

MESSIANIC MINUTES

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Purim</i> | 1-2 |
| <i>How Do We Know?</i> | 1-3 |
| <i>Who Really Killed Jesus?</i> | 3-4 |

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PURIM — THE (REAL JEWISH) TIME TO GIVE GIFTS

by Rabbi Ted Simon

Well, just after we finished our family celebration of Christmas and Hanukkah this year, we had an **epiphany!** It may have been sparked by my son-in-law's scriptural insight that there's very good evidence that Yeshua wasn't really born on December 25 (see Jeffrey D's article in the December issue of the *Messianic Minutes* Newsletter).

The revelation may have come as a result of spending a larger percentage of our time buying and opening gifts rather than studying the Scriptures about the birth, circumcision and dedication of Yeshua and the purification in the Temple in



Dressing up as characters from the Book of Esther is a traditional part of a Purim celebration

Jerusalem of Miriam (Mary) His mother.

It may have come because Jenna and I had spent the days right before Christmas and Hanukkah in Kansas City: there we saw young

people passionately pursuing Adonai in twenty-four/seven worship and prayer. In Kansas City we also met with Melody Green, the founder of Last Days Ministries. One of the

(Continued on page 2)

HOW DO WE KNOW?

by Jeffrey D. Miller

Do you remember that song, “The Bible Tells Me So?” The chorus says, “How do I know? The Bible tells me so.”

For many Jewish people, that line simply doesn't

work. That's because many don't read the Bible, nor do they believe it is the Word of God. Therefore, using the simplicity that if the Bible says it, it must be true, bears absolutely no fruit. Interestingly enough, I remember singing that old song when I was a kid because it was being played on the radio (weren't they

the good old days!). **But I had never even opened a Bible** and didn't really care what was in it.

It wasn't too long ago one of my Jewish relatives asked me a great question, “How can you be so sure you are right about your faith?”

(Continued on page 3)

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Messianic Minutes
P.O. Box 4006
Frederick, MD
21705

*“How better
to rejoice than
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PURIM

(Continued from page 1)

teachings of that ministry, which we followed right after we first became Believers, was to take most of the money we were going to spend on presents and buy presents, only not for ourselves, but for those in need!

How it came about: we're not sure just how; we sense a true leading of the *Ruach haKodesh*, the Holy Spirit of God. We have decided to not do a big deal gift exchanging in December.

But the Bible teaches us to put off the old and to put on the new. Put off – and put on. If we put off the materialism and self-indulgence of Christmas time, what are we to put on? The Bible has an answer – in a most unusual place! The book of Esther.

Now you all know the story of Esther the Jewish Queen of Persia. She hides her identity and perhaps harbors a secret hope that while a dastardly fate may await others, she'll be safe because of her exalted position. She might have had those thoughts for a moment – just as the 20th Century Church might have believed that the threat of radical Islam is only against Israel and the Jewish people. The Church might have believed that she was immune until 9-11 just as Esther might have believed she was safe until Mordechai sent her a message. Mordechai, speaking prophetically, told her that Salvation would

come to the Jewish people, and Esther can be part of His plan or part of the problem. The Church can stand with Israel and the Jewish people and work and pray for their survival, or it can pretend that it is safe because of its exalted position!

Esther chose to listen to the prophetic word! Esther with courage and dignity chose to fast and to pray and then to risk her life on behalf of the people of God.

The Story of Esther, the story of Purim, ends with a swift and dramatic reversal of events. Jewish people go from a position of certain annihilation to a place of elevation and celebration. The Bible records (chapter 9, verse 5): “Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies ...and did what they pleased with those who hated them.”

“Then the Jewish people celebrated with a day of gladness and feasting as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another...as the month that was turned from sorrow to joy for them and from mourning to holiday. That they should make days of feasting and joy, **of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor**” (Esther 9 verses 19-22).

What a concept! What provision. Our Father, Abba in heaven, knows of our human need to celebrate. **And He provides a special time of remembrance to celebrate and He provides a special way to celebrate.** We celebrate remembering His goodness and His Salvation.

After all, at the time of Purim not only were the Jewish people rescued, but also many gentiles became followers of the God of Israel (chapter 8 verse 17). What a time to rejoice!

All these events were recorded and “established as a yearly celebration!” (verse 21).

And how better to rejoice than to give gifts to one another **and to give to the poor?**

So this year at Purim, a Biblical holiday described in the book of Esther, we will follow the customs of the Jewish people – a custom that has been a source of faith and gladness for over 2400 years. We will celebrate Adonai's goodness and His steadfast Love – His *Chesed* and His *Rachamim*. We will participate in an annual remembrance that increases our faith and does good works in our communities.

Purim is a time to grab a better understanding of what James meant when he wrote: “see faith working together with works, and by works seeing our faith made more perfect.” James, a Jewish man in Jerusalem, grew up with Purim, and he knew that while celebrating is a godly activity, true celebration requires faith and loving others. It reminds us a little of Messiah's birth: a celebration when the Word became flesh. A celebration of Abba's gift to all people – so that none would perish, but all would come to everlasting life.

How?

(Continued from page 1)

I honestly don't remember exactly how I answered, but I probably talked about knowing that you know... that sense of truth that transcends logical thinking.

Yet that scripture (Romans 10:17) "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" stands tall. And here's where the relationship between the Old and New Testaments becomes very important in reaching Jewish people.

While most Jews don't read the Bible, they do know the basics of the Feasts declared by God in the Torah, the Books of Moses. And they certainly are usually familiar with the traditional celebrations that accompany them. This is particularly true of **Passover**.

Every child who was raised even nominally Jewish knows the fundamentals of this springtime holiday.

They know about the bondage and slavery of the Children of Israel in ancient Egypt and how the blood of the lamb was put on the door so the plague of death would pass over them. They know about the parting of the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross over from the land of their bondage to their freedom.

They also know about the Passover Seder, a Jewish tradition based on several verses from the Book of Exodus. While Seders can vary greatly in their length and content, they all have *Matzah* or unleavened bread, and they all feature four drinks from a cup of wine or grape juice.

Well, when we compare the Passover Story with the

sacrifice of Jesus we see some amazing truths. Jesus is the Passover lamb! He shed his blood for the atonement of our souls (Leviticus 17:11). When we spiritually apply His blood by faith, just as the Israelites physically applied the blood of the lamb on their doorposts thousands of years ago, the plague of death (Hell) passes over us. The Israelites were set free from their bondage when they applied the blood; we are set free from the bondage of sin and death when we apply His blood.

Now take the Seder. **The matzah is unleavened.** Leavening represents sin. Jesus had no sin in Him and in fact was conducting a Passover Seder when He took a piece of matzah, unleavened bread, declaring, "*This is my body . . .*" (Luke 22:19).

He also took the cup after supper saying, "*This cup is*

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the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20). We can see both from the Old to the New Testament and from the New to the Old, how the Bible relates **Jesus as the fulfillment of Passover**. So we can show Jewish people, even those who don't really know the Bible, right in their Feast and in their customs, Jesus is the one!

And we can be sure because the Bible tells us so.

Who?

(Continued from page 4)

The sacrificial system was flawed: the blood of bulls and goats was only good for the shortest of intervals and didn't deal with the underlying problem of death - Sin.

Yeshua came to earth as the sinless Lamb of God. He came to remove Sin, for it was for this purpose that the Son of God was manifest - to destroy the works of the evil one!

Who killed Jesus? It is a lot more complex a question

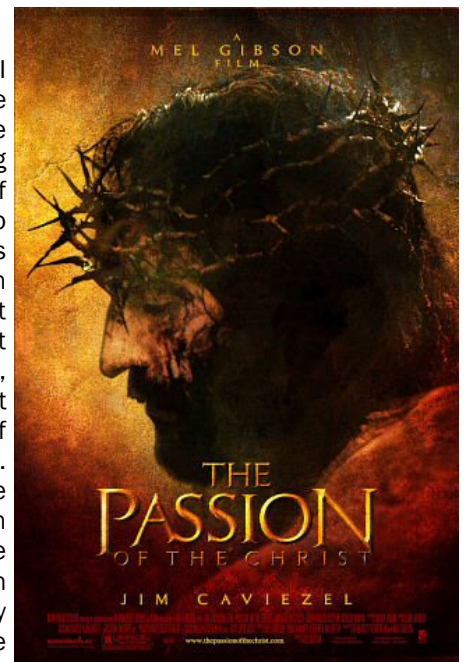
than it initially appears to be, or how it is often preached.

The question: *who killed Jesus?*

The answer to the question: Who killed Yeshua is really **everyone** and **no one**.

Yeshua in humility laid down His life because all of us had sinned and had fallen short of the Glory of God. He came into this world with a purpose and He set His face like flint to fulfill His message of Love - even if His message of Love meant His own brutal

death. While I'm not a *macher* I do have executive privileges. Those privileges include being able to read the Word of God and being able to appropriate Yeshua's death and resurrection as part of my covenant inheritance. You might not be a *macher* either, but its Abba's Will that no one perish, but all of us come to eternal life. You have executive privileges, too. You can choose Life. He chose death, but we can choose life. And Life only comes by Faith in the One who gave His Life so that we might have Life and Life abundantly.



Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is now playing at theaters across the country.

Messianic Minutes

P. O. Box 4006
Frederick, MD 21705

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Messianic Minutes is a five minute daily radio program (with seasonal half-hour specials) aimed at bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people through Bible believing Christian listeners. The good news is that the Kingdom is available to you now! The program is hosted by Jeffrey D. Miller and Rabbi Ted Simon, two Jewish men who love Yeshua (Jesus), the Jewish Messiah.

Rabbi Simon and Mr. Miller also travel to various congregations all over the country in order to teach the church about its Jewish roots. They speak on a variety of subjects concerning Israel, the Church, and these last days, offering a Jewish perspective many Christians may have never experienced in the past.



WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS?

by Rabbi Ted Simon

I haven't seen the movie yet. I'm not a *macher* (big shot) – that would get invited to pre-opening galas and screenings. But I have read a lot about *The Passion of the Christ*. And it boils down to one question. It is a question charged with emotional voltage and fueled by 1800 years of anti-Semitic rhetoric. It's the question that underlies pogroms, inquisitions and holocausts. It's the question that poisons relationships and is the venom of mean spirited sermons.

The question has been asked rhetorically by priests and business leaders, by kings and politicians. The answer they led the masses to was

always “the Jews.”

The Question: Who killed Christ?

But is that horrible question always followed by a slam-dunk answer? I haven't seen the movie, yet – but I do hope that it shows that the answer to the question, “Who killed Jesus?” **is not** the Jews. The answer to the question, “Who killed Jesus?” is really we did! Or if you prefer naked honesty the answer is you did, and I did.

See Jesus could have called ten thousand angels, and he would have instantaneously been rescued. He himself said, “My Father loves Me, because I lay my life down, and I have power to take it

up again. **No one takes it from Me**, but I lay it down Myself. I have Power to lay it down and to take it up again. This command I have received from My Father.” (John 10:16-18)

Jesus knew that God is Love. And Jesus let us know, “Greater love has no one other than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends” (John 15:13). See, we are His friends. The Son of Man didn't come to be served – Yeshua came to serve us. And to serve us in the best possible way. How? By giving us everything we want? No. By answering all of our prayers immediately? No.

Yeshua came to serve us in a way that would have eternal positive results –

fruit that would last. Yeshua came “to give His life as a ransom for many.”

It was our sins that caused His death. The Jewish Prophet Isaiah wrote: “He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.” It was our sins that nailed Yeshua to the cross as certain as it was the hammers in the hands of those young Roman soldiers.

Yeshua knew that the Torah truths are eternal. That there could be no remission of Sin without the shedding of blood. He knew that it was “the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).

(Continued on page 3)