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Spiritual Obstacles in Jewish Evangelism

Jewish Resistance to Jesus
(The Spiritual Reasons)

The Problem:

Over the years I have been troubled over the persistent resistance of the Jewish people to the claims of Jesus Christ, and particularly since being asked to review Walter Riggans' excellent book: Yeshua Ben David - Why do the Jewish people reject Jesus as their Messiah? - (1995). One question has increasingly come to mind as a result: Whence this persistent resistance? Riggans gives us much to think about. I heartily endorse everything he said. But after my review had been sent in, I began to wonder about why Riggans had not dealt with the biblical witness to the "spiritual" reasons that are behind all human resistance to God's love. Doubtless his reason was: "But we all know about that!" Even so, his silence made me wonder whether there are particular "spiritual" reasons for Jewish resistance to the gospel. All this led to my choice of this topic for discussion at our gathering.

Not that I feel particularly competent to deal with this complex subject. Nor that I have any new insight that has come to me personally in recent weeks while thinking and praying about it. But it so happens that the Lord has placed me in the midst of a missiology faculty that is currently engaged in considerable research into such matters as "spiritual warfare," "territorial spirits," "spiritual mapping," "prophetic acts," "remitting the sins of nations," "tearing down strongholds" and "identificational repentance." Hence, why should we not seek to deal with a topic that interests us all (Jewish resistance to the Gospel) in the light of some of the ferment currently swirling around me? Actually, I feel that at our annual LCJE meetings we should grapple with topics of this sort. Any subject that will enlarge our faith and insight, and heighten our effectiveness in being fruitful should have highest priority, as I am sure you will agree. Furthermore, I hope and pray that through our interaction we will receive enlarged insight into the possibility of our bringing into our encounter with the Jewish people a fuller measure of the powerful resources inherent in the gospel. So then, I would like to

share some things with you at this gathering that will, I trust, linger with us all and stimulate us to come up with more insight into the spiritual dimensions behind the mystery of Jewish resistance to the claims of Jesus and what we evangelicals ought to be doing about them.

A Suggested Analysis:

Admittedly, "there are theological, historical and psychological reasons for the contemporary resurgence of a strong and specifically Jewish rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus" (Riggans 1995:9) but we will not deal with them in this paper. This is the substance of Riggans' book. Our concern is rather to focus on the three most prominent biblically-defined spiritual reasons that have shaped their resistance to God's disclosure of Himself in Jesus Christ. First, we will identify these reasons and then seek together an enlargement of our insight into what Scripture has to say about coping with them.

1. Human Fallenness -- When we step into the world of the Bible we encounter the human heart in all its fallenness. And the tragedy is that all humanly devised religions, especially Rabbinic Judaism, shrink from its reality. Some weeks ago I received from our local rabbi a copy of a sermon he recently preached. I had sent him a copy of my review of Riggans' book and he replied with this sermon. After commenting negatively on the Christian preoccupation with "Adam, Eve, the serpent and the infamous tree," Rabbi Gilbert Kollin added: "The absence of the Garden and Creation stories in our Mahzor Prayer Book points the Jewish people in another direction. Every morning when we get up we offer the prayer: 'My God, the soul with which you endowed me is pure. You created it, you formed it. You will in the future take it back from me, but you will restore it to me in life eternal.'" Then followed his commentary: "According to the Jewish understanding of the Bible, we are not born with an original sin virus" (he had been discussing the manner in which a computer can have a virus which only an anti-virus software can remove). "Our original equipment is clean, free of contamination, except what we bring into it in the course of our lives. In other words we are by our action *sinners* , but not by our natures *sinful.*"

In contrast, we must contend that in the Bible we find no such thing as a human being who is innocent before God. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul expounded the concept of original sin by an almost exclusive use of Old Testament texts (Ps. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1,2;

36:1; 53:1,2; 140:3; Isa.59:7,8 and he could have used Jer. 17:9; Eccl. 7:20; etc.). Furthermore, Paul did not deliberatedly neglect to focus on the initial revolt of the human race against God (Rom.5:12-14). When Adam and Eve openly rejected the authority of God over their lives, they forfeited their right of free communion with God, and involved all their descendants in their revolt. As T. C. Hammond has rightly stated: "Their rebellion dislocated their power of communication with the Godhead and thrust between their posterity and the divine Being a barrier which only Christ can remove. Fallen people still have a capacity for such communion, but they have no power to exercise it until they individually receive reconciliation in Christ and are 'renewed' by the Holy Spirit. A consequence of the loss of this upward 'pull' is that they are now a prey to the 'law of sin' in their members (Rom.7:22,23), which continually exerts a downward force which we may compare with that of the law of gravity. People are unable to escape its continuous operation until they are made free by the operation of another and stronger law introduced and controlled by the Spirit of God" (1952:78,79).

I recently participated in a faculty discussion of Cornelius Plantinga, Jr's. remarkable book: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be - A Breviary of Sin (1995). What a comprehensive and insightful study of the biblical witness to the essence and dynamics of sin! Among many related themes it made me reflect anew on the 10th law in the Decalogue and its prohibition against coveting. I was convinced as never before that the human heart, my own included, is anything but "pure." Coveting represents the almost automatic expression of the human heart, which leads so readily to envy, and then to double mindedness, lying, lust, thievery, killing, on and on. The rabbis tell their people that only the overt act is sinful, but how superficial this notion is. God searches the heart. He notes its seething ferment, its self-centeredness, its unworthy motivations long before social restraints check most outward acts. The old creed calls us to repent of our sins in thought, as well as in word and deed. Indeed, "the doctrine of total depravity is the one Christian doctrine that can be proved" (op.cit. p.103). It is not without profound reasons that the Apostle Paul wrote: "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:12,14). .The bent of the human heart is a formidable barrier to even beginning to face, much less listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ. "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can

understand it?"(Jer.17:9). The human race is one in its fallenness, and in this regard there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

2 Satanic Dominance -- Besides the reality of human fallenness brought about by human folly, all people also unconsciously reflect the impact upon their lives brought about by what Scripture calls "the powers." It has been my experience to observe that those who downplay the tragic dimensions of human fallenness are also prone to regard lightly the reality of "the powers" and their contribution to the human condition as it is described in Scripture. Indeed, reference to "the powers" pervades the whole of Scripture, and particularly the New Testament. On almost every page one finds words that refer to angels and demons, gods and Satan, principalities and rulers, dominions and authorities, on and on. Human fallenness and the powers -- these two realities are brought together in one of the key passages in the New Testament on evangelism (Acts 26:12-18). Let me explain.

You will recall the context. Saul of Tarsus, the relentless persecutor of the Messianic movement in Jewry is on his way to Damascus to apprehend the leaders of a growing congregation of believing Jews. Suddenly he is overwhelmed by the Presence of the Lord and is flattened in the dust. In that very condition he is completely conquered through visible encounter with the resurrected Christ. He repents and then requests insight into how he might make amends for his arrogant assaults on fellow Jews who were correctly confessing Jesus of Nazareth as Lord, Messiah and the Savior of the World. Among other things he is told that he has been appointed to the Apostolate, and is told what this entails. So far as the evangelization of Jews and Gentiles is concerned he is "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

Three hard realities must be drawn from this instruction, and all have special reference to Jewish evangelism. First, all human beings are **blind**. Their blindness has to do with their inability to perceive spiritual realities such as God in His holiness, sin as violation of his law, grace as the goodness of God, and the gift of his Son. Second, they are facing in the wrong direction and need to be turned around in order to face the Lord Jesus, the Light of the World. Third, the authority of God is not operative in their lives. God is not

at the center of their being. The power of Satan dominates them, not the Lord Jesus Christ. These hard realities confront us with three impossibilities, humanly speaking. No one is able to cure spiritual blindness, or turn people around so that they face Jesus Christ with open hearts, or cause them to transfer the allegiance of their lives from Satan to God. It is good for us to admit our helplessness as we begin our inquiry into what Scripture has to say about the impact of the powers on the human condition. Obviously, evangelism involves coping with them.

Let me repeat this: Acts 26:18 with its threefold reference to aspects of the human condition is a vivid reminder that all evangelistic activity must take the full measure of the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph.612) that have shaped human resistance to the Lord Jesus Christ. We all give lip service to this spiritual reality and readily quote this and other related texts, but seem to have difficulty incorporating their full meaning into our evangelistic activity.

These powers represent intelligent spirit beings along with their hidden influence on fallen human beings. This influence extends to the laws, customs and structures they cause individuals and nations to shape all the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions of human existence. It takes little imagination to accept the fact that the powers will put up great resistance to anyone seeking to liberate people from their dominance. Indeed, how else can one explain the conditioning Jewish people have received generation after generation to accept without personal investigation the tragic bias that Jesus is not for them? Messianic Jews in the 1st century had no difficulty accepting the reality of the powers and their deliberate deception of Jews and Gentiles alike. Did not the Apostle John accept without qualification the full import of the Apostolic declaration: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19)? And when the Apostle Paul confronted the mystery of human resistance to the gospel, particularly Jewish resistance, he was quick to affirm: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

But there is more to be said at this point. Biblical evangelism demands that those who have been awakened by the truth of the

gospel, and have begun to face the resurrected Christ, must be told that what God is looking for is repentance and faith. This entails a deliberate turning from the allegiance that caused them to ignore God and break His law, to the surrender of their hearts to Jesus Christ. Satan must be dislodged from the center of their being and Christ enthroned in his place. Only His Presence and power can bring to an end the dominance of Satan over their lives. The issue is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul spoke of this very pointedly when he stated: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Christians are those who have repudiated Satan and all his works, and who have made sure that their hearts have become Christ's home. They must know in their spiritual experience that they are indwelt by the resurrected Christ and that they are living under His rule and for His glory.

3. Divine Hardening -- It may be most presumptuous for me to introduce such a complex and hotly debated subject as the Apostle Paul's most famous contribution to mission theology. But our discussion demands it "A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25,26). What does Paul mean when he speaks of the full number of Gentiles coming to faith and of all Israel being saved? He does not give any details. What concerns him is Jewish unbelief in the context of God's sovereign love. This leads him to identify a mystery of tremendous missionary consequence -- the concept of God hardening the hearts of the people he loved. This mystery cannot be avoided if one wishes to explore the issue of Jewish resistance to faith in Jesus Christ.

In the larger context of Romans 9 through 11 Paul stresses the sovereignty of God's will in relation to human freedom. He does so in such a way as not to minimize the validity of human responsibility (9:6b-18). He then hastens to stress faith in God's sovereign freedom while deliberately smothering theological speculation and the temptation to defend His reputation with superficial rationalizations (9:19-33). In Romans 10 he reaffirms the intensity of his heart's desire and of his importunate prayers for the salvation of the Jewish people. He reiterates at some length that people are only saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and then underscores the absolute necessity of preaching this good news to all people, whether or not they are Jewish (10:12-21).

But he does not leave the whole issue unresolved. He sees great significance in the superintendence of God over human history, particularly over the people of Israel, and hastens to develop his resolution of this complexity in Romans 11:25-32. The mystery of God's world-wide redemptive purpose for the nations is made clear by recognizing that: 1)- Israel's rejection of the gospel has only been partial and temporary; 2)- It has provided opportunity for the Gentile nations to enter the messianic community; 3)- But, he stresses, before the consummation of all human history in Jesus the Messiah, all Israel will be saved. Apparently, neither human freedom nor demonic powers will finally triumph. They can never become the decisive barrier to the fulfilling of His purpose. Paul's final confession of faith is that as the Eschaton draws near there will be the beginnings of a stirring in Israel. This will gather momentum and in the end a repentant and responsive people will at long last be united to their Messiah. They will then extend to the corners of the earth in an unprecedented fashion the blessings of His salvation.

B. Comprehensive Resolution:

If we have been faithful in taking the full measure of the human condition in the totality of its fallenness, in its enslavement by the powers and in the particular hardening of the Jewish people through the sovereign activity of God, what shall our evangelistic responsibility be to this people? Here is where we must not be led astray by reducing the gospel to mere verbal proclamation. In the Gospel of Matthew, written particularly for the Jewish people, we come upon a phrase that must be taken to heart. It is "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (24:14). The qualifying word is "Kingdom" and this word immediately brings the issue of power to the fore. Not words but power. But what does this mean? One has only to reflect on the undergirding components of Jesus' efforts to evangelize the Jewish people. Let's examine these components.

1. We Are In A War. All are indebted to George Eldon Ladd for reminding the evangelical movement that the Kingdom of God is a present reality, as well as a glorious future certainty. All recall the extensive nature of Jesus' ministry in delivering many Jewish people from their bondage to demonic powers. Furthermore we know how He was able to do this, as He Himself revealed: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). Jesus' ministry of exorcism was nothing less than the kingly power of God attacking the dominion of Satan, and

delivering people from his evil control. Jesus immediately followed this affirmation by citing a principle that has significant evangelistic implications. "How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house" (vs 29). The only conclusion we can draw from this principle in relation to His ministry of exorcism is that on each and every encounter with a possessed person, He first deliberately invaded Satan's kingdom and "bound" the strong one who was holding him/her captive. Releasing the demonized then followed as a matter of course. Binding Satan or Beelzebub or whatever lesser demon was involved, did not totally or finally strip the enemy of his power. It merely curbed his control over the particular person Jesus was confronting, and whom He sought to deliver. Every such occasion was in partial fulfillment of the larger defeat Christ would gain over Satan and all his hosts at the Cross (Col.2:15). It was a foretaste of the final victory to be fully displayed at the Eschaton. Even those engaged in Jewish evangelism today should be able to enter the joy Jesus' disciples experienced when they found the demons subject to them in His name (Luke 10:17). So then, the dimension of war must be kept in mind when one seeks to participate in God's gracious work of delivering people from the dominion of darkness that they might be transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Col.1:13).

2. <u>We Invade Enemy Territory!</u> Central to the evangelistic task is bringing awakened people to accept a change in their allegiance. to "turn them from the power of Satan to God." On one occasion I had an encounter on this very point with Rabbi A. James Rudin. He agreed that most informed Jewish people recognize the Christian obligation to bear witness. But he wanted to define "witness" as a matter of sharing the details of one's religious faith in such a manner as would not "cause offense". But when I asked for details, it soon became apparent that by "Christian witness" he meant something that was pale, diluted, and utterly devoid of any intimation that it was for others, particularly for the Jewish people. My response was that the ultimate objective in Christian witness was to "make disciples." This provoked instant reaction. "Making disciples" was denigrated as unwarranted proselytism. Our conversation then began to peter out. What I was advancing was too aggressive an understanding of "witnessing." He wanted Christians to be nice to the Jewish people and adopt the sort of passive witness that would be devoid of any uncouth intention of introducing the Lordship of Jesus Christ into the equation. Of course, we can adopt

an aggressive outward stance that is obnoxious, because the truth is not spoken in love. But I am thinking primarily of the necessity of assuming an inner stance of aggression toward the one who is determined to keep Jewish people from their Messiah. He must be deliberately bound by the prayer of faith and the power of the Holy Spirit, or our evangelism will be not bring about the release of his captives.

To speak in this way is to be reminded of what the King James Version of the Bible says about "overcoming. At student conferences years ago we used to hear a good deal about living the "Victorious Life." Emphasis was placed on the thesis that although sin in the life of the believer was always possible, it was not necessary. The general thrust was that one "overcame" when victory was gained over temptation or when one became diligent in the pursuit of personal holiness. Fortunately, some of the newer Bible translations render *nikao* as "conquer" which is its basic military connotation. Furthermore, its usage in the New Testament "almost always presupposes the conflict between God or Christ and opposing demonic powers" (Wagner 1996:144, quoting W. Gunther 1975:650). When Christ claimed having "overcome the world" (John 16:33 - both KJV & RSV!) the world, He was confessing His victories in ministry and His soon to be achieved victory over Satan, sin and death by His death and resurrection (I John 3:8; Rev. 1:5,17,18). And nothing is more challenging to us than His post-resurrection commissioning of the seven churches in Asia to "conquer" in the same way that He did in His earthly ministry (Rev.2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). Indeed, the rich promises He extends to the churches that overcome are nothing less than a revelation of His desire that all His disciples be aggressively engaged in spiritual warfare.

3. <u>Our Resources are Christ's!</u> What do we mean by this? Nothing less than that the resources which Christ utilized in the course of His ministry are not different from the resources that He has made available to us today. He was empowered for ministry when on the occasion of His baptism by John the Baptist, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also gave Him confidence in the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. It was nothing less than the Word of God. As a result He accepted its finality as the expression of His Father's will. And here is a startling fact: we do not find His deity as such being directly or even actively involved in His public ministry. He was a human being in complete subordination to His Father. This means that He models ministry for us; all His

teaching, healing and exorcising reflected this subordination. On this basis He gave His disciples authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). He also promised that those who believe in Him "will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will they do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12).

This last promise has proved elusive and somewhat of a torment to many engaged in active Christian service. There may be many separate reasons for this: the toleration of sin or an insensitivity to the leading of the Lord or the all too widespread pattern of only giving lip service to all that the Bible says about involving oneself in spiritual warfare. In this connection we do well to reflect on the summarising report that the Apostle Paul gave of his own evangelistic ministry. Ponder the following:

> "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor.2:1-5).

Note that the apostle does not stress his skill in organizing and then delivering highly persuasive expositions of the gospel ("Jesus Christ and Him crucified"). We can well believe that he made sense when he spoke to the Jewish people, addressing, but particularly their consciences (2 Cor.4:2 - "by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"). He was deeply convinced that the fact of "God's kindness" displayed in the Cross would lead them to repentance and faith (Rom.2:4), but even so, his hearers could not but detect an "oughtness" in his gospel witness. In Acts 17:2-4 we read that in the synagogue in Thessalonica Paul "argued" from the Scriptures, "explained" and "proved" that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead, then "affirmed" that Jesus whom he "proclaimed" to them was the Christ, with the result that some of his Jewish hearers were "persuaded." I am sure that Luke included this brief statement with its cluster of verbs to demonstrate that his hero Paul was invariably well prepared, particularly when he sought to evangelize the Jewish people. And we should be also. But what Paul himself says in the earlier Corinthian passage is that the dimensions of power

and the Holy Spirit were also dominant realities in his oral ministry. There was "deed" as well as "word." This cannot but mean that Paul regarded himself and his ministry as involvement in warfare in the spirit world, against a foe over whom Christ had all authority and power, but whose enslaving power Paul had to "resist" and "bind" through the power of the Name of the risen and triumphant Lord Jesus. Jesus' ministry reflected the exercise of His "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Matt.10:1) as well as His obligation to preach that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (vs.7). There is no evidence in the New Testament that Paul's ministry was less effective than that which Jesus of Nazareth exercised "in the days of His flesh." And should we not add that all those seeking to evangelize the Jewish people today are similarly equipped for effective and fruitful service? Should we not be individually able to identify with Peter's statement in the house of Cornelius about Jesus of Nazareth? He said that "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power? The result was that He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

Do you catch the significence of Peter's closing line: "God was with him." All of us will contend with all heart and conscience that one of the Messiah's names is Immanuel. This means "God with us" (Isa.7:14 & Matt. 1:23). Jesus was God in the midst of His people throughout the period portrayed in the Gospels. Furthermore, the Messiah will be in the midst of His people when He returns at the Last Day (Rev. 22:3-5). Looking back, we see Immanuel. Looking into the future we see the same Immanuel. But what about the present? Where is Immanuel? The Jewish people today have every right to ask, when they encounter Messianic Jews: "Where is Immanuel?" During those days long ago, when Messianic Jews were charged with having "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching, the apostles could challenge their needy countrymen with the invitation: "Look at us!" And those who looked were not disappointed, for they perceived that Immanuel was indeed with them, through the healing power and the good news which they gladly received from them (Acts 5:28 & 3:4).

Bringing it all together:

I am sure that you will all agree that the Jewish people are the particular focus of Satanic opposition. And the reasons for his particular hostility are many. First, the very integrity of God is at stake. God has promised in Scripture that He will faithfully watch

over this people so that at the very end of human history there will be an independent Jewish state in the Middle East centered in what is known as the Holy Land (Jeremiah 30:11; 31:35-37; Amos 9:11,14,15; Ezekiel 37:21-28). If Satan is able to destroy the Jewish people, would this not call into question God's integrity?

Second, the utter trustworthiness of the Bible is also contingent on the indestructibility of the Jewish people. One can readily sense that if Satan were to destroy the Jewish people he would at one stroke not only call God's faithfulness into question. He would destroy all confidence in the certainty that the Bible is the Word of God.

Third, the great Messianic hope of the people of God will likewise end up on the ash heap of unwarranted human speculation if Israel does not survive as a nation (Isaiah 11:1-5, 11-12; Hosea 3:4,5). This would reduce Jesus Christ to someone far less than the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World, and particularly the Messiah of the Jewish people. It would particularly reduce to nonsense His claim to having been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18)?

Fourth, if all Jewish people are destroyed, where is the comfort of the gospel? There can hardly be any satisfactory relationship with One who failed His people in their time of greatest need. All talk of personal salvation departs into thin air if there is no trustworthy God who provides His people with the forgiveness of their sins and everlasting linkage with Himself.

Finally, imagine the dilemma the disappearance of Israel would pose for God touching His worldwide redemptive purpose for the nations. "Riches for the Gentiles" and "Life from the Dead" and "Mercy upon All"-- these are the terms used in Romans to describe the unique contribution which redeemed Jews will make to the wind-up of this purpose at the end of this present evil age (Romans 11:12,15,32). If there is no Second Coming and no completion of His Body, will this not prove that evil is more powerful than good, and that all supposed resistance to Satan and his hosts will end up as an utterly futile exercise?

Recall how many times Satan has sought to destroy the Jewish people (this paper has been written during Purim!). And how indebted we all are to Michael L. Brown for providing us with such a moving (and humbling!) review of what our "Christian" anti-semitism

has brought upon this people (Our Hands are Stained with Blood-1992). My favorite quote is on page 155. "With every fiber of his depraved, sinister being, Satan despises the Jews. He hates them with a perfect hatred. Their total destruction is his goal. He is the author of the spirit of antisemitism. There is no other way to explain the venomous hostility that has been directed against the Jews by so many people in so many countries for so many years." Then, some pages later Brown adds: "The salvation of Israel means the return of Jesus, the resurrection of the righteous, the revival of the Church and the restoration of the earth. The fulfillment of the Jews' destiny will seal the devil's doom" (p. 163).

Conclusion:

We must not forget that God is struggling with His Jewish people. They have never ceased to be "the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8). But it seems as though this highly diverse people is deeply agreed on one thing: Jesus is not for them. Generation after generation has accepted this without hesitation, without question, without searching the Scriptures to ascertain whether there is something in their history as a people that has grieved God deeply. This brings me to my final observation. Because of Satan's great hostility toward the Jewish people God has given them Michael, His most glorious archangel to be their special protector.

In the book of Daniel there is a sequence of thought in chapter 12 that gives one a sense of pause. In verse one God addresses Daniel and speaks of "Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people." He then portrays Michael as though he were in the act of rising up as though he is to counter another mighty Satanic assault against Israel. We are not surpreised that in the very next verse we are confronted with that terrible period often referred to as "the Great Tribulation" or "the Time of Jacob's Trouble". Then, in the third verse the focus is on the Day of Resurrection with the dividing of the righteous from the wicked. What is the meaning of this sequence? Does this mean a total and final awareness on the part of the Jewish people of that which has separated them from their God? Does Michael stand aside, as some have contended, so that all protection is withdrawn and at last the Jewish people can no longer escape the issue of issues - the issue of Jesus Christ? Is this their day of total catastrophe? Is the enemy about to grind his way in, possibly with glee that at long last all Israel is totally exposed to the totality of his wrath? But No! Other passages in Scripture tell us of the sudden

appearing of the One whom the Jewish people have long failed to receive. Then follows their weeping, the confessing, the reaching out for His deliverance and the wonder of wonders - finding themselves caught up in His loving embrace.

Why this reference to the Eschaton, the Last Day? I think you can see the point. If we are to engage in Jewish evangelism let us make sure that we do not overlook or treat lightly the spiritual dimensions of our evangelistic encounter with the Jewish people.

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LCJE Gathering - Chicago 1996.

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