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TAX-EXEMPT

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

May 2024

FROM US TO YOU

What a dangerous world this has become! Every time you think things are as bad as they can be, they get worse. That's because Satan, the devil, is running this world (Ephesians 2:2). And he knows that he doesn't have much time left (Revelation 12:12 NIV). We on Long Island are glad that we don't work in New York City. Like all big cities, there has always been crime, but decades ago it was relatively safe to ride the subway during business hours. Not so anymore. A woman in her sixties, whom Anne was talking to recently, lives in one of the boroughs of the city. She said it's terrible lately. The city has become even more crowded. She said there are so many illegal immigrants recently that they push and shove people at random. (And according to the new language "police," we are not supposed to call them "illegal immigrants." But that's what they are.) The woman said she is fearful.

It has been reported in the news that some businesswomen have said that they were walking down a street in Manhattan, minding their own business, when suddenly a male stranger came up to them and punched them in the face! One woman had a broken nose. One possible theory is that men from Moslem countries expect women to cover their faces. There was no one around to arrest the attacker. The streets were full of people. So he got away each time. Crime has become so out of control that the police are overworked. Sometimes things are so bad that the police themselves have been attacked! It seems that this country has a new flood of "strangers" roaming our streets that disrespect our laws and scoff at our customs. We can only hope that the coming election will set things right! However, the primary opposition candidate, President Donald Trump, has been politically targeted by the current administration with frivolous lawsuits designed to waste his time, deplete him financially, and hamstring his candidacy. This once great nation is becoming more like a Third World country!

The New York news has recently been reporting about the many Pro-Hamas protesters in the city. They are college students, often from Ivy League universities. They have been chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." A reporter outside the courthouse was talking about the bogus trial of President Trump when he suddenly paused his report. A man across the street from the courthouse had set himself on fire! We are clearly in the last of the last days. Jesus Christ will be coming back sometime soon to reclaim the earth and set up His own kingdom (Revelation 19:11 thru 20:6). However, don't expect things to change right away. Because the Apostle Peter said, "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' He promised?' Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV). However, "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 NIV).

It has been reported that Europe and English-speaking countries have also been plagued with anti-Semitic protests and political strife. So why is all this happening in countries that were once influenced by the holy Word of God and great Christian leaders? Things were very different then. Ancient Israel also was once so strong in her walk with God that other nations feared her. The Bible says, "The LORD your God, who is going before you, **will fight for you, as He did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place. In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. When the LORD heard what you said, He was angry and solemnly swore: 'Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly'" (Deuteronomy 1:30-36 NIV).**



It is the same way today with Jews and Christian Gentiles. God expects to be respected and acknowledged. He deserves it! In previous generations, many once Christian countries were in need and prayed for God's help at times of war. The Lord responded to their need out of His great love, and we felt the joy of His blessings. However, in the years that followed after two world wars, Christ became a distant memory for the children of those God blessed. Now people are wondering what happened? The fact is, when you turn your back on God, He turns His back on you (see Matthew 25:30). The Bible tells us that these last days before Christ's return will be filled with stress and anarchy (Matthew 24:21-22). Jesus has promised to come back soon and reclaim this world when Satan's time of running things comes to an end. Even before that, Christ will return for those who truly love Him. The church calls that time the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-55 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). He will meet us in the air (Matthew 24:30-33). So, in the meantime, remember what the apostle Peter told the church, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:6-11 NIV).

In the Lord's service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

CHRISTIANITY IS JEWISH

By Anne Kaestner

Jessica was a young Jewish woman in her early twenties. My mother told me how Jessica had called her up on the phone one afternoon. In those days, cell phones weren't as widely used as today. So Jessica was standing in a public phone booth, her suitcase by her side. She was trying not to cry. Her parents, whom she had thought loved her, had just thrown her out of their house. They had taken away her credit cards, and she had very little money. She had no place to go. No place to sleep. And she asked my mother if she could spend the night at their house. I was single and living in Staten Island in my apartment at the time. So I only know about it from what I had heard. I didn't know Jessica very well. I had only seen her when I had occasionally spent the weekend on Long Island and attended my parent's church. However, I liked her. She was always polite and courteous to people, but it seemed to me that she was a very serious person. I had never known her to laugh or giggle like some of the other young women who went to the church. My mother told Jessica yes, of course she could come over and sleep at her house. The church was closed at that time, and the doors were locked, so she couldn't go there.

Jessica was a new Christian. She had just accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior some weeks or months earlier. I'm not sure which. But she was now Born Again (John 3:3) into the Kingdom of God, and her name had been added to the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27). The Lamb, of course, is Jesus Christ (see John 1:29). That meant that she had a reservation in Heaven waiting for her when she needed it (John 14:1-3). Jessica wasn't expecting to need it any time soon. However, the peace of God (see Philippians 4:7) gave her the courage to stand strong in her new faith no matter what her parents threatened to do. They were Jewish, and they felt that their Jewish daughter was betraying her heritage by accepting Christ, who they felt, was a major part of a Gentile religion. They had told Jessica that they had asked their Rabbi what to do about her, and he had told them to take away her credit cards and throw her out of their house.

People who don't know Christ as their Savior always think in terms of money and material wealth (see Matthew 6:19-21). I'm sure that their Rabbi felt that the loss of her credit cards, and the financial security of her parent's home would certainly make Jessica acquiesce and give up thoughts of Christ. To her parents Christianity was just a religion, a Gentile form of worship. And, sadly, to a lot of people who call themselves Christian, that's what it is. However, Jessica had experienced what I, and millions of other people had felt down through the ages. It wasn't just some boring church ritual, where people make their weekly pilgrimage to their local house of worship and leave feeling more righteous. It was much greater and more real than that. It was a personal relationship with Jesus Christ whom a real Christian can feel in his or her heart. I was always bored with the rituals of man-made church structure. Everything would start at a certain time each service and end on schedule. The pastor would say something like, "congregation, turn to page 149 in your songbook" and everyone would resolutely comply. Then the next thing on the church program would occur, and so on and so forth. I especially hated it when the pastor would say, "Now turn around and greet the person next to you. Give them a big hug." I hated getting a big bear hug from some man who was a stranger to me and whom I didn't know anything about.

Contrast that with the godly love Paul had with the church leaders at the church in Ephesus when he knew he was leaving them. He told them, "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about

preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, **savage wolves** will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even **from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them**" (Acts 20:25-30 NIV. Also, see Matthew 7:15). "When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship" (Acts 20:36-38 NIV). Their love for Paul was the genuine thing. It wasn't just following the direction of their pastor. They had true Holy Spirit love. They were like family to each other because they were all Born Again (see John 3:3) into the family of God, filled with His Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and loved one another (John 13:34-35).

I had the same experience recently with Heidi Marquina, our Spanish translator. She lives in California, so I had never met her in person. For about thirty years we had just communicated via phone, email, and video conferencing. She is also a member of our Board of Directors. As Spirit filled Christians (see Galatians 5:25), we had developed such a love for each other that I was thrilled when she called up on the phone one day to say she was on the East Coast and was coming for a few days to visit with us. Eric and I met her at the train station, and it was like finally seeing family. We spent much of her visit praying together, talking about Christ and our love for Him, and we enjoyed a lot of time hugging each other.

Like us, Jesus hated phony piety. He said to the religious leaders in His day, "... *Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'*

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.' And He said to them: 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!'" (Mark 7:6-9 NIV). This is the kind of thing I was talking about, churchianity instead of Christianity. No wonder Jewish people are confused about Christianity. They see so little of it in churches these days. Usually what is preached in most churches is whatever is politically correct at the time. Good works and kindness is mostly preached (see Ephesians 2:8-10). Very few pastors actually teach the Bible in depth. If there is any Bible teaching it's usually very basic. It reminds me of something the writer of Hebrews said to senior church members in his day. He said, "*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil*" (Hebrews 5:11-14 NIV).

If you've been a Christian for many years and each time you go to church you keep hearing the basic teachings of salvation over and over again something is wrong with your Christian education. I've heard Christians say that the pastor gave a "nice salvation message."



Well that's good if he has a lot of unsaved people at his church or newly saved individuals who need to learn the basics of Christianity. But if you hear the same elementary message each time, your spiritual nutrition is not going to be very good. If those of you who have accepted Christ years ago and are not learning anything past the milk and baby food stage something is wrong. You need to grow deeper in your knowledge of the Word of God! If your church leaders are not going to help you to grow in your understanding of God's Word, read the Bible for yourself (2 Peter 1:19-20). I prefer the New International Version because it uses modern terms that we can understand.

The King James Version is fine for people that prefer it, but it was translated into English in 1611, a long time ago. It uses phrases that have changed their meaning over the years like the scripture that says, *"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me..."* (Matthew 19:14 KJV). If I was a child and someone beckoned me toward them and used the word "suffer" I would run in the opposite direction. By comparison, the New International Version translates the scripture this way, *"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'"* (Matthew 19:14 NIV). Otherwise, find a church where you can learn more spiritually. The point is that we Christians need to have a better understanding of the Bible. It tells us what God expects from us. It is our spiritual authority. How can you serve the Lord if you don't know what He's telling you? *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"* (Hebrews 12:1 NIV).

In other words, Christians, you and I are being watched by angels in another dimension, who write down all that we say and do. You can't see them, but they see you. In the book of Daniel they are called "watchers" in the King James Version, or "Messengers" in the New International Version. Some of them were the ones who decided to teach King Nebuchadnezzar, a lesson in humility when they gave him the mannerisms of an animal due to his pomposity (see Daniel 4:15-17). And people of other religions are watching Christians as well, to see if they can truly see Christ in us! Therefore, *"let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"* (Hebrews 12:2-3 NIV). The writer of Hebrews was writing to Jewish Christians, who should have known their own scriptures well enough to understand all the prophetic messages in their Tanakh and to understand the Christian message better than Gentiles would.

The first Christians were all Jewish, all twelve of the Lord's disciples and apostles. It was Jews who brought Christianity to Gentiles, not the other way around (see Acts 13:46). In truth there is nothing more Jewish than Christianity! Even in the Book of Genesis, we read that God told Abraham to sacrifice his only legitimate son, the son he had been waiting for all his life (Genesis 22:2). It was a symbolism of Christ. Isaac even carried the fire wood on his back that he was to be sacrificed on (Genesis 22:6) the way that Christ carried the cross on His. By then Abraham was well over a hundred years old. Isaac was young and healthy. He could have put up a fight if he wanted to. But he obeyed his father. He trusted that it was the will of God, just as Christ obeyed the will of His Father all the way to the cross (John 3:16). And notice that before he knew what would

happen, *"Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together"* (Genesis 22:7-8 NIV).

There is so much in what Gentiles call the Old Testament, and Jews call their Tanakh, that is symbolic of Christ. For example, in the story of Joseph, he chose to live righteously, but his eleven brothers hated him. They were jealous of him due to the fact that his father gave him a robe of many colors because he loved him more than them (Genesis 37:3). It was the same thing with Christ. The Jewish religious leaders were jealous of Jesus because He was more popular with the people and because God gave Him the power to do miracles. So they conspired to kill Him (see Matthew 26:4). This is symbolic of the way that Joseph's brothers conspired to kill him (Genesis 37:23-27). However, after careful consideration, in Joseph's case, they decided not to kill him, but to sell him as a slave and make money doing it. This is reminiscent of Judas making money for selling information that led to the death of Christ (Matthew 26:14-15). But in the case of Joseph, God had planned for this to happen. And in the end Joseph's brothers bowed before him (Genesis 42:6. Also, see Revelation 5:13). Joseph said to them, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"* (Genesis 50:20 NIV). Likewise, the

Jews planned to kill Christ out of hatred, but God planned for it to happen to save the souls of many people.

The evidence is there in the Old Testament or Tanakh for those who chose to see it. Notice that God spoke in the plural when He said, *"... 'Let Us make man in Our image, in our likeness..."* (Genesis 1:26 NIV). And did you know that the Old Testament and Tanakh says that God has a Son? *"Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of His hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in His cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and the name*



of His Son? Tell Me if you know! 'Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him'" (Proverbs 30:4-5 NIV). Also, in Proverbs, God's Son, Jesus Christ, talks about how He and God the Father worked together making a perfect world for us. He says, *"I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind. Now then, My sons, listen to Me; blessed are those who keep My ways"* (Proverbs 8:27-32 NIV). God the Father was the holy architect of this world and the universe and God the Son was the holy builder.

Job, in the mist of his misery knew who God the Son is. He said, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25-27 NIV). In the Hebrew language the name of the Messiah is Yeshua Hamashiach: This name means "Jesus the Messiah" in Hebrew. It emphasizes Jesus' role as the Savior and Redeemer. The original Hebraic name for Jesus would've been "Yeshua." While this name is significant, it's essential to recognize that we do **(Continued on Page 4)**

not forsake our prayers or petitions unto the Lord by saying “Jesus” or any other pronunciation in different languages. God calls us to call upon His name, whether it’s Jesus or Yeshua Hamashiach. As for Yehoshua: Over time, the Hebrew name Yehoshua contracted to the shorter form Yeshua. Both names convey the idea of “God is salvation.”

The great Hebrew prophet, Isaiah knew who the Messiah would be. He made it very plain when he wrote, “*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to His own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. And who can speak of His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people He was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the LORD’S will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities*” (Isaiah 53:3-11 NIV. Also, see Matthew 27:57-60).

Bible prophecy gets even more specific in Psalms when it says, “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? Why are you so far from saving Me, so far from the words of My groaning?*” (Psalms 22:1 NIV). Jesus said the same words when He was on the cross. “*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’—which means, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?’*” (Mark 15:34 NIV). And in Psalms it says, “*I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth; you lay Me in the dust of death*” (Psalms 22:14-15 NIV). This is a description of crucifixion. This method of execution wasn’t used until the advent of the Roman Empire, a long time after the time of King David, who wrote many of the psalms.

Jessica eventually married a young Gentile Christian man that she met through the church. The pastor’s wife gave her a big bridal shower. I bought her a wok. To my surprise, Jessica’s parents actually showed up at the church one day. I briefly spoke with them and Jessica’s mother said to me, “We are all God’s children.” Actually we are not all God’s children. She was wrong about that. Speaking of Christ, the Bible says, “*He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of*

the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:11-14 NIV). The type of belief in Him that we need for salvation, is childlike faith. Jesus “...said: *I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:3-4 NIV).

A child doesn’t worry about paying the mortgage or what the taxes will be, or who to vote for. He just trusts his parents or caregiver to take care of that. I am not diminishing the importance of these things. They are all very important. But our faith in God should be the same type of trust that a child has with his parents. The apostle Paul said, “*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love*” (1 Corinthians 13:11-13 NIV). In other words, for now, our time on earth, we have to just love God enough to trust Him. Let Him do all the driving and the navigating of your life. We don’t need to have all the answers about the future or why things happen the way they do. For now, until we get to Heaven, we have to just trust God that He knows what’s best for us. Right now circumstances of our lives are like a dim reflection.

We can’t see the whole picture. We don’t know how the circumstances of our lives will affect other people. We don’t know what our own future holds or how it will change the course of somebody else’s life. So God is saying, “Just trust Me as a loving child trusts his parents. I know what is best for you and that of others that your life touches.” When we get to Heaven and see God face to face, all will be revealed to us.

It’s like the song “Trust and Obey” says, “When you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word what a glory He sheds on your way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, For there’s no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey. Not a shadow can rise, Not a cloud in the skies, But His smile quickly drives it away; Not a doubt or a fear, Not a sigh or a tear, Can abide while we trust and obey. Not a burden we bear, Not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay; Not a grief or a loss, Not a frown or a cross, But is blest if we trust and obey. But we never can prove The delights of His love, Until all on the altar we lay; For the favor He shows, And the joy He bestows, Are for them who will trust and obey. Then in fellowship sweet We will sit at His feet, Or we’ll walk by His side in the way; What He says we will do; Where He sends we will go, Never fear, only trust and obey.”

Eric and I were married in April 1980, and we leased an apartment in Baldwin, New York. I sadly noticed a spirit of backsliding had started to take place at the church that had led Jessica to Christ. Since I had been living in Staten Island when the Holy Spirit had moved so well at my parent’s church I had only been there a few times. However, I remember that the original church had a small building that mostly encompassed the sanctuary. It did not even have a lavatory! But the church continued to grow as many of the young women got married and had children. Then someone left a great deal of money to the church, and they built a much larger and more impressive building. It not only had lavatories for the congregation, but the pastor finally had an office of his own with his own private lavatory. Things began to backslide even more until the pastor had an affair with his secretary, and the church came to an end. Long before that happened Eric and I began attending services at the church in which we’d been married in another town.

