



AI Generated

Iran and Israel at War (Part 9)

By

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I'll address some issues about the war in a few minutes, but first let me continue where I left off in the **last part of this series**.

Christians have veered away from many of the basic teachings of the Apostle Paul. I emphasized Paul's unique ministry based on Jesus Christ calling him to it and the Holy Spirit inspiring him for it. You can read previous parts of the series for more information about that.

The entire Bible is written 'for' every Christian (2 Timothy 3:16), but not everything is addressed 'to' Christians. It's important that we are able to differentiate. If we don't, we end up with a mish-mash of strange theology.

The Apostle Paul had to deal with that from the beginning of his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul had to deal with ‘Judaizers’ who wanted Gentile converts to Christianity to be circumcised and obey the Mosaic Law (e.g. Acts 15; Galatians 2). Paul also had to deal with ‘super apostles’ (*huperlian apostolon*) who were really nothing more than ‘false apostles’ (ψευδαπόστολος) (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:5, 13; 12:11).

Paul did not hold back in defining who they were or who they were like:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” 2 Corinthians 11:13-14

These 'super apostles' distorted the Gospel for their own advantage, even as Paul warned the elders from the Ephesian church:

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-31

Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia (which may have been his first church letter) is another example of the kind of opposition he had to face in trying to help Christians stay on the right path:

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the

Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

Galatians 3:1-5

“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. ” Galatians 4:16-17

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus

neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love ... You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. Galatians 5:1-5, 7-8

“As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.” Galatians 6:12-13

You can also read Paul’s final letters to Timothy and Titus just prior to his death that also address the opposition he and they faced in preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Resurrection Challenges

One of the primary issues Paul had to address concerned the 'resurrection' of Jesus Christ. You might think that strange since the Lord's death and resurrection are central to the Gospel, but it was a problem for Paul from the early days of his ministry to Gentiles. Here are some examples:

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter.” So Paul departed from among them.” Acts 17:30-33

“Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.’ ” Acts 24:20-21

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.” 1 Corinthians 15:12-14

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord

Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

“And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 2 Timothy 2:17-19

While the Gentiles often struggled with the idea of a physical resurrection from the dead, many Jews of the 1st century AD believed in a physical resurrection at the end of the age. The Pharisees believed in a 'bodily resurrection,' but the Sadducees did not. There is some debate about what the Essenes believed. Some say they believed that the soul was immortal and 'released' from the body at death. That's probably why we don't find the Jewish apostles writing letters addressing challenges to a physical resurrection. The Jews they wrote to readily accepted bodily resurrection as true based both on their beliefs as Jews plus their belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Churches in the first few centuries seemed to agree with Paul's assessment about resurrection. However, that doesn't mean the issue didn't raise its head from time to time through the history of the Church.

That brings us to modern Christianity and what people believe today. While a majority of Christians across the world say they believe Jesus rose from the dead, there are many 'Christians' who disagree:

"A quarter of people who describe themselves as Christians in Great Britain do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, a survey commissioned by the BBC suggests." [Resurrection did not happen, say quarter of Christians, BBC](#)

How about 'Christians' in the United States?

"Most Americans believe Jesus rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday. They're just not sure it matters much. Two-thirds of U.S. adults (66%) say the biblical accounts of the physical resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. They believe this event actually occurred, according to the 2022 State of Theology study. Fewer than a quarter (23%) disagree, and 11% say they're not sure. Some of the denominations that don't believe in resurrection include

liberal and progressive ‘Christianity.’ Some view resurrection from the dead as being allegorical, symbolic, or a metaphor for ‘new life. Age also plays a role in this belief as research shows that belief in the resurrection is lowest among people from their late teens to mid-30s. Also, people who do not attend church regularly are also more likely to doubt that Jesus rose from the dead and that anyone else will as well. The percentage that affirms the bodily resurrection of Jesus as described in the Bible is unchanged since 2018 and within two percentage points of where it has been since the first State of Theology in 2014. Jesus’ Easter resurrection is more accepted in the Midwest (70%) and South (70%). But majorities in both the West (62%) and Northeast (60%) also affirm it. Younger Americans are the least likely age group to say they believe in a historical resurrection. Still, 58% of those 18-34 accept it as fact. Self-identified evangelicals (90%) and Black Protestants (89%) are more likely to affirm Jesus’ resurrection than Catholics (79%) and mainline Protestants (74%). Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without such beliefs to accept

the resurrection (98% v. 58%). Nine in 10 Americans who attend a religious service at least monthly (90%) say they believe the biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection. One of the few demographics in which a majority don't believe is those who attend religious services less frequently. Less than half of those who attend less than monthly (48%) affirm the belief." [Lifeway Research](#)

If Jesus Christ didn't rise from the dead, He's still dead. That means He can't give anyone 'eternal life' because He has no life in Himself. It also means that He didn't ascend to Heaven and won't be able to 'return' from Heaven to establish an earthly Kingdom – even though Jesus and His angels said He would. To not believe in Christ's resurrection means that Paul's preaching was 'empty' and our 'faith is also empty.' If there is no resurrection from the dead, then we should change the way we live. As Paul wrote:

"If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" 1 Corinthians 15:32

That was my attitude as an atheist years ago. Live for today because there is nothing after death. Fortunately, I know better now because I believe the Word of God is true. There is a great life waiting for us after death. Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly' (John 10:10). It should be obvious to anyone who reads the New Testament carefully that people who say they are Christians but deny Jesus' resurrection couldn't be saved. How could they? Their 'faith' is in 'vain.'

Response to War?

In case you're wondering what any of this has to do with the current war in the Middle East, here's my thought. Christians struggle to find agreement on so many areas of theology – areas that seem so clear to me as a former atheist who believes in 'rightly dividing' the Word of Truth. If Christians can't agree on the clearest truths in Scripture, do you think they'll agree on something like a war between Israel and Iran? If they can't agree about whether Jesus rose from the dead, do you think they'll agree about when He will return from Heaven to defeat the armies of the world, judge the nations, and establish His earthly Kingdom? If Christians are led astray by tens of thousands of false preachers and teachers in churches and denominations across the world, do you think they'll end up getting anything right about what's really happening in the natural and supernatural realms? I don't think so.

Until Christians can figure out how to study the Bible correctly, they will get a lot of other things wrong – important things like a proper response to war in the Middle East.

Next Time

In the next part of this series I'll look at other important areas where Christians did exactly what the Apostle Paul prophesied about their being 'drawn away' by false teachers and doctrines of demons. And, we'll see how it impacts the war between Iran and Israel.

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