

SHELTERED THROUGH
THE STORM

The Travails and Ultimate Triumph of the Church

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MICHAEL JOLAYEMI

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DEDICATION



To all Christian martyrs
and those passing through persecution on account of their faith in
Christ.

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WRITING THIS BOOK has been very rewarding for me. I want to thank my wife, Folarin, who did the initial editing work on the manuscript. I am grateful to Dr. Salihu D. Garba, former trustee of the Evangelical Churches Winning All (ECWA), and Elder James Irewole. Their counsel through the process was helpful. Trustee Garba also wrote the Foreword for the book.

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—Mike Jolayemi

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FOREWORD



If there has ever been a time when the Church has come under severe storm of attacks from within and without, rejection, condemnation, rebuff, and all kinds of lies, it is now. This is the time the world insists on rejecting the truth, and is constantly gravitating from light to darkness until, perhaps, it reaches utter darkness and a point of no return.

In the face of rising voices of hell and calls for “progress” and “advanced achievement” from liberal theologians who seek to reinvent God, proponents of liberalism, the apostles of inclusivity, and agents of political correctness, *Sheltered Through the Storm*, could not have come at a better time. Michael Jolayemi puts in clear and simple language what those who have turned the Church into mega-businesses would not dare say. He sets out to put a stop to the pervading paucity of truth that is becoming the norm in Christendom.

It is no doubt that attacks and a virtual tearing down of the Church and the sanctity of God’s Word have, unfortunately, begun to take their toll on believers. Today, it is not uncommon to hear some believers wonder if God has indeed abandoned His Church. But, I think, by the time people read this book, their hope in God and His Christ will not only be rekindled, but they will continue the pilgrimage with a strong hope, the assurance of His abiding faithfulness, and the assurance of the eventual victory of the Church.

In Michael Jolayemi's aptly-titled book, we are reminded of who our God is, His consistency and His absolute truth. His Word stands forever. He remains forever faithful to His Word. When He says the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church, He means it. The author states this fact unambiguously. Yes, the Church may go through times of difficulty and open rebellion to God's Word (especially in the so-called advanced world), but the Creator of the universe will never change or abandon His Church. He will continue to keep His remnant and shelter His Church through the storm no matter how strongly it rages. He has declared ". . . I am with you always even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28: 20b).

Readers going through this valuable treasure are reminded of the enemies within and without the Church. The Judases within are doing no less harm than those outside. Those within do not actually belong but God allows them to point to our human weakness. It is God's own way of reminding us of the need to watch, pray, and constantly trust and depend on Him.

The author addresses the great threats Islam poses to the Church, threats that have their origin in Abraham and Sarah, which the Church will contend with until the end of the age. These threats are aided by the ignorance of Church leaders coupled with their naivety. Islam poses a great threat to the Judeo-Christian values on which Europe and America were built. Church leaders have had an unholy romance with the Islamic world and allowed the watering down of the teaching of some of the core doctrines of Christianity for fear of offending Islam and Muslims. God is using the means of this book to warn the Church again and to call it to return to basic truths as contained in His written Word, the Bible.

The author for many years has been an elder and teacher in Evangelical Churches Winning All, which I was, by the grace of God, a trustee for some years. I came to know him well in the past eight years, as the author of another book, *Saving America: The War We Can't Ignore*. He is the current ECWA-USA district national treasurer and a member of the district executive committee. His fearlessness, thoughtfulness, and thorough dissecting of the Word of God with high integrity can be seen. He has brought this godly character into this book.

This book is a wake-up call for Church leaders, followers of Jesus Christ, and all of us who have the hope of His second coming. Enjoy God's gift through Mr. Michael Jolayemi.

Salihu D. Garba, Ph.D.
International multimedia broadcaster
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Washington DC.

INTRODUCTION



And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38 ESV)

Life is a mystery. Though it can be beautiful, yet it is often laden with fear and anxiety. I’ve heard it said, “Don’t think about or wonder at the frailty of life. Have faith that everything will work out for the best!” But most of the time, the best does not look good. Job said, “Affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground; yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:6–7). Here’s the paradox—life may be sweet at some points, but the turbulence that follows often wipes away all the memories of the good days.

The disciples of Jesus were not expecting a rough time. It had been miracle after miracle ever since they had enlisted to follow Christ. But, suddenly, their boat encountered rough weather at sea. The fierce, out-of-control storm made them feel they were not going to survive. Gripped with fear, it seems they did not remember their Master and Lord was in the ship. Jesus was lying down, resting. That should have allayed their fears, but reason does not usually prevail when we feel overwhelmed. Jesus rose to their rescue, rebuked the wind and the raging water, and there was calm.

The world, and particularly the Christian community, is under siege as a new culture of wickedness has emerged. Jihadists around the world are attacking Christians, maiming and killing them as well as destroying churches. There are over three hundred active terrorist groups globally and new splinter ones are emerging daily. The world is being terrorized by the likes of Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Jamaat Ansar al-Sunna, Al-Shabaab, and Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami.

Hostility toward Christians around the world, including in the United States of America and Europe, is on the rise. There is trouble everywhere. Violence and the destruction of human lives is no longer limited to the under-developed and developing world alone; the developed nations of Europe and America are no longer safe zones. As angry outbursts increase, the dignity and respect for human life is being destroyed.

The Western world now has the task of not only monitoring their embassies overseas, but also beefing up homeland security because of the significant security concerns at home. These are not things anyone wants to live with.

In addition, the Church is facing intense opposition from “human rights” groups and political activists who seek to enforce immoral lifestyles on society through legislation and court orders. Liberal political ideologies, including strange theological views are now prominent in our public discourse and practice. The words of God and the prophetic revelations of the Bible are being undermined.

A new era without the fear of God has come upon our world, and new generations that are capable of setting the nations ablaze are being groomed. As uprightness in society fades fast, the world is witnessing an increase in evil. Despotic leaders on the path of political expansionism are inciting violence, posing danger to life and property.

Paradoxically, Christians are not only persecuted by the enemies outside, but the Church is faced with betrayals and detractors within her fold. Traitors and invaders inside the Church are on the increase. These self-styled Christians, some who are in leadership positions, are sources of stress and discomfort within the body of Christ by their lifestyle, misrepresentation, and misapplication of the Bible. They are the like of people Paul bemoaned:

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. (Phil. 3:18–19)

We definitely are in troubled times, and it does not seem there is an end. Is the world doomed? Or is there an unseen hand channeling the course of these occurrences? Who is behind all the chaos and the increased uncertainties around the world? Is there hope for the world and the Church? Is there someone who has overall control of the situation?

This book identifies the challenges facing the Church and the world today. Not many people are aware of what is happening. Some of those who are observant are not concerned; those who are concerned are being muzzled by the cares of life and the fight for survival within the worldly system. Many of those who are determined to fight what is happening are not equipped to do so. The weapons of our faith are being demobilized and taken away by Satan. As Satan launches his end-time assault on the world, and the battle rages, and men and women of faith run for cover, we may humanly conclude the battle for a moral world is being gradually lost.

But, in spite of the opposition against Christians, the Church remains an issue in the world. The name and person of Jesus Christ has no rival in this world, and neither in the world to come.

There *is* an ultimate power in control. Darkness may fiercely envelope the land but that darkness cannot prevail over the light. Our faith must not falter or be overtaken by fear and anxiety. Upright men and women will make the difference in the current dark age. Even though we may not know what the future holds, we know the God who holds the future in His hands—and He is our God.

The Lord **their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown**, lifted like a banner over His land.” (Zech. 9:16)

The perilous times are here. It is as if I hear the Church crying out, “Lord, do you not care that we are killed daily?”

The words of the Lord echo back to us, “Where is your faith?”

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
(Rev. 3:13).

Hello Church! Welcome to the days of turbulent storms!

THE HUMAN TRAVAIL



Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (John 14:1)

Franz Kafka portrayed life as a dehumanizing existence that turns people into a sea of empty faces without identity or worth. Kafka said, “The conveyer belt of life carries you on, no one knows where. One is more of an object, a thing, than a living creature.”¹

It is hard to make sense of life with all its inherent struggles. For King Solomon, the meaning of life was lost to the incessant travail and woes of daily living. He said:

For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. (Eccl. 2:22–23)

Life is sweet but often has many dark sides. We believe understanding past experiences, either ours or others, will help us navigate troubling days and make changes to improve the condition of our lives. This, however, is not always the case. Humanity has not succeeded in obtaining the desired rest our hearts long for.

Breakthroughs in science and technology and other human achievements have not provided the much-needed relief from the problems that beset life. Rather, new issues demanding more research are added daily. It does not appear there will be an end to causes for worry on Planet Earth.

As we advance in age, many new issues of life erupt. You, no doubt, have observed from experience the unique problems that come with the three phases of our lives. When we were young, through our teenage and young adult years, we were faced with the challenges and struggles of education, worries about what the future holds, career, and marriage, etc. As soon as it appears those hurdles were jumped, the huge challenge of starting a family, raising children, and maintaining our status in society surfaced. That gives us enough trouble to contend with until old age! My mom in her old age is full of life but with the accompanying aging pains. She often voices her desire to go to her eternal rest, and we are hardly able to talk her out of that mindset. Pain is not desirable; only the person going through the experience knows how it feels.

Paul had a greater desire to be in heaven, rather than here on earth, except for the sake of the gospel. He told the church at Philippi:

For I am hard-pressed between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. (Phil. 1:23–24)

The issues of life can make life seem meaningless. This is usually the condition of mind of individuals who decide to take their own lives through suicide, because it did not appear life was offering them anything good. Depression is a state of mind created by Satan who makes everything in life seem horrible, as though the Creator derives pleasure in seeing His creatures in sorrow.

But God did not create humanity for suffering. Life was meant to be enjoyed in fellowship with one another and communion with the Lord. When God made man and woman, it was not a creation of hapless chance, but a creation made in His image, who were given power to subdue and have dominion over all other creatures and circumstances on earth. “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

It is part of our human limitation to not understand everything about life; but it becomes inexcusable when we refuse to accept the credible explanations and solutions offered by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. This has been the major issue in the world. Life will remain a tragedy without God. You

cannot know the meaning and purpose of life if you do not know God, the Creator and owner of life. The copyright to life belongs to God and no one can lay hold on life without God's approval.

Some believe life has always been like this with its attending troubles. That is not true. Prior to the coming of Satan into the world, life was free from labor and pain. Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden and did not need to work and sweat to have food. Their every daily need was met without struggle because God provided for them. They had no rivals or competitors; they knew no enemy. Peace and personal harmony was theirs. It was a life full of bliss, a paradise, and a place of ecstasy and serenity.

The game changer was when an angel rebelled in heaven against God and was thrown out into the world with numerous fallen angels. The perfect earth was now polluted by Satan as he entered into the serpent and used it to deceive Adam and Eve to disobey God. Humanity and the world has not been the same since sin and disobedience entered the world.

Job reeled from his experience of the bitter side of life and summed it up by saying, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). When his life was ravaged by stress and unrelenting trouble, Job concluded, "For affliction, does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground; yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job 5: 6–7).

Job was not comforted by anything, not even the wealth he had, when his life was consumed with hardships and afflictions. He lamented, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me" (Job 3:25).

Life was meant to be enjoyed in fellowship with one another and in communion with the Lord.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (Gen. 6:5–6)

Our days come with many incidences, sometimes these are harrowing experiences, usually caused by ourselves, and sometimes by others. Everyone craves peace and tranquility, but trouble comes in an unrestrained manner. “While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman” (1 Thess. 5:3 NIV). Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19).

We thank God for we know that there is a place of peace where Satan cannot enter; it is the abode of God and His kingdom. It makes no difference whether you believe in God or not; God is bigger and greater than Satan. C.S. Lewis said;

God is a basic Fact or Actuality, the source of all other facthood. At all costs, therefore, He must not be thought of as a featureless generality. If He exists at all, He is the most concrete thing there is, the most individual, organized and minutely articulated. He is unspeakable not by being indefinite but by being too definite for the unavoidable vagueness of language”²

As a result of sin, the human race turns out to be its own enemy. We are born and dwell in the midst of those who seek to destroy us, and sometimes destroy themselves, for no good reason other than the depravity of their minds. We are all surrounded by enemies; many times, Satan uses us against each other. The devastating impact of human actions on earth is carnage. Everywhere we go, some form of enemy is waiting for us.

Even when our enemies are not apparent, we often have friends whom we cannot trust. Untrustworthy friends are worse than known enemies. The gloomy and wretched nature of life spares no one.

Those who are wealthy live in fear of losing their possessions, and those who are poor are troubled by the glaring lack in their lives. As it is

for the poor, so it is for the rich. Amaechi Nsekwe captures this paradox of life in *The Rich Also Cry*. While man is willing to trade anything in exchange for personal happiness and harmony, peace has been a scarce commodity through the generations. King David lamented:

Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war. (Ps. 120:5–7)

While it was Adam and Eve's fall that changed the dynamics of life, they are no longer to be blamed. By choice, humanity has perpetuated sin outside the garden of Eden. We miss the presence of God in our lives because God does not dwell in unholy vessels. The

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absence of God in our lives produces distorted and depraved minds and hearts deeply rooted in wickedness. Our perspectives, thoughts, and characters have changed from its original creation. Life created by God to be enjoyed has become distasteful and depressing. People have become a danger to themselves, their societies, and nations. Jeremiah said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jer. 17:9).

The order that God instituted at creation has given way to disorder. Ironically, an unruly life is sometimes regarded as pleasurable, while, in fact, it makes us miserable. Men and women have become uncertain and unpredictable in their behavior: in one moment, they are well-behaved, but in the next, they are evil. Uncertainty resulting from distorted hearts has eroded the trust we have in each other. Relationships have become a constant mixture of suspicion and fear of one another.

Hearts occupied by Satan result in barbaric actions. Some feel they are pleasing God in their acts of wickedness. They engage in horrific activities dictated by their sinful hearts, claiming it is done for the holy God. They kill others because they think it will get them to paradise.

It was not this way in the beginning. Prior to the entrance of sin into the world, Adam and Eve lived in an uncommon openness with one

another, in shared love and enthusiasm. They were in fellowship with God and with one another. God showered blessings on them by His presence. His pronouncement over them was a tonic for a good life:

Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (Gen. 1:28)

The first family lived together in peace until sin brought God's curse on them.

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain, you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil, you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:16–19).

In a huge shift, the man and the woman turned from being the agents of life God made them to be, to agents of death.

Human wickedness appears in various colors, shapes, and sizes—greed, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, and malice became common traits. (See Gal. 5:19-21.)

After their sin, Adam and Eve's relationship was ruined. Adam kick-started the disconnection when he disowned his wife before God by saying, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). Since then, our deceptive human hearts have contained traits of a saint and a villain.

Their sons, two brothers, Cain and Abel, who were meant to care for and serve each other, became estranged. Cain, in jealousy and anger,

murdered Abel his brother, shedding innocent blood. The Lord called on Cain saying,

“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” (Gen. 4:10–12).

Since Cain and Abel, epidemics of wickedness and evil have come and people are made to live in sorrow and pain. The grave consequences of sin has led humanity to completely lose their godly values; life has descended into depravity in thoughts and actions; and Satan has continued to use man against himself and against others.

The Church and Israel

Everyone on earth is acquainted with the turbulence of life, but two groups of people have had more than their fair share of adversities. The Church and the nation of Israel are badly hit by the disorder in the world. The Jews live in the midst of their Arab neighbors who are their sworn enemies; the Church is hated wherever she is found all over the world. While we realize not everything is fair in this world, the travail of the Church and the Jewish nation goes far beyond general unfairness. These are the groups at the receiving end of the attacks in the world. The people of the world are united against the people of God, the Christians and the Jews.

The Church is often discounted as mere religion, and the narratives of the Bible are seen as fables. Bible stories are facts of history and not fiction; they are not fairy tales or fabrication. The Bible is an authentic record of encounters and activities of God in and among His people.

The common ground of hostility on which the attack on the Church and the Jews is based, is as a result of their identity and association with God and the name of Christ. As the preference and prerogative of God, He chose the Jews through their forefathers. The existence of God, His person and awesome power, must not be questioned, even by perverted

hearts. God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is not on the throne by our votes; neither is His reign by our wish. It is not at our pleasure that He is God. Our acceptance or non-acceptance of God does not change Him. Striving with God is at our peril.

“Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands?’” (Isa. 45:9)

The tragedy of humankind is the loss of intimate relationship with God. The collapse of the divine intimacy between the Creator and people is painful to God and a great disaster to us. Satan is here to kill and destroy and he is against you when you identify with God. It is an offense to his kingdom when you choose to obey or do the will of God. When we depart from the bondages of Satan and embrace the love and the light of God, we become the enemy of the world and of Satan.

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

But God has not given up on humanity; He cares for and passionately loves the human race That is why He sacrificed His Only Son, Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world (John 3:16). While Satan steals away peace from the hearts of people, our Lord Jesus Christ came to restore peace to people.

My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Those who seek to be God’s must be prepared for the attacks of Satan. The people of God have continued to experience massacres, maltreatment, and serious oppression in the world at the instigation of Satan.

Israel as an Issue in the World

Israel, a small Jewish nation in the Middle East is hounded, harassed, and physically attacked more than any other nation in the world. Jews have experienced debilitating physical torture and abuse from their enemies. Between 1941 and 1945, the Jews passed through the shocking and terrible event of the holocaust, which claimed about six million Jewish lives. Israel is surrounded by adversaries who do not wish to see the Jews alive any new day. Hebrew children are born and grow up among hostile enemies. The sound of explosions and bombs in their neighborhoods is a familiar, and regular occurrence. Attacks from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hezbollah, Hamas, and terror groups against Israel are unrelenting.

Israel is an issue in the world and very significant in the program of God. Unfortunately, as it was in the days of Jesus on earth, the Jews do not understand or appreciate their position in the schemes and plans of God. The reason Satan and his followers are struggling to deny the existence of God is because they cannot withstand God's program for the world in which Israel is very prominent. Israel is not just a nation, but a special and unique people in God's purpose and agenda. For this reason, the Jews have been under attack from enemies, either through terrorism or other threats to their existence. From generation to generation, it has been war between Israel and their surrounding neighbors.

The patriarch Abraham was the father of the Hebrew nation. He was a man who came into the limelight because of faith and obedience to the Creator of the universe. He was found to be faithful to God and called the friend of God.

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Genesis 18: 17-19)

God called Abraham from his land of birth in Ur of Chaldeans, relocated and allotted him the land of Canaan, known as the Promised Land.

The people of the world have had trouble recognizing the sovereignty of God and His ultimate ownership of land. As the Supreme Being with absolute authority and power, He gives land and gifts to whomever He wills from the abundance of His creation. Therefore, no valid argument will stand against God. “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness” (Ps. 24:1). If this seems unfair, there is no injustice on the part of God; no one is higher than Him to define for Him what is fair and what is not fair. As God told Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding” (Job 38:4).

Israel existed only in Abraham when the Promised Land was given to him. In their old age, God visited Abraham and his wife, and gave them the promise of a child who would result in Israel as a nation. Abram was ninety-nine years old when the Lord told him,

“I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him saying: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also, I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (Gen. 17:1–8)

It is important to recognize that God is not a politician; He does nothing for political interest or gain. He chooses to do whatever pleases Him according to His purposes. He owes no one an explanation or an apology for what He does. Abraham was chosen by Him from among the pagan world as a vessel through whom God would make Himself known on earth to a lost generation that did not know God. The lives and destiny of the Jewish nation are wrapped up in the activities and program of God for humanity. God came in physical human form through the lineage of the Jews in the person of Jesus Christ. No one

has seen God, but Christ. “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father,” Jesus said. The revelation of God and His total program for the world is therefore woven around Israel.

The revelation of God and His total program for the world is woven around Israel.

The covenant between God and Abraham has been an issue in the world as other nations surrounding Israel could not accept this fact. Satan, in opposition against God, has recruited a human army and demons against Israel, the chosen nation of God. On occasion, the Jews were plagued by famine and economic woes that resulted in them temporarily exiting the Promised Land for other places in the world.

These issues sometimes led them farther away from God. In their disobedience to God, the repercussions have often been costly. They have been led into exile and captivity with their attendant hardships. Satan planned to destroy a nation after God’s heart, but the covenant nation of Israel remains. The Jews were in Egypt for over 400 years, most of which they spent in slavery under the Egyptian lords. But God was merciful to them and brought them back to the land of their inheritance. Many of them were later scattered all over the nations of the world until they gradually returned to the Promised Land as a recognized nation of the world in 1948.

Some remnants are still outside the Promised Land. Prophecy had said all Jews would return to the Promised Land. Meanwhile, Israel is a nation in the eye of the storm in the Middle East, surrounded by enemy nations and with God alone as their defense.



Some people, including certain in the Christian field, argue that the current Jews are not authentic Jews, and cannot be regarded as the true Israel. Such arguments are feeble and should be disregarded by those who love God. Israel remains Israel no matter the accusations from the pit of hell. Anyone in the Promised Land today, and those who claim to be Jews, are truly Jews. There has been cultural mingling with other nations of the world in marriage and offspring as the Jews went on various exiles

and sojourns in other lands. They married Egyptians while they were in Egypt. There are Russian Jews, and there are Jews of all nationalities, but they are all Jews. They are Israel indeed so long they have the Jewish blood. The covenant of the Lord removes all barriers including mixed biological blood with other nations for anyone claiming to be a Jew. Every Jew who returns to the Promised Land before and since 1948, by virtue of their return and by the token of being in the Promised Land, is covered by the covenant God had with Abraham.

Those of us who are not biologically Jews are adopted sons and daughters of Abraham by the means of our faith in Jesus Christ.

The Church is in trouble all over the world because the founder of the Church, Jesus, was of the stock of David, a Nazarite born to Jewish parents. Jesus came physically into the world through the lineage of Abraham. It is therefore not false to regard Christians as brothers and sisters of the Jews. Israel and the Christians are connected by the fact of history, and of the stock of Abraham by biological birth, and by adoption through faith. While the Jews are the natural children of Abraham, Christians are the spiritual children of Abraham. Both are connected to God. Hence the world under Satan hates them.

Recall how Jesus was not conceived by the natural biological process as between a man and woman. His mother, Mary, was a virgin, when He was born. He nevertheless shares in the Jewish bloodline through birth.

Jesus Christ extends to us a new birth by the Holy Spirit to become children of God, and by rights, the children of Abraham. Paul said, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). John also testified, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

God has chosen the Church as the ark on which the world will sail to a safe eternity.

As Satan hates Israel, so he hates the Church. It is therefore not strange when the people of the world easily lump Christians and the Jews together for persecution and physical attack. The direct attachment and association of the Church with Abraham, the father of the Jews, and the attachment of both the

Jews and the Church to God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is a threat to Satan and his followers.

God has chosen the Church as the ark on which the world will sail to a safe eternity. As our Savior Jesus Christ is the greatest gift of God to mankind, the Church is God's tool to keep the world from being destroyed by the devil. The Church is the best that will happen to the world. A world without Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and a world without the presence of the Church cannot be imagined. It would be a world in total darkness, chaos, and without direction. The importance of the Church cannot be overemphasized. It is the presence of the Church that is preventing Satan from overrunning the world.

Jesus unveiled His program for the world through the Church when He said:

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:17–19)

When the identity of the Church as the instrument of change to save, the world was revealed by Jesus, a new era entered the world. The Church became the Lord's *bride* and companion in His work as Messiah for the salvation of the world. Jesus needed someone who would represent Him and continue the work He did on earth; that baton falls to the Church.

But the Lord taught us to be prepared for the pain and anguish the Church would be subjected to at the hands of the people of the world. Demons and wicked spirits have been unleashed on earth to make it difficult for the Church to obey the call of God on her.

The Lord Jesus used time to prepare His disciples to brace up for attacks from Satan. The Bible says,

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took

Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matt. 16: 20–23)

The message of Jesus was very unpleasant to the ears of His disciples. Despite Peter’s commitment to the Lord, it was clear the devil had set him to be an offense to the cause for which Christ came into the world. Satan had taken over the thought processes of Peter, and the Lord rebuked Peter for that. The tricks of Satan using Peter would not derail what God had purposed; the work of salvation had to be done.

The Church will come under the assault of the devil; as a result, life may be difficult and full of turbulence. As Christians, we have the choice to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and leave the consequences to God, or we can decide to turn away from Him. As in the words of Paul:

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor. 4:8–11)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:24–26)

If God gives a responsibility, He also gives the power, strength, and ability to accomplish the task.

Jesus took some of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, with Him while He prayed in agony in the garden of Gethsemane. They were not there for mere support in Christ’s moment of distress. They were learning as they witnessed the anguish that accompanied the work of redemption. Jesus said,

“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22: 42). It was clear to them that the road to the salvation of mankind was not an easy one, but one to which the Lord was committed.

The Church, therefore, as the ambassador of Christ, passes through anguish because it is the will of God to use her to set free men and women under the captivity of Satan in the world.

The war against Satan on earth is not an easy assignment. But if God gives a responsibility, He also gives the power, strength, and ability to accomplish the task. As Jesus overcame Satan and sin on the cross, so also the Church will triumph over all the vicissitudes of life. For the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church of Christ.

The indication that troubled days lay ahead for Christians was not kept away from the disciples. Christ constantly reminded them that the life of righteousness will come with suffering because the world cannot tolerate holiness. He said,

These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. (John 16:1–4)

We are witnessing today the horrific scene of radical Islamic fundamentalists slaughtering Christians in the name of Allah. The Lord said they do this not because of us, but because they hate Him.

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18–19)

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. (John 16:20)

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. (John 14:1–4).

Here is the conclusion: “And now I have told you before it come, that when it does come to pass, you may believe” (John 14:29).

Satan and the World Against Christians

The Church is a challenge to Satan in his battle to drag the world to hell. The Church constitutes a buildup of organized force against the authority of the devil. The Church is a body, family, and community representing the teachings and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ to change and deliver the people of the world into a life of holiness and righteousness. When Satan sees a Church that mirrors the life of Christ, it reminds him of the defeat he suffered at the hands of Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of Christ's ministry, and on the cross at the end of the Lord's ministry.

The early Church was marked by signs and wonders. It demonstrated the power of Christ to deliver humanity from the consequences and agony of sin. The life and work of the early Church depopulated the kingdom of Satan. The city of Jerusalem was in an uproar, as it was turned upside down by the preaching of the gospel. The devil is therefore on the offensive against the purpose of the Church to save and change lives.

Satan plotted against the early Church; through persecution, he got the apostles and other believers scattered. But this resulted in the

Righteousness challenges the lifestyles of the world.

preaching of the gospel of Christ with accompanying miracles in many nations of the world. It also resulted in the birth of several movements and fellowships in the name of Christ in nations that were in darkness. The early Church got fired up by the power of the Holy Spirit,

which the Lord had promised and given, and many souls were gained for the kingdom of our Lord.

The church was engaged in honest and holy living, resulting in the rapid growth of their numbers. The power and authority given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ was confirmed through this. They were constantly together in teaching, worship, and prayer. In Antioch, an ancient Greek city on the Orontes, the people were recognized by their lifestyle. They were seen demonstrating, and living the life of Jesus Christ, and were therefore called Christians. Antioch eventually became “the cradle of Christianity.”

Since the days of the early Church, Christianity has attracted the hatred that people of the world have for the person of Jesus Christ. Righteousness challenges the lifestyles of the world so those who live it will be hated.

The Name of Jesus Challenges the World

One of the issues since the birth of Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection is His *name*. The name of Jesus has been a burden to the world. It is a name that brings questions and challenges to the human heart, because it stands for truth and righteousness. The name was given by God through the mouth of an angel:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:31–33)

Herod the King struggled with this but he never lived to see the day of resurrection. Christ confirmed the prophecies spoken by the mouth of Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Luke 4:18)

The mention of the name of Jesus creates panic in the camp of Satan.

Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2: 9–11)

In the United States of America, some people hate the name of Jesus so much that they wish the word Christmas could be removed from existence—not because they do not enjoy the festivity, but because the festival comes with the name of Christ. Some are offended to be wished “Merry Christmas” during the Christmas season; they rather would hear “Happy Holidays.” But Christmas is about Jesus Christ; He remains the only reason for the celebration of Christmas.

The “separation of church and state” is a misapplied constitutional clause in and seems to affect only the religion that is associated with the name of Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus is an issue now and will continue to be an issue in the world.

Simeon, a known just and devout man in Jerusalem who waited for the “consolation of Israel,” said this when Jesus was brought to the Temple:

Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (Luke 2:34–35)

“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?” queried the high priest (Acts 5:27-28). Preaching in the name of Jesus had sent the apostles several times to prison. They were questioned by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem for not obeying their orders not to preach in the name of Jesus Christ.

“What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. But so, that it spreads no further among the

people, let us severely threaten them that from now on they speak to no man in this name.” So, they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:13–18)

If the name of Jesus is removed from the gospel, it becomes an ordinary entertainment that lacks the power to save souls. “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt.10:22).

Jesus is the Truth

In addition to His name, Jesus stands for the truth, another concept the world cannot handle. “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” said our Lord Jesus (John 14:6). Truth reveals the infidelity, treachery, perversion, and evil in the world. Truth pierces the heart of people so they are cautious to get near the truth because they do not want their lives and actions to be measured by the upright standards of truth. The systems of the world created by Satan do not make room for truth, so truth becomes an issue.

The accepted norm is diplomacy, tact, and rationalism created by philosophers who do not face up to truth but dilute the truth, limiting its authority on society. The Church as the embodiment of truth cannot therefore be loved by the world. People distance themselves from the Church because the world does not want to handle or deal with the truth. When truth is spoken, it is an affront to the world and ignites negative reactions from the people. People are outraged against the Church simply because the words of truth are too strong for their comfort

For example, when Kittredge Cherry’s paintings and books about Jesus Christ were widely criticized, the author was mad at the objections coming most likely from Christians. According to Jennifer LeClaire in Charisma News, in her article, “LGBT Activists with ‘Gay Vision’ Peddle Paintings of Homosexual False Christ,” Kittredge was quoted as saying in an article in the Huffington Post: “But we refuse to concede Jesus to those who act like they own the copyright on Christ, then use Him as a weapon to dominate others”³

But Christians surely do own Jesus, and Jesus owns the Church. Christians therefore are in the position to tell the world who Jesus is.

Christians do own
Jesus, and Jesus owns
the Church.

Not out of arrogance or pride, but because they are members of His body, and He is the Head of the Church. No one can know an individual better than the individual.

Kittredge Cherry is not alone in this perception about Christians. Some people even refer to Christians as haters. We know that Christians do not hate, they only say the truth. Truth does not make falsehood comfortable. An action may be politically correct, but if it is not the truth, it is not right.

It has become the norm in these days to blame the Church for anything that happens that the world is not comfortable with. But Christians cannot be bothered because the prophecies of the Bible have revealed Christians will be falsely accused by Satan, the accuser of the brethren. No accusation against Christians when we have done nothing bad should be news anymore; people are merely acting out the scripts of Satan, their master. But this will not last, “. . . for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:10–11). Then will salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ come.

It is rewarding to always be on the side of truth. Peter said,

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us,[a] leaving us[b] an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:19–23)

On June 11, 2016, Omar Mateen, an Afghan-American Muslim fundamentalist and terrorist with allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) entered a night club in Orlando, Florida, armed with a semi-automatic rifle and killed forty-nine people, and wounded another fifty-three. This was an act of a deranged terrorist, which many Americans and non-Americans described as an unwarranted destruction of human lives. It was described as the deadliest mass shooting by a single gunman. Incidentally, the nightclub was frequented by members of the LGBT community.

Strangely, accusations were levelled against innocent Christians who knew nothing about the incident, instead of at the deranged gunman and Satan, who he represented. The accusers of the Church held the Christians responsible for the carnage because Christians preach righteousness. Since the Church does not condone the gay lifestyle, we are held responsible for anything that happens to any gay community. That cannot be right as Christians are the most peace-loving people on earth.

What has the Church done to influence this kind of deadly situation?

Directly or indirectly, the activities of the Church curb and decrease crime in society. The Church is focused on her calling, the preaching of Christ and His resurrection. It is the job of the Church to preach and teach against every form of unrighteousness and sin, including homosexual behavior. But the Church does not preach violence or hate against anyone not even hate against the terrorists who have terrorized the Church for centuries. It is absurd to bring the Church into the mess created by Satan through the Islamic teachers who publicly encourage violence against infidels (non-Muslims).

No matter how much the Word of God which Christians preach and live out has impacted and pierced the souls of sinners across the nations, Christians are still the most loving people in the world. The work of the Lord Jesus, delivering people and societies from lawlessness should be commended and embraced by all people. But this is not the case because “the god of this world has blinded the

The calling of the Church is to preach Christ and His resurrection.

The death of any sinner who does not make it to heaven is a failure of our mission as Christians on earth.

minds of them that believe not” (2 Cor. 4:4).

June 11, 2016 was a bad day for the Christian community in the U.S., and a horrible day for heaven when forty-nine souls for whom Jesus Christ died were lost probably without reconciling with their Maker and God. That is a loss

for eternity. The Bible says, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. It is equally sad when some do not make amends before they die and therefore do not make it to heaven.

Christians cannot rejoice at the death of any sinner. The death of any sinner who does not make it to heaven is a failure of our mission as Christians on earth. This is particularly true if one such person has crossed our paths and we did not take the opportunity to talk to him or her about God and heaven.

But it is an irony when the Church is accused of aiding in the death of persons in the LGBT community. The enemy of gays is not far from the gay community. Their enemies are the activists and gay leaders who have not given them room to reason for themselves and reconcile with their God. Their major enemies are those political leaders who encourage them to continue in sin when the motivators do not practice the same lifestyle. The greatest enemy is Satan who would not allow them to hear the words of God and repent before it is too late. The Church does not take up arms against sinful behavior, but rather explains in love the consequences of such behavior and sinful lifestyles. Anyone listening to the gospel is not obliged to follow. It is the responsibility of the Church to preach, while people are held responsible for their personal choices to repent, or continue in sin and face the consequences.

The Bible as an Issue in the World

Furthermore, the Bible and its contents is an issue for the people of the world. Many are not comfortable with anyone who carries the Bible, reads it, or preaches it. The contents of the book are challenging to human character, and conduct.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Heb. 4:12–13)

The displeasure and the hostility of Satan and the people of the world against the Church are in part hinged on the book from which Christians derive their beliefs and the grounds for their faith.

The Bible shows what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen.

The Bible contains God's plan for humanity and His creation. It shows what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen hereafter. The Bible has not changed when all things in the world have passed through a series of changes. From generation to generation, the contents of the Bible, beginning from Genesis through Revelation are the same and have not changed. The Bible is authentic and original from the heart of God. There have been many battles against the existence of the Bible, but the book has remained the best seller of all times. Prominent politicians and celebrities have called for the revision of its contents, but they are delusional who contemplate such a thing. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away," says the Lord (Matt. 24:35).

The Bible has survived attacks by those who sought to destroy the book. The Roman Catholic Church formerly restricted the people's access to the Bible, but most Catholic congregations today have copies of the Bible in their hands.

Communist leaders forbade Bibles but God always provides avenues for those men and women who are hungry for His Word to obtain copies.

Richard Wurmbrand's story tells how God met the need of the underground church who were not allowed by the Communists to have access to the Bible. He told of atheists publishing books such as *The Comical Bible* and *The Bible for Believers and Unbelievers* in an attempt to ridicule the Bible. The books were printed in millions of copies and were full of Bible verses, included by the atheists to discredit the Bible. What

the Communists meant for evil delighted the underground churches who thereby obtained verses of the Bible without hindrance. Richard said,

The Communist's publishing house was very glad to receive thousands of letters asking for reprints of atheist books that quoted Bible verses to mock them. They did not know that these letters came from the Underground Church, which had no other opportunity of receiving the Scriptures.⁴

Those who attempted to destroy the Bible are gone, some of them are forgotten, but the Bible remains as strong as ever. Wayne Jackson in his article, "The Holy Scriptures—Indestructible," in *Christian Courier* said:

In France, Rationalism found a champion in Francois Marie Arouer—popularly known by his pen-name, Voltaire—a deist who produced several volumes brimming with hatred for the Bible. No one in Europe did as much to destroy faith in the Word of God as Voltaire. France rejected the Scriptures, tied a copy of the Bible to the tail of a donkey, and dragged it through the streets to the city dump, where it was ceremoniously burned.

Voltaire predicted that within a hundred years of his death (1778) Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history . . . His final days were spent in agony. He even signed a confession begging God to forgive his sins.⁵

In the United States of America, the hatred towards the Bible has heightened particularly among the current generation of liberal leaders. The access to and the free distributions of the Bible has been impeded in public institutions, government offices, and military facilities. Christians who are determined to get the Bible into the hands of people are being sometimes restricted from doing so, usually on the excuse of the "separation of church and state." The presence of the Bible in public gatherings creates uneasiness, apprehension, and nervousness. Iowa State University on March 1, 2015 removed all Gideon Bibles placed in the university's Hotel Union Memorial guest rooms, simply because

an atheist full of hatred for the Word of God made a case for throwing the Bibles out of the hotel.

On Sean Hannity's show on the Fox Network (February 18, 2015), Atheist Annie Laurie Gaylor argued the Bible constitutes danger for her in hotels. She said, "I don't like to pay high prices to stay in a hotel room to find a book in there that says that I should be murdered—that blasphemers should be put to death, that homosexuals are an abomination, that women are subordinate"⁶ Unfortunately, Annie Gaylor sees the Bible from the perception of the natural man or woman. She, no doubt, does not realize the spread of the gospel through the Bible is the reason why Christians have been easy targets for destruction.

The Bible is credited with changing many criminals into saints. Satan's opposition to the Bible is because the book delivers people from his prison (Isa. 55:11).

According to C. S. Lewis, "It is Christ Himself, not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him"⁷

Political, intellectual, and physical opposition against the Bible notwithstanding, the book is found everywhere and continues to point men and women to the salvation found in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though, the Church is constantly under attack by the people of the world, we are not in any trouble—it is the attackers of the Church who are in trouble. The more they have attacked the Church, the stronger the Church has grown. Christians who have been slaughtered and killed by ISIS or other wicked people were not stupid to lay down their lives for Christ. They did so because they have a hope of eternity which is absent of all the pain of this present world.

The apostle Paul was informed of imminent danger to his life in Jerusalem; the people tried to persuade him with tears that he should not go. Paul answered,

What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 21:13)

Paul had declared to the church in Philippi:

According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:20-21)

The insurmountable challenges of this world can only help us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the perfecter of our faith. But for those who refuse to reconcile with Christ before they die, it is tragic. Death is an end to life's chapter on earth; the next phase of life has no end. There are only two destinations: heaven with faith in Christ, and hell for those who reject salvation through Jesus Christ.