

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

AN EXCERPT FROM BIBLICAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE TROUBLED MIDDLE EAST

Guy N. Woods

Christians, Arabs, Jews are deeply concerned about matters occurring in the Middle East . . . , a land which has so long and so profoundly influenced the rest of the world. Well-informed people are not indifferent to matters that the news media keep ever before them and which could very materially affect them in the future. Whether we approve or not, we are directly involved in events occurring in faraway Palestine—an involvement that may well become more direct before this generation passes. All people, whatever their religious prepossessions, must concede that the holy land is unique and has a distinctiveness unlike that of any other place on Earth.

From the purple rim of Mount Herman’s snow-capped summit to the Salt Sea’s brackish and forbidding waters, from the sunny sand-strewn beaches of the Mediterranean Sea to the storied banks of the historic Jordan River, each square mile of this land made sacred by prophets, priests and kings, and blessed by the footsteps of our dear Redeemer and Lord, has immeasurable biblical significance for us all. The

contemplation of its famed cities, towns and villages—Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Bethany—and the events having there occurred in the long ago.

How can any thoughtful person be indifferent to the land where our Lord was born; where His gracious offer of salvation was first made to all the sons and daughters of men; where He gladly gave His life and died for all the world of mankind; where in triumph He rose from the dead, bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel, and through whose consecrated skies He returned to His heavenly home?

Sadly, His gentle voice is neither heeded nor heard today in the land of His nativity, and the song of the heavenly hosts once heard by shepherds on a star-lit night in Bethlehem with the glorious message of “Peace on Earth, good will to men,” is heard and acknowledged in Judaea no more. Instead are the shrill and angry voices of bitterness and hate, and the fearful roar of terrible weapons of death and destruction that people with the same ancestral father turn against each other. The soft, moon-lit skies through which the angels came near the Earth with their message of love, kindness, and good will now echo to the piercing screams of supersonic war planes with their lethal loads on their way to bomb Palestinian targets. The gentle murmur of waves along the sun-drenched

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH exists to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:7,17) and refute error (Jude 3). Therefore, we will not knowingly print anything to the contrary.

**CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH
25403 Lancewood Dr., Spring, Texas 77373
Telephone: (281) 350-5516**

**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”

(John 6:66-69)

Frank L. Cox

Thongs had followed Jesus. Beside the sea of Galilee, He had fed them. They were greatly pleased and **“were about to come and take him by force, to make him king.”** When He withdrew into a mountain, they were disappointed. Later—when He spoke on **“the bread of life”**—when He lifted the spiritual above the carnal—many of His disciples went back and followed Him no more. Of the multitude that had followed, only the twelve remained.

The pathetic situation gave rise to the Master’s question and a disciple’s reply.

The Master’s question: **“Would ye [the twelve] also go away?”** The question is pertinent and pointed. It carries with it some important implications: (1) That they had the power to depart. Departing or remaining with the Lord is a matter of personal choice (Jos. 24:15). (2) That the Lord was grieved at the departure of the many. **“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together”** (Hos. 11:8). (3) That He was anxious concerning the few that remained—as a mother is anxious concerning the last remaining child. **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Pet. 3:9).

A disciple’s reply. Simon Peter answered with a question and a declaration.

The question? **“Lord, to whom shall we go?”** Not to what, but **“to whom?”** Man is so constituted that he cannot live alone. He must have a guide, a master, or a comforter—a person. The question suggests the uselessness of going, of leaving the Lord. (1) **“Shall we go unto Moses? He will send us back to thee.”** This is true because Moses spoke of the Savior (Acts 3:22). (2) **“Shall we return to the beast of sin? He will mock us, rend us, devour us”** (Jer. 2:13; Gal. 6:7, 8a; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). (3) **“Shall we go unto the scientist? He may heal the body, but is powerless to heal the broken heart.”** (4) **“Shall we go unto the skeptic? His doctrine is purely negative; he has no balm for the soul.”** (5) **“Shall we go unto the pagan philosopher? He offers no certainties, makes no promises.”** (6) **“Whom shall we substitute for the Christ?”** It is easier to ask the question than to answer it.

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Contending For The Faith—January/2024

Spring Church Of Christ

Contending For The Faith Lectureship

Lessons On Christian Living

February 24, 2024

9:00 AM: *Teach Us To Pray* – Weldon Blake

10:00 AM: *Exercising Your Christian Influence* – J. D. Gunter

11:00 AM: *Are You Being Fashioned According To This World?* – Jonathan West

LUNCH PROVIDED BY THE SPRING CONGREGATION

1:30 PM: *The Importance of Bible Study* – Bruce Stulting

2:30 PM: *Into Our Hands The Gospel Is Given* – Jack Stephens

3:30 PM: *Examine Yourself* – Jose Gamez

LECTURESHIP DIRECTOR: David P. Brown

ELDERS: David P. Brown, Kenneth D. Cohn, John West

1327 Spring Cypress Road Spring, TX 77373 ~ (281) 353-2707
springcoc@gmail.com

LIVE VIEWING @ www.churchesofchrist.com

Contending For The Faith
25403 Lancewood Dr.
Spring, Texas 77373

(An Excerpt ... continued from page 1)

crescent coast of the beautiful blue Mediterranean is drowned out by deadly bursts of machine-gun fire turned on Arab terrorists, who deliberately walk into the range of the Israeli guns on the false and fatal assumption that this is, for those who thus die, the certain path to Paradise.

David, Israel's sweetest singer and her most beloved monarch, once a shepherd lad himself, skilled in leading his flocks to cool, refreshing waters or meadows green, and ever on guard to protect them from danger through the long and silent watches of star-studded nights in Israel's quiet valleys and along her gentle, undulating hills, passionately loved the land of his fathers and its capital city, and he urged his people, as he must himself have often done, to **"pray for the peace of Jerusalem"** (Psa. 122:6).

This petition seems especially appropriate today.

[Originally published in 1991]

—Deceased

(To Whom Shall We Go? ... continued from page 2)

The declaration: "Thou hast the words of eternal life." This reveals the reason for remaining, for clinging to the Lord. (1) His word is the *germ* of life (Luke 8:11; John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23). (2) His word is the *bread* of life. (Mat. 4:4). (3) His word is the *healing balm* of life (Psa. 107:20; Isa. 61:1). (4) His word is the *light* of life. It guides us in the path of safety and salvation (Psa. 119:105). (5) In His word there is *power to raise us* to eternal life (John 11:25, 43, 44; 5:28, 29). (6) Simon Peter was assured not only that Jesus had the word of life, but that no one else had. It is easy to carp, to criticize, to find objections, and to deal in negations. It is not hard to find fault, to pluck up, to ridicule, or to pull down. "But when the house is down and dismantled, what next?" It is easy to depart from the Savior; but it is not so easy to answer the question, **"To whom shall we go?"** It is the height of folly to leave a boat in a treacherous stream unless we can find a better one; it is the height of folly to depart from the Christ unless we know where we can better ourselves.

—Deceased