prophesy over one of our choir members. Chandler will pray over this person. I’ll be in the middle leading a song. We’re all singing a song. And then we’re like, ‘Let’s go write.’ So the atmosphere is already there. We don’t have to [ask the Holy Spirit to show up] because He’s already there.” Raine agrees.

“We may schedule 45 minutes [for worship], and we’ll be there for an hour and a half, and almost miss out on writing time or have to cut some of our writing time short,” Raine says. “But that’s what happens. ... The rehearsal moments? To me, those are some of the sweetest moments that we get with the Holy Spirit.”

Yet perhaps Maverick City’s greatest asset is the simplest: The leaders profess their dedication to the fundamentals of worship, or as they call it, keeping “the main thing the main

thing.” What does the main thing mean for them? Both Bowe and Raine immediately reply, “Jesus.”

“For me, it’s Jesus and all He encompasses,” Raine explains. “And I know that sounds so simple, but when you look at Jesus’ life that He lived, He lived to glorify God. I think that we’ve all been given gifts to shine in the world as light, so that people would see it and glorify God in heaven. I don’t think that’s just by saying, ‘Oh, God is great.’ I think that’s by them living their lives for Him and living in a way that loves people and shows them who He is, you know? I think it’s by giving Him back what He’s given us.”

Bowe says there is a “Maverick sound,” a shared lyrical DNA among the group’s songs; they write stories about doubt, Jesus and overcoming. Those are the fundamentals of their writing—the gospel in three pieces—and that’s the reason for Maverick City’s existence. Raine hopes it will always stay that way.

“I pray that we stay focused on the assignment that we have been given, and I pray that we don’t get distracted from what we’ve been called to do,” she says. “I think it’s easy when you start to get some level of success to begin to adjust and shift your heart and your goals, but I pray that we keep the main thing the main thing ... and that we always love Him and let Him be our goal.”

Endurance in Adversity

If the music of Maverick City creates a space for authentic worship, it’s an extension of the musicians’ authentic love for Jesus. The leaders strive to follow God not only in public but also in private. Both Raine and Bowe reflected on how God is at work in their lives, still shaping and molding them in His image. For Raine, that means focusing on endurance in the face of adversity and failure. She says “Wait on You”—one of Maverick City Music’s hit songs, originally written by Bowe

and Moore—has gained new meaning for her in recent months. The chorus promises, “I’ve tasted Your goodness/ I’ll trust in Your promise/ I’m gonna wait on You,” with a bridge that quotes Isaiah 40:31.

“I think sometimes we have created this magical-thinking theology that things just happen instantly,” Raine says. “They don’t happen instantly. When you think about the children of Israel standing at the front of the Red Sea, the Bible doesn’t say that the sea instantly just split open. No, it says that the wind came and began to push back the waters, and they began to recede. How long do you think that took, while Pharaoh’s army was still coming? I think we read some of these stories and we look at people’s lives and we hear the sermons, but we don’t really get it. It takes waiting. It takes endurance. That is the type of process and journey the Lord has taken us through. So that’s what God’s been dealing with me on: ‘Naomi, wait, trust Me and endure. Do not give up. Do not throw in the towel. Don’t give in and make decisions based on fear.’”

And Bowe says God is challenging him to show kindness, patience and love, even for situations and people that irritate him.

“The higher you go, the more you know; I’ll say that,” Bowe says. “For me, I’ve been growing in the industry for three or four years. So you experience a lot of accolades. You get people always congratulating you and building you up. You get the hundreds of thousands of followers, and everyone knows your name. You get stopped in airports. And the Lord’s been dealing with me on this like, ‘Dante, how should you love today? How kind can you be today?’ [That means] being patient with my friends and patient with the world when you make a statement and you can see Christians arguing in your comments. The higher you go, you have to work on love. How can I be patient? How can I be more loving and kind? That’s literally my everyday right now. When I wake up, it’s a conscious

decision to be kind and loving and patient.”

The leaders of Maverick City share that commitment to following Jesus in the private, quiet moments of everyday life. In fact, on the business side of things, Raine even mentions that Brown and the label leaders have been generous with financially supporting the collective’s members to ensure that they can support themselves from their work with Maverick City Music—a rare perk in the music industry, even among Christians.

“If I can be frank, we’re super blessed to not be taken advantage of by Maverick City Music, as a record label and as a company,” Raine says. “We’ve been able to reap and eat off of what we produce. That is a blessing because that is not a lot of people’s stories in the industry. I’m grateful that we get to be a part of it, and I’m praying that more people get to be a part of it as well. [I hope] it will shift the paradigm for labels and that their way of doing business will hopefully change, so that it’s not just companies making a bunch of money off of artists.”

Bowe and Raine say they don’t know whether Maverick will remain a force in worship music for decades as Hillsong or other groups have, but for however long the groups lasts, they hope to keep shifting the industry in a positive direction.

“I pray that Maverick is not a flash in the pan, that it’s not just a ‘15 minutes of fame’ thing,” Raine says. “And mind you, if it is, then it is. We didn’t set out for any of this. It’s not like we had a goal to last forever. But I do believe we are changing things not only in the worship sphere, not only in churches, but in the industry and in the business side of it that I think honors people and reflects the heart of the Father.”

“And it was a choice,” Bowe says. “None of us signed to this massive label. ... I mean, we didn’t sign at all. That’s what

people don't know—we didn't even sign any contracts when we were blowing up. And it was because Tony was trying to literally change narratives. It wasn't about money. It wasn't about fame. It wasn't about opportunity. It was about, 'How can we as Maverick City change the narratives?' And that's been our goal with Jesus: How can we make a change for Him? ... And I pray that we would honor and love Jesus deeper and deeper as the years go on."

READ MORE: For more on the contemporary Christian music scene, check out .

Taylor Berglund is a freelance writer and graduate student at Duke Divinity School. He is the former associate editor of *Charisma* magazine.

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Many atheists have rejected the God of the Bible, only to place their interpretation of the natural world as ultimate truth. In other words, they study nature, and try to make it say what they want it to say. But is the book of nature comparable to the Holy Bible? Watch this video and learn more.

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