



Be an Up Stander, Not a By Stander

Steve Cohen

There is an old Jewish joke about a mother kvelling on her son the doctor. “My son is an outstanding doctor in his field!” the mother says. To which her

disgruntled relative says, “Yes, he is out standing in right field!”

As we enter the third year of the Covid pandemic, have you noticed a grinding away of the social graces among many who live without the knowledge or hope of Jesus? Who do you know who is mumbling and grumbling because of deteriorating circumstances, be it health, work, challenging relationships, or fear of the unknown?

Over and over again in scripture we see Jesus tending not only to the health needs of hurting people, but also...

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Continued...Be an Up Stander

...to their general needs of food, etc. Matthew 14 gives us a prominent example, with Jesus feeding the 5,000:

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (Matt. 14:14-21, NIV)

Jesus demonstrated his compassion for those lost and hurting so that his disciples might catch on and continue his focus on caring and sharing. Instead, the disciples wanted the masses to be sent away to go and fend for themselves. Jesus wanted to shower the people with love by giving them what was needed right where they were. His example of UP standing still speaks to my heart today in helping others who are lost and hurting.

I am reminded of the familiar hymn "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" by George Duffield:

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high his royal banner,
It must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory
His army shall he lead,
Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord indeed.
Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in his strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there.
Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song.
To those who vanquish evil
A crown of life shall be;
They with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally.*



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Each day I am eager to see just who the Lord will bring across my path that I might extend a word of hope and grace and stand up for the Lord and I pray that you will too.

Steve Cohen is the founder of Apple of His Eye
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Missio Dei

Bob Roegner

Drawn from Genesis 12:1-3 and John 3:16-20.

For the next three months, I intend to use this blog space to discuss something that I know if you are reading this blog is very important to you and to me -- The Mission of God. This is often referred to as the MISSIO DEI. Here is what it will look like:

- January 2022 - Missional God (the genesis of mission)
- February 2022 - Missional Jesus (mission embodied)
- March 2022 - Missional Church (mission is multiplied because we are a missional community)

Missio Dei is a well-known Latin phrase used by theologians and church practitioners to speak of God's mission in the world. It literally means "the mission of God" and refers to the "sending" of God and His missionary heart for the world. Mission arises from the heart of God himself and is communicated from his heart to ours.

We should become convinced by the end of this blog, if not already, that from the very beginning of the biblical story, we learn that you cannot know God or be in a true relationship with God and not acquire his desire for lost people.





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As all the major figures of the Old and New Testaments eventually discover, God is missional. If you enter a relationship with him through the power of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacraments, look out, because he is going to send you out on mission for him, he is going to send you to the lost, to the hurting, and to the needy, on his behalf.

As most of you know, the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, not Latin. The Hebrew verb "to send" (shalakh) is found over 800 times in the Old Testament, and more than 200 times God is the subject of the verb.

Let's begin by considering a foundational character and story from the Old Testament in Genesis 12:1-3. This is a familiar text both to Jewish believers and Christian believers because this is where we see God making a covenant with Abraham. He is the one the salvation plan begins with. Abraham is the father, whose many sons make up the Old Testament story, and who (as Christians believe) gives us the genealogy of Jesus. And to understand the great significance of this point of the narrative, we do need to keep in mind what has come before it in Genesis chapters 1-11.

In the first two chapters of Genesis, we read a poetic account of creation. In chapter 3, sin comes into the human story through Adam and Eve, and right away, it seems very fitting to say that all hell breaks loose. The curse of the fall in Genesis 3:15, the dark cloud, and the consequences of falling short of God's glory and his intentions for human beings begins to spread. Cain kills Abel, a flood that wipes out the wicked, and the tower of Babel is where, in God's judgment, we see the scattering of the curse all over the world.



But look what happens. In Genesis 12:1-3, the missional God responds by calling out Abraham to begin a journey that would end in the blessing of all people. The ultimate goal of God's promise to Abraham is that blessing will prevail over curse. It does so when the seed of Abraham, and the singled-out descendant of Abraham, the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, becomes a "curse for us..." so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to all nations, Jewish, and Gentiles alike!



It does not get any better than that. Again, this blessing of God that we have come to know as his peace, his promise, and his purpose for our lives, is not just for us to receive and then keep to ourselves. NO. It is always something that we receive and then we give away to others, as God sends us, just as someone was sent to us. That is how it works.

Of course, no conversation of a missional God can take place without taking a quick look as well at John 3:16-20, where God reveals His heart to us by sacrificing His own Son. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Typically, this verse, John 3:16, is one of the most popular verses we find in Scripture. I am sure you have seen the Scripture reference displayed on a placard at football and baseball games. You have also probably heard before that they call this “the gospel in a nutshell.” So, why is it so popular and referred to as “the gospel in a nutshell?” Because this verse speaks to us and shows us God’s heart and His plan of salvation as a missional God.

Think back to your baptism when the pastor baptized you and as a child asked your parents, “how is this child to be named?” Or, if you were baptized as an adult, you were asked for your name. Why? Because at that moment when your name was pronounced, you were identified as one of His own. As you received this water and God’s Word, and through this Sacrament, you were given forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and rescued from death and the devil. However, at that moment you were also tied to this missional God by name! You were identified as one of His very own!

Look deeply into the missionary heart of God, who seeks us out and sends us out to manifest His presence and reflect His glory into the world. He does this (take a look at the picture on the preceding page) starting on our road...this is where God has placed us...this is where we live...this is where we engage a missional God to do His mission!

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The Bridge

Kristi Roegner

In the introduction of Reverend Donald F. Ginkel’s Bible study book, *I Have Good News for You*, he starts off with the following:

On a dark night on a road from Jackson to Vicksburg, MS, heavy rains washed a bridge away. When a truck driver saw the taillights of the car ahead of him disappear, he knew something was wrong. Suddenly his own truck sailed through the black void where a bridge once stood, and he crashed into the river below. He made it out of the cab, swam to shore, and sat there in the darkness. Car after car zoomed into the gap and crashed into the swirling water below. Sixteen people died that night. Each of them had faith in a bridge that was no longer there.

Spiritually, there are millions of people today who have faith in a bridge that isn’t there. So many people believe that by their good works, their character, their church membership, their morality, they will somehow cross the river of death to heaven. But the bridge is out! From Genesis to



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Revelation the message is the same. It is that God's Son, Jesus, has come, and He is the sure and only Bridge to heaven.

The perfect relationship between God and man was washed away when mankind fell into sin, leaving a seemingly unbridgeable chasm. There had to be a way to bridge the gap to save mankind from eternal separation from God. Thankfully, God provided the Messiah, Y'shua, as that bridge. Acts 4:12 teaches that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved". Jesus himself said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". That "no one" includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Though Deuteronomy 7:6 states that the Jews are God's chosen people, that does not mean that all Jews are saved automatically. For anyone to be saved, they must come to God the Father through faith in the Messiah. Romans teaches that all have sinned against God, are under the consequences of sin, and that "the wages of sin is death". We are all in need of a bridge to salvation from our sin; we are all in need of a Savior. Fortunately, Jesus came to seek and to save the lost!

Romans 10:12 shares that in Christ, there is "no distinction" between Jew and Gentile. Yes, the Jews are God's chosen people, and through them came the Jewish Messiah to bless all the nations of the earth. But it is only through Jesus Christ, the Bridge to everlasting life, that Jews—or anyone else—can find God's forgiveness.

It is all too easy to forget that the clock is ticking for those unaware that the bridge is out. It is all too easy to turn a blind eye to the fact that the bridge is out if it is not a road upon which we travel. We must be more aware and strive to reach out to those around us who are lost and dying without knowing Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Our task is to tell others that the Bridge to heaven is securely in place for all who believe!

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NanC's Corner

Religion vs. Gospel

Nancy Cohen

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. Their worship of me is useless because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines. (Matt. 15:8-9, CJB)



In this world of chaos and turmoil, sickness, death, wars, and rumors of wars, it is comforting to know that not only do we have a loving Heavenly Father, an advocate in Yeshua and a life guide in the Holy Spirit, but we also have a standard of hope. The old and new covenants teach us how we are to live and worship. It holds comfort as well as rebuke and healing and guidance. We are told to memorize it.

Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Ps. 119:11, KJV)

...and you are to love Adonai your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources. 6 These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart; 7 and you are to teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead, 9 and write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:6-9, KJV)

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (Ps. 119:9, KJV)

Kim is one of Rudyard Kipling's books about India. Summarizing an incredibly good read, Kim was an orphaned boy who later in his life studies to become a spy for the British. It is during his schooling that he is taught how to self-hypnotize himself for protection against revealing secrets if caught by the enemy. At the end of the course, each boy is separately and privately tested through hypnotism by the instructor. Having placed a vase with fresh flowers and water in front of the student, he says that he has picked up the vase and smashed it to the ground. Then he asks the student what he sees. Every student has fallen into the mental hoax and believes the vase is smashed and broken, flowers askew and water on the floor. Except, that is, for Kim. Kim sees the farce and fights it and says "No! The vase sits on the table and is whole!" Having impressed the instructor, his teacher asks Kim how he was able to maintain his mental awareness and thought process? Kim said, "I focused on the math standard: 1 plus 1 is 2. 2 plus 2 is 4, 4 plus 4 is 8 and so on..."



The Word of God is (to the believer) our Standard! It holds true and is our dependable fortress of hope.

So, if the Word is true, why-oh-why does man distort, add-to, and diminish and ignore it? Yeshua never came to establish a denomination. We are told in Acts that there is to be a communion of believers. 1 Corinthians 14 teaches the order of the church. 1 Corinthians 11 teaches us how to observe the Lord's supper. Exodus 12 instructs us to observe Passover. My point is, God gives us the blueprint. We do not need to make stuff up to match our customs or cultures.

Religion colors the thought process and takes from the simplicity of the Bible. One can substitute, add, delete, and make everything fit the customs and familiarity of one's life. It would rock the church of today if we worshipped as they did in Israel under Yeshua or the disciples.

Religion has taken the church to the point of making it an institution, with CEOs, CFOs, and overseers. I knew a young woman in Israel who came from Switzerland to tour Israel. She ended up becoming a believer and follower of Yeshua. She was a pastor's daughter. I told her I was sure her father would rejoice in her salvation. "Oh, no. My father himself is not a believer, and it is not important to him." She continued, "In Switzerland, the church is a state institution. Christianity has nothing to do with the church. Being a pastor is a civil job position." She knew the difference between religion and gospel.

Here is some food for thought regarding religion versus gospel. The following is from Timothy Keller, an American pastor, theologian, and Christian apologist.

Religion: I obey – therefore I'm accepted.

Gospel: I am accepted – therefore I obey.

Religion: Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.

Gospel: Motivation is based on grateful joy.

Religion: I obey to get things from God.

Gospel: I obey God to get God to delight and to resemble Him.

Religion: When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job's friends, that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.

Gospel: When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle but I know all my punishment fell at Jesus's feet.

Religion: When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a good person. Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.

Gospel: When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not critical for me to think of myself as a "good person". My identity is not built in my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ. I can take criticism.

Religion: My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.

Gospel: My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with Him.

Religion: My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. When I am not living up to my standards, I feel insecure and inadequate. I'm not confident, I feel like a failure.



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Gospel: My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ, I am “simul iustus et peccator” – simultaneously sinful and yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad he had to die for me and I am so loved he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time. Neither swaggering nor sniveling.

Religion: My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work. Or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to “the other”.

Gospel: My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for His enemies, who was excluded from the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace. So, I can’t look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace, I am what I am. I’ve no inner need to win arguments.

Religion: Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, my moral record, my personal discipline, my social status, etc. I absolutely must have them so they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I may say I believe about God.

Gospel: I have many good things in my life – family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things are ultimate things to me. None of them are things I absolutely must have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.

Well, that is a lot to think about. Mr. Keller surely stepped on my toes and blesses my heart besides. I hope the same is for you. Bottom line - focus on the truth. Look for the difference between religion and the gospel. Do not be religious, be a believer, a Christian, a follower of the true God and Messiah. Remember:

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. Their worship of me is useless because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines. (Matt. 15:8-9, CJB)

Love from my heart,

nanC

P.S. Happiest New Year! May God keep you healthy and stress free and may we win many to the Messiah! Do you have a prayer request? Please share it with me. I would love to hear from you.

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From the Library: Resource Suggestions from Nancy

These are two of my study Bibles, two of my devotionals, and an incredible study book to read and re-read (especially if you are a perfectionist or on the Asperger spectrum like me).

- [The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus](#)
- [The Black and White Thinking Christian](#)
- [Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day: A 40 Day Journey](#)
- [CSB Apologetics Study Bible](#)
- [The Complete Jewish Study Bible \(Hardcover\): Illuminating the Jewishness of God's Word](#)

From the E-Bag: Heaven and Hell in Scripture

Steve Cohen

A visitor to our website writes:

I stumbled across your website looking for information to speak to a Jewish friend of mine. Your topic "The Gospel in the Old Testament" is very helpful, thank you.

I could use help. Where can you point me in the Old Testament that would refer to heaven and hell? I understand Jews do not really believe in heaven or hell as its not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament. Any help or resources that you can provide would be appreciated.

I finally have my friend listening as when he asked his rabbi about how to get to heaven he said following the Shemah and Ten Commandments and doing good things.

So my friend is interested and his rabbi stumbled to give him an answer.

John S.

Shalom, John.

Thank you for reaching out and especially for your witness to your Jewish friend!

You have asked a great question and to start the answer I should first say that if you ask three Jewish people the same question, you will get five answers. There is a wide spectrum of thought, especially on discussions of life after this life.





One stream of thought is that our eternal standing is based on our doing good deeds while on earth so that on the day of Judgement there is a set of balance scales – good deeds on one side and sins on the other. The “hope” is that a person has accrued enough merit to tip the scale in their favor and they would be granted a place in “gan eden” or the bosom of Abraham (think heaven). But, the tradition goes on to declare, that those who do not have enough merit will, at death, go to Sheol, a place of punishment but only for up to one year. Then on the anniversary of that person’s death, they will be restored to the bosom of Abraham because to receive imputed righteousness from the good deeds done by righteous Jews whose accrue merit for those who have perished. This is one reason why the headstone on the grave is not “unveiled” until the yahrzeit (anniversary of a person’s passing).

On the other hand, the Reform branch of Judaism does not believe in a literal life after death, but eternal life is vested in the memories of a person’s deeds done here which memories are passed on from generation to generation.

There is little in the Old Testament which speaks directly of Heaven and Hell, but I would invite you to look closely at what Daniel the prophet writes:

At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Dan. 12:1-3, NIV)

Here we find a clear reference to a future day of judgement. Those who have died shall come back to life to face judgement – some to everlasting life, others to everlasting shame and contempt. I have asked hundreds of people over the years which of these two outcomes would you prefer and it has always been unanimous – people prefer the good stuff over the bad. So the question becomes, “What is the dividing line between those who get eternal life and those who receive eternal shame and contempt?”

Most Jewish people today believe it all depends on them and how they have lived their life. Have they accrued enough merit to outweigh their sin? Here I refer people to the prophet Isaiah:

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Is. 64:4-6, NIV)

What a desperate state of affairs, all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. In other words, they are not put onto the balance scale. In fact, on the side to counterbalance our sins we have... absolutely nothing of our own merit.

Our only hope is that God provides for us what we could not provide for ourselves – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, NIV)



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We are here to answer any questions you may have about sharing your faith or for those who are seeking the truth about the Messiah.

Do [check out our website](#), too. We have good information useful for witnessing or helping others understand important Biblical considerations.

Yours in Y'shua – Steve Cohen

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