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All Families of the Earth

By Pastor Victor Atallah



Sudan civil war refugees

T.S. of Khartoum, Sudan, wrote: “Islam is the only monotheistic religion which is open for all human races.” He wrongly concluded that the Bible teaches that only the descendants of Jacob’s (Israel) 12 sons are God’s people. He claimed that God “appointed Mohamad as the true descendant of Abraham, in order to spread the true religion throughout the world.” Then, he said “Christianity is a corrupted form of God’s true religion... It is suitable only for white people.” Like other Muslims, most Jews and many “Christians,” he needs to understand the true teaching of the whole Bible about what makes sinners into the “people of God.”

After the flood, the Lord’s plan to preserve the human

race was made clear, despite the fact that “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:22). So, the Lord intervened at the Tower of Babel to save humanity from self-destruction.

Later Abram the Hebrew was called to receive promises of blessing – including “a land” and “a great nation.” He was assured of guidance and protection throughout his calling. He was then given a universal mission -- “in you all families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3). For this reason, his name, “Abram”, meaning “father of a single nation” was changed to “Abraham”, which means “father of a multitude of nations.”

Later, he was told that the

promises, including the nation and land, were to be fulfilled many generations beyond his own life time. The Lord said to him: “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners (or strangers) in a land that is not theirs, and they will be servants (or slaves) there and they will be afflicted for four hundred years...” (Gen15:13). Later he learned that the objective of his calling would continue through his descendants – “and in your offspring (seed) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:18)

Actually, that single offspring or seed had already been promised long before to come defeat Satan. This was after humanity fell in

sin and lost its intimate relationship with the gracious Creator. He was to be “seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15). Isaiah specifically prophesized the coming of this seed as the divine “Immanuel” (God with us). He was to be miraculously born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; 9: 6-7).

In the New Testament Jesus, named by the angel “Immanuel,” was born to a virgin. Forty-two generations from Abraham, Mary and her fiancé, Joseph descended from the line of his great grandson, Judah and the royal line of King David (Matthew 1:1-17).

Writing to Gentile believers in Galatia, the apostle Paul emphatically pointed out that Christ is the prom-

ised single offspring or seed of Abraham who brings the promised blessing to all nations. He boldly asserted that all who belong to Christ, regardless of their ethnic background, are not only God's true children but also Abraham's offspring and heirs of all promised to him (Galatians 3:15-29). Paul further calls them the "New Creation." As the "Israel of God," they are receivers of God's "peace and mercy" (Galatians 6:14-16).

The apostle Peter also named as God's people the dispersed and persecuted Christians of both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. He did so as he applied key Old Testament terms distinctively used for Old Testament believers: "...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy"

(1Peter 2:9-10). John's gospel tells us that most Israelites rejected Jesus. Many persecuted the apostles and other believers. Yet, many more are blessed by trusting Christ, regardless of their ethnic background. We read: "11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13).

These important truths protect Christians exposed to different unhealthy views. Speculative interpretations of prophecy, by some popular writers and preachers, confuse simple believers, depriving them of assurance of their value in Christ as part of the one "people of God," one "new creation," one "Israel of God," gathered from "all families of the earth" and "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." They are all richly blessed "in Christ by every spiritual blessing in the heavenly



Gaza

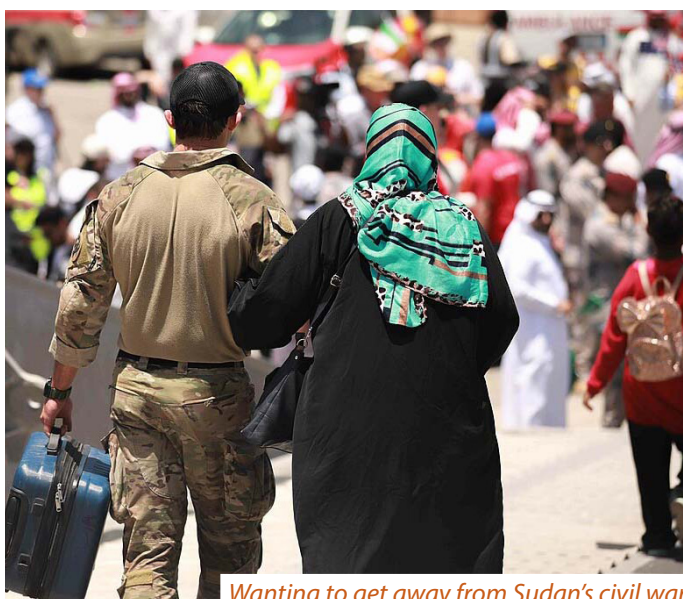
place." (Ephesians 1:3-14)

The simple, straightforward truth about the completeness and sufficiency of Christ and his work liberate Christians from error. This is also vitally helpful to Christian workers seeking to bring a clear and wholesome gospel message to Muslims, Jews and others.

M.M. of Iran, wanted to understand what is meant by believing in a "catholic church." Realizing that it means belonging to the "universal body" of Christ,

he joyously announced "I belong to the King of heaven and earth, I am a citizen the universal Kingdom of Christ. I am one with all who belong to Christ."

These are special days of devastating and divisive wars, hatred, ethnic and religious tensions and pervasive disquiet, even among Christians. Christ alone is the "Prince of Peace." He provides all nations of the world, with a powerful gospel message of truth, justice, peace and self-giving love.



Wanting to get away from Sudan's civil war

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