

PROGRAM 65 TEASER

The human heart is incurably religious. That's why atheism is too simple. It won't work. Just half a brain knows there is a God. The human heart is also incurably sinful. That's why man invents his own god in order to salve his sinful conscience while being free to savor his sinful life. Then along come the Jews. Their task is to announce that there is only one God and that He will judge the world. Along with that, they will bring forth the Messiah and Savior of the world to call all men to repentance. Is it any wonder that the world doesn't like Jews?! Get ready for tough truth—the first of four programs: Jews, Israel and the Church—People of Prophecy—on More Than Talk.

PROGRAM 65 PAGE 1

JEWS, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH—PEOPLE OF PROPHECY THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH HISTORY

PAGE 1 The Curse Of Mere Religion

I have my own religion.” “All religions are good.” “If a person is sincere in his religion, he will go to heaven.” Ever hear the above? And a whole lot more about “religion”? I define “religion” as man’s ideas about God—or gods—but usually absent the reality of God’s thoughts about Himself. Webster’s definition includes “reverence for the gods...any system of beliefs, practices...any object of conscientious regard and pursuit...earnest about something.” So everyone has a “religion”—being earnest about something, whether secular humanism, atheism, horoscopes or the more recognizable “religions” like Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. The key to successful “religions” is in the numbers. The more the followers, the more notoriety. With the publicity comes more bodies; more notice; more power; more money.

Of course, the world’s three great “monotheistic religions” scoff at being lumped with the “anything goes as god” crowds running around. But the shoe fits. For all of these “religions” are great at obscuring the reality of the one and only Creator of the universe—God—and substituting human traditions for heaven’s truth. But how does one dare to say he has encountered the true and living God without being shouted down by the “this is what my god says” folks? Or facing the rebuke of Jews—most of them secular. Or the wrath of Christians—including evangelicals—who adopt a utilitarian “whatever works—whatever brings success—whatever feels right” lifestyle to their faith? Or Muslims, whose militants march to jihad while no sizable number of “gentle Muslims” ever march in protest against the “holy warriors” who slaughter women, children and the aged—and who use their own women and children as exploding missiles?

Is God intimately involved with His creation—especially humankind? Has He spoken in absolute truth? Has He revealed Himself in ways that offer convincing proof of His reality? Will He reveal Himself today—to us? Is sin really evil, and has God provided a way of forgiveness? Is there life after death? And is there convincing proof of all of the above?

That’s where Israel and a people called “Jews” come in. Their 4000 year history is mind-boggling. A succession of fathers (like Abraham), leaders (like Moses) and

prophets (like Jeremiah) claimed to hear from God. Prophecies were given in advance—and proven true as proof that God was real and active. They—the Jews—were ordered to be holy and a witness of integrity to the nations. Blessings were promised for obedience; cursings for disobedience. All came to pass. God would not tolerate His being made into “mere religion”. How far did He go in condemning the “religion” of the very people who had received undeniable proofs of His incredible existence? When Israel turned its collective back on God’s orders to “Seek good, and not evil...Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment...” (Amos 5:14,15), God said, “I hate, I despise your feast days...” (the very days He had ordained but which had become an outer sham hiding inner shame. See v21)

If God hated mere religion then, He still hates it today. But His judgment of false spirituality is always most severe on those to whom He has given much light. Jesus called Himself the light of the world and those who claimed Him were to be the same in integrity, holiness, unselfishness and unconditional love. God also warned that “...judgment must begin at the house of God”. (I Peter 4:17) That’s us Christians—that’s today’s church! So in exposing “mere religion” which is deadly because it becomes a substitute for a personal relationship with God, I wish to first unmask the subtlety and falseness of “utilitarian Christianity”. That’s next!

**JEWS, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH—PEOPLE OF PROPHECY
THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH HISTORY**

PAGE 2 Utilitarian Christianity

Come to Jesus and your troubles are over.” “Accept Jesus, be happy and go to heaven.” “Make God happy by receiving His Son and He will make you happy, healthy and wealthy.” “Believe hard enough and you’ll have enough.”

It’s hard to believe that the above and a whole lot more comprise much of evangelical Christianity. So take us “guardians of The Book”, throw in Protestants and Catholics, and what do you have? What Christian researcher George Barna just released in his survey on Christianity. In Charisma News Service (Vol. 3 No. 225), Andy Butcher quotes Barna, “When a majority of Christian adults...as well as three out of four born again teens proudly cast their vote for moral relativism, the church is in trouble.” Among Christian adults, 22% believe in moral absolutes, while 64% think truth is relative to a person’s situation. Of the identified “born-againers”, only 32% believe in moral absolutes. Teen agers? Only 9% of teens claiming to be “born again” accept the idea of absolute truth. Sixty percent of adults age 36 up and 75% between 18 to 35 reject absolutes. Only 26% of those “born again” base moral decisions on the Bible. The rest? “Whatever feels right or comfortable.”

There you have it. Utilitarian Christianity. God becomes a means to an end. And the end is the “does it work, does it bring success” happiness of man, not the glory of God. Secular humanism in Christian ribbons. If this is the only Christianity around, we would be stinking up planet earth. Thank God for the martyr church in many parts of the world where it costs to follow Jesus Christ. Where young believers are not invited to dances and bikini-clad “Christian beach parties”, but to die for Jesus Christ and accept persecution for His sake as a badge of honor. Where adult believers don’t divorce and remarry because it “feels right” but call it what the Bible does—adultery—and so hate it just like God does. Where the Scriptures are embraced as absolute truth rather than discarded as out of date. Where teens flee fornication instead of flaunting it. Where older folks don’t shack up (“so we don’t lose our benefits”), but stand up for Jesus cost what it may. Where “getting more” is not a true test of biblical faith, but giving more. Where the indescribable sufferings of Jesus Christ bring brokenness and repentance, rather than an “uh-huh” to three or four questions that “prove” you’re a Christian.

Any believers want to join me in protest of this insipid, lukewarm monstrosity of utilitarian Christianity before Jesus finally spews it out of His mouth?! Then let's rush back to the four gospels that constitute Christ's criteria for genuine Christianity. His was not a call to beds of materialism, comfort and a "me-first" mind set. It was a summons for disciples to imitate the Master Discipler Himself in loving and serving God with every atom of our lives. His demands will never change!

**JEWS, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH—PEOPLE OF PROPHECY
THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH HISTORY**

PAGE 3 The Cheap Imitation

It is easy to perceive “Christianity” as the stuff we see in the West—especially in America and the evangelical church. After all, aren’t we evangelicals the proud “guardians of biblical truth only?” Isn’t our doctrine the purest? Our churches the fullest? Our seminary graduates the brightest? Our political clout the most formidable? Our radio and TV empires the richest and most far-reaching? Our buildings and furnishings the most opulent?

Remain in America and all of the above will be seen as merely descriptive of “evangelical Christianity.” But go to China, Indonesia, Sudan, India—lands of Communism, Islam, Hinduism and other controlling forces, and you’ll see why American Christianity is mostly a cheap imitation of the real thing. J. Lee Grady writes for Charisma Magazine. In the March 2001 issue he told how his life was “rocked” when he interviewed leaders of China’s illegal “house church” movement. One woman who oversees 5,000 rural churches was asked, “Are you a bishop or an apostle?” she answered, “We do not use titles. We just call each other brothers or sisters.”

Mr. Grady writes, “The 80 believers I met are responsible for more than 35 million Christians in China...But no one arrived at our meeting place in a limousine, nor were any of them followed by an entourage of bodyguards and publicists. Most of these people live as fugitives, yet their faces are radiant with joy.”

What Grady saw in China is also common in India, the Muslim world and other places where one who says “Jesus is Lord” must be ready to die. Life is kept simple. Priorities straight. Humility is a hallmark. One leader—Grady calls him “the apostle Paul of China”—“wore a simple, short sleeved shirt, ate the same fish and rice we did, and he showed up for prayer like everyone else before each meeting. He usually took his seat in the back of the room.”

Now look at us. Denominational squabbles. Church splits. Leadership infidelity without biblical consequences. Big-shot titles. Superstar personalities. Like a grieving Lord says, we call ourselves “rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” (Revelation 3:17) But we don’t stop long enough to hear Him say that

we are “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.” I’m glad Grady, a young man, has spoken up. It’s easy for folks to look at an older guy like me as “judgmental and negative.” So I’m just echoing what this refreshing younger brother says: “I’ve had enough of our abnormal brand of Christianity. It is as impotent as it is lethal...How desperately we need the Holy Spirit—our Refiner—to strip us of our titles, our limousines, our front-row seats and our “what’s-in-it-for-me” message. We need a return to simple humility! May God forbid that we ever export a man-centered, adulterated gospel to other nations. Let’s ask the Refiner to send His fire and burn up our dross so we can experience a China style revival in our country. What they have is genuine. We’ve settled for a cheap imitation.”

Let those with eyes that see and ears that hear say “Amen!”

**JEWS, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH—PEOPLE OF PROPHECY
THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH HISTORY**

PAGE 4 Antisemitism: The Scandal Of Church History

What is unconditional love? It's loving someone, standing by him, and, if necessary, giving your life to preserve and protect his—whether or not he likes you, loves you, listens to you, or wants anything to do with you. That's the kind of love Jesus showed on the cross for all mankind. It's agape love, and there's often been a sad absence of it in Christian behavior toward the Jews.

It seems we either ignore the Jewish people while they suffer ridicule, false charges and worse from those who hate, or else we target them for special evangelism and, if they don't listen, we have little or nothing more to do with them.

I believe that Jesus Christ is good news (note my emphasis on Jesus, not Christianity). That's good news for everybody—Jew and Gentile. So part of my life is involved in training Christians to speak out sensitively, sensibly and solidly on behalf of Jesus and the offer of forgiveness and eternal life He extends to every human being—Jew or Gentile. But only the Lord knows how much He needs to scrub, soften and sweeten us Christians if we ever hope to see Jewish people—or anyone else—take us seriously.

A Jewish friend of mine once said, "Frank, not one percent of Christians care anything about us Jews." Is he right? And if he's wrong, where are the pastors' voices today in speaking out on the Christian debt owed the Jews and Israel!? I hear at best only the sound of piccolos, not what should be trumpets.

We talk about everything else. Gifts of the Spirit. Health and prosperity teaching. Prophecy. The return of the Lord. But why aren't more leading Christian voices exposing antisemitism and defending Israel and Jews worldwide—and doing it in such numbers that no Jew-hater would dare raise his head above gutter level?

Does today's silence speak of yesterday's past scandal of church history regarding Jews? Is it any wonder that some Jews have told Christians, "Take your Jesus to your people. We know them—they need Him."?

Allow me to state unpleasant facts. Then you won't wonder why the Jews are so resistant to the gospel. Yes, I know there is a scriptural mystery behind it all—the choosing of Israel—the rejecting of Jesus by certain of Israel's leadership—God's extended mercy to us Gentiles through the Jews—and Israel's final recognition and acceptance of Messiah. But at the day of judgment, will we Christians discover to our shame that one reason it took centuries for Jewish people to recognize any merit in Jesus was because of what His followers said and did to inflict pain on the very people through whom our Scriptures and Savior came?

It appears that the term “antisemitism” was coined by a German agitator, Wilhelm Marr, in 1879 to designate anti-Jewish campaigns then appearing throughout Europe. Since that time, the term has been universally applied to any form of behavior, activity or literature which evidences hostility toward the Jews. Though Jews experienced past sufferings prior to Christ's earthly ministry, antisemitism really started at the dispersion of the Jews worldwide. Titus had sacked and burned Jerusalem in 70 AD, and Jews were either killed, sold as slaves or scattered everywhere as objects of scorn.

In the third century, “Christian antisemitism” got rolling. It was proudly stated that John of Ephesus, on a mission through Asia, had turned no less than seven synagogues into churches. Edward Flannery, in his book *The Anguish Of The Jews*, stated that this was “an action which was definitely illegal, and could only be carried out with violence.”

PROGRAM 65 PAGE 5

JEWS, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH—PEOPLE OF PROPHECY THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH HISTORY

PAGE 5 The Heist Of History

The Epistle of Barnabas shows the church exalted at the expense of the synagogue and a deadly word being born in the “Christian” vocabulary—that of “Deicide” (the killing of God), which began appearing in Christian literature.

Justin Martyr, in his “Dialogue with Trypho,” charged that the Jews crucified Christ “in the highest pitch of their wickedness.” Tertullian argued in his discourse “Contra Judeo” that divine judgment is upon Israel, and Jews are destined to suffer for the crucifixion. Hippolytus, in his exposition on Psalm 69, said that the Jews would be “slaves to the nations not 430 years as in Egypt, nor 70 years as in Babylon...but always.” Nothing about Romans being in on the crucifixion. Nothing about Jesus willingly offering his life for the sins of the world. Just the raw, terrible poison of Jew-hatred. More was to come. Cyprian, in his letter to Quirinius, the African bishop, stated that the blessings of Hebrew prophecy should be appropriated by the church—and the curses applied to the synagogue. It was the heist of history!

The final example of third century antisemitism is seen in the writing of Eusebius of Caesarea. He makes a distinction between “Hebrews” and “Jews”—calling Old Testament patriarchs and prophets “Hebrews,” while dubbing all the evil characters as “Jews.” This appears to be the first ecclesiastical attempt to use theology to dirty the very name of Jew. St. Jerome said of Jews, “Their prayers and psalms are like the inarticulate cries of animals.”

But these attacks were mild in comparison to John Chrysostom, perhaps the most vitriolic of early Christian writers. Chrysostom was a charismatic, eloquent preacher of the eastern church. Perhaps because of his jealousy that many Gentiles were leaving a sin-riddled church and joining the synagogue, Chrysostom’s unrestrained animosity toward Jews knew no bounds. In a sermon in 386 at Antioch, he called the Jews “carnal, unclean and savage beasts.” The synagogue he called “the house of the devil, a place of shame and prostitution and assembly of criminals.” He termed the Jewish religion “mockery, a parody and a disgrace.” Ah, “Saint” John—such a tender heart!

It's easy to see why both the church and society hated Jews, when Chrysostom said, "Jews are the most miserable of all men...why are the Jews degenerate? Because of their odious assassination of Christ...there is no expiation for this...Jews are rejected by God and He has completely abandoned Israel...it is the duty of Christians to hate Jews...he who could never love Christ enough will never have done fighting against the Jews who hate Him..." Chrysostom's commentaries on the gospels are still read in churches today—but many of his readers don't comprehend Satan's blindness put on this man who said of the Jews, "God hates them and indeed has always hated them...When it is clear that God hates them, it is the duty of Christians to hate them too..." Hate. Hate. Hate. And the words and actions of hate would follow Jews for the next sixteen centuries—right into the Holocaust.

How different and how contrary to what God had said of the Jews. "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." (Numbers 24:9) "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people (the Jews)." (Isaiah 40:1) "I have loved thee (Israel) with an everlasting love." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Serious followers of Jesus have much "reparations homework" to do toward the Jewish people. Where deluded "Christians" built walls of distrust and hatred, we're called to build bridges of compassion and love.

The task is enormous. No use getting discouraged, though. Satanic hate had to be transferred from one individual to another, until infected individuals became diseased multitudes. So must it be with God's love—transferred from one to another, until the disease of hatred is isolated and love of neighbor—Jew or Gentile—becomes the healthy norm. Each listener is that "one individual"—a potential carrier of the disease—or the cure.