



**STORNOWAY**  
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO  
THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS  
(1 TIMOTHY 1:15)

## May 2024 Newsletter



### WELCOME

### LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

### PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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## WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

I began last month by noting the remarkable and relentless demonisation of Israel by the Western media outlets and, indeed, by the UN.

On this matter, and as further evidence of UN bias, the UN Secretary-General somehow managed to blame the October 7 Hamas attack, involving the most barbaric mutilation and torture, on Israel's behaviour. Further, most people are probably unaware that UN has still not condemned those horrific atrocities, even though it was swift to condemn the terror attack at the Russian concert hall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March. Neither has it condemned the use by Hamas of hospitals in Gaza as bases for terrorist operations. Although hundreds of terrorists were arrested or killed in the Shifa hospital, where they were firing on Israeli troops from an emergency room and a burns unit, there has been no acknowledgement of such acts as the war crimes they are.

To challenge the Palestinian narrative, which has gained such traction in the West (disseminated from the academy and through the media) I am examining just a few of the many myths surrounding Israel and the Palestinians. Last time, we considered the claim that Israel has always resisted a two-state solution, a solution supposedly desired by the Palestinians. This month, we will consider another two myths, the first of which is the claim that the Jews are committing genocide against the Palestinians. Again, as with the previous claim that the Palestinians have always wanted a two-state solution, nothing could be further from the truth.

As distinct from killing a significant amount of people in a just war, 'genocide' involves the willful destruction of an ethnic group, a group bound together by birth (from 'genos' meaning 'race' and 'gene' meaning birth). The tragic irony here is that this is precisely what Israel's enemies are trying to achieve in connection with the Jews (as an ethnic people) and is what explains their implacable hostility to Israel (as the only Jewish state on earth).

Making full allowance for misinformation and ignorance – too much of which is willful ignorance – the fact remains that applying the charge of genocide to those who are living in constant fear of it, while excusing those who are guilty of pursuing it requires more than a twisted logic: it requires the special kind of blinkered vision borne out of prejudice or hatred.

The Jews have expressed no desire whatsoever to wipe any people group off the face of the earth or even off Israeli land – despite the fact that they have either feared or endured attempted genocide at the hands of others frequently throughout their history (it should be remembered that the holocaust was unique only in magnitude, not in kind). As evidence of the lack of Israel's genocidal intent, the Palestinian population, next door to Israel and supposedly enduring genocide, has increased fourfold since 1948, doubling from 1990 – 2008. Perhaps we could all agree that if Israel is trying to commit genocide, she is extraordinarily inept at carrying it out?

As further evidence of this, I referred earlier to Israel's professional approach to conflict, down through the years, which demonstrates an army going to quite unique lengths to limit civilian casualties. Even in this conflict – throughout which Hamas has issued inflated and grossly misleading casualty figures, the accuracy of which, thankfully, virtually everyone without an axe to grind is now doubting – Richard Kemp, a former British army commander, has estimated a ratio of 1.5 civilian deaths for every combatant death. No other army comes anywhere close to achieving such a ratio in operations of this kind, and that includes British and American armies. Again, if Israel were bent on genocide, could she not be more effective than that?

The third myth is that the Israeli state is an apartheid state. Suffice to say that those who make this charge must have a peculiar definition of what constitutes apartheid. They certainly cannot be aware of what apartheid looked like in the American South or, particularly, in South Africa. To be clear, apartheid expressly involves segregation and systematic persecution based on race. Black South Africans, for example, were denied citizenship, voting rights, and were forbidden to live in certain areas. They were segregated in schools, churches, restaurants, washing facilities and many other places as well. Black people resident in America up until the 1960's would easily recognize these things. So, if apartheid is practiced in Israel, surely we should expect to find a comparable situation? Far from it. Consider the following:

Around 20% of Israel's population consists of Arabs who are mainly Muslims. These Arab Israelis are not merely tolerated in Israel, existing in impoverished Arab ghettos: Rather, they are full Israeli citizens and are, in the main, well off and enjoy living and working in Israel where they have better living conditions, better insurance, and pensions. In the state of Israel, Jewish and Arab babies are born in the same hospitals and they and their mothers share the same facilities as well as the same doctors and midwives. Israeli Arabs eat in the same restaurants as Israeli Jews, shop in the same shops and travel in the same buses and taxis. Indeed, these Israeli Arabs are represented at every level of society – including government. You will find Arab judges in the Israeli supreme court, in the Israeli parliament and the Israeli cabinet. Some apartheid! (By the way, see if you can find any Jews in the executives and judiciaries of Muslim states).

Only a few years ago, polling amongst Palestinians revealed that 80% of them admired Israel's democracy and the rights enjoyed by their fellow Arabs living and working in Israel. At the same time, these Palestinians despised their own authoritarian government – so much so, that prior to this most recent conflict, a growing number of Arabs were applying for Israeli citizenship and, astonishingly, over 50% of Palestinians said that if their land were to become part of Israel, they would not consider relocating.

But is that any wonder? The Palestinian Authority has a long record of corruption, with government officials lining their own pockets while allowing their people to live in poverty. The Palestinian Authority has received billions upon billions of dollars in International Aid, mainly from the West, but this aid never seems to find its way towards permanently housing the refugees (who are kept how they are purely for the 'optics') or improving their standard of living, and while their population increases rapidly as their infrastructure decays, government officials have always seemed to do very well indeed – witness Arafat's enormous personal wealth, for example – as do the terrorists, who are well able to afford the endless stream of rockets which they have been firing daily over many years now into Israel (why, over the last twenty years, hasn't the BBC camped where these rockets are targeted every night?) and the development of a highly elaborate and expensive tunnel network for military purposes.

Coupled with the unfounded charge of apartheid is a similar charge, that Israel is a Jewish state and, therefore, bigoted and sectarian. But what does this charge really mean? Israel is, indeed, a Jewish state – but only in the sense in which America is a Christian state and not at all to the extent that the UK is a Christian state (no Jewish leader would be required to take an oath like the overtly Protestant oath which King Charles was – rightfully – required to take on his coronation as British Head of State). And, crucially, it is certainly not a Jewish state in the sense in which Arab states are Muslim states: In other words, unlike the twenty (or so) Arab states which are officially Muslim states, Israel has no official state religion and although she has a proud Jewish heritage, history, and identity, it is perfectly possible to live there and practice another religion while retaining full rights.

So, no, Israel does not practice 'bigotry' or 'sectarianism.' As a self-determining nation, and in common with every other self-determining nation, she is choosing to have her own social and religious identity. However, Muslim states, as distinct from Arab states, unashamedly reduce the status of Jews: For example, Israel's border country, Jordan, denies Jews rights to property ownership or full citizenship while several Muslim states refuse entry to any Israeli citizen, even if they are Israeli Arabs. So, who are the sectarians?

But this kind of thinking has a long pedigree among Arab Muslims: Mohammed himself cleared Arabia of Jews and, since 1948, although many Jews have returned to Israel freely, it is worth noting that many of them had little choice but to do so. Thousands upon thousands of Arab Jews were made to feel unwelcome in the Arab nations in which they were born and raised, and were, effectively, hounded out of them. Another mysteriously under-reported fact is that Jewish populations have more or less disappeared in Arab countries.

As I said at the outset, there are many more myths and, unfortunately, space constricts me – but I want to conclude with a few thoughts.

Hamas foments war because it desperately needs to keep the hostility against Israel alive. That need, itself, reflects two truths worthy of consideration: a growing ambivalence over recent years in much of the Arab world in connection with the Palestinian people themselves, and a growing recognition, in the same Arab world and beyond, that Israel only wants a peaceful co-existence and has much to contribute to the Arab world if only they would allow her to do so.

Take the ambivalence first: Many Arabs view the Palestinians as Syrian Arabs (which is what they are) and are increasingly impatient with their posturing. Indeed, few Arab states are willing to help them and on the few occasions when Palestinians are received into Arab countries, it is often with limited access to health and educational facilities. All in all, there has been surprisingly little by way of practical aid for Palestinians from Arab countries in past years.

As for the recognition that Israel is here to stay and that she is essentially peaceful and may, indeed, have an enormous benefit to bring others even within the Arab world, this found recent welcome expression in 2020 with the signing of the historic Abraham Accords. These Accords normalised relations between Israel, on the one hand, and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on the other, along with a genuine hope – based on hard evidence – that Sudan, Morocco, Niger, Indonesia (and, possibly, even Saudi Arabia) might follow.

These Accords point to the real motivation behind the horrific attack on Israel on October 7th (besides the pathological hatred harboured by the perpetrators for the Jewish people as expressed in the mutilation and torture as opposed to mere killing) which is the fear, on the part of Hamas, that Israel's national existence could be legitimized across the Arab world. This would mean, of course, that the presence of Jews as full citizens of a Jewish state on 'Palestinian' soil would finally be accepted – which is, of course, utterly anathema to those who cannot tolerate Jews living on the land never mind having full citizenship in a Jewish nation. These Accords proceed on a recognition of Israel's right to exist.

When it comes to the many gullible and biased journalists working in the Western media, steeped in the pro-Palestinian narrative since their university days, Israel's very openness militates against her: While journalists are free to go where they wish in Israel, and report accordingly, they are told where to go in Palestine and only see what they are permitted to see. The naivety of the West is quite extraordinary, and it is a naivety that extends way beyond the media. Who can forget the LGBTQ+ or 'Gays for Palestine' spewing hatred and bile against Israel knowing that while Tel Aviv openly welcomes them (since it is one of the 'gay capitals' of the world) they could well be thrown off a roof with impunity in Palestine. The Palestinians, while deeply despising the so-called 'LGBTQ+ Community,' view them as 'useful idiots' when it comes to promoting their cause in the West, although that community seems blind to the fact that they are seen as much more idiotic than useful.

All the above only reinforces the old pithy saying, 'if the Palestinians would drop their weapons, the war would soon be history; if Israel would drop her weapons, the Jews would soon be history.' That is the fundamental truth at the root of this conflict and while war may throw up horrors on all sides, as it always does, there is no doubt where the blame lies: it lies fully with the one side who wish for, and work for, the total annihilation of the other. And until that is resolved, nothing else can be

resolved: 'My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war' (Psalm 120: 6-7).

*'Has God cast away his people? Certainly not! ... I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. And so, all Israel will be saved: as it is written: "the Deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of their fathers: for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.'* (Romans 11: 1, 25-29)

Down through the years, Scotland provided a relatively safe sanctuary for Jewish people due to her Christianity being permeated, both in creed and practice, by the historic and biblical belief that the Lord has a particular purpose for this ancient people. Our historic Reformed and Presbyterian theology meant that Scottish Presbyterian Christians believed themselves bound to love this people and, therefore, to treat them with respect and with kindness. This remains our creed and let it remain our practice.

Therefore, although we are not Jews as Paul (Saul) was, we thoroughly identify both with the pain in his heart and with his prayer arising from it, 'I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ... my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved' (Romans 9:2-3; 10:1)

Your minister

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### GAMBIA—BRIKAMA BUILDING

Recently, Brikama RP Church held their first service in a temporary building constructed on church land. The land is located just off the main highway and is very visible within the community. Up until now, the congregation had been meeting in a family compound, belonging to a member of the congregation.

As you can see from the photos, the building work has a way to go, but it had reached a sufficient stage to enable the congregation to hold worship within the building. There is sufficient land behind the building, to construct a permanent building, if and when the funds become available. Please remember the congregation, who now have a very visible presence in the community, as they seek to reach out with the Gospel and the reformed faith.



*Brikama RP Church*



### THE GAMBIA PARTNERSHIP

In addition to the RP Mission in Gambia, please remember the work of the Gambia Partnership. The work is separate to the RP Mission, although there is some crossover in that the Gambia Partnership have provided financial support to the RP Mission.

The Gambia Partnership seeks to support Gospel work in Gambia in a variety of ways, including Church support, Christian School support, engaging in outreach, providing resources, funding village development works and funding Christians with small business startup grants.



*Gospel Outreach*



*Village Development Borehole*



*Pastors Fellowship*



*Bakery—Small Business Startup*

## THE ARROW DRIVEN DEEPER

Finding it impossible on account of the number, to have much conversation with each individual at the inquiry meeting; I at one time abandoned the practice of conversation for a few weeks, and addressed them all together. I found this was unacceptable, and concluded therefore to return to the former custom.—It was on one of those evenings, when about seventy persons were present, and I was passing rapidly from one to another, that I came to an individual who had never been there before. Said I: “What is the state of your feelings on the subject of your salvation?” “I feel,” said he, “that I have a very wicked heart.” “It is a great deal more wicked, than you think it,” said I; and immediately left him, and addressed myself to the next person.

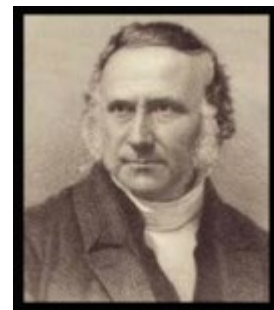
I thought no more of it, till a few days afterwards, when he came to me with a new song in his mouth. He had found peace with God, as he thought, through faith in Jesus Christ. Said he: I want to tell you how much good you did me. When I told you, that I had a very wicked “heart, and you answered, that it was a great deal more wicked than I thought, and then said nothing more to me; I thought it a most cruel thing. I expected something different. I thought you would say more; and my soul was wonderfully cast down. I did not believe you. I was angry at your treatment. I thought you did not care, whether I was ever saved or not; and I did not believe you knew anything about my feelings. But the words rung in my ears,—‘a great deal more wicked than you think.’ I could not get rid of them. They were in my mind the last thing when I went to sleep, and the first when I woke. And then I would be vexed at you, for not saying something else. But that was the thing, which drove me to Christ. I now know, it was just what I needed. I thought, when I went to that meeting, my convictions were very deep. But I have found out they were very slight. You hit my case exactly. If you had talked to me, my burden would have been diminished. But you fastened one idea on my mind. You drove the arrow deeper, when I expected you to do just the contrary; and I could find no relief, till I gave up all into the hands of Christ. I know you read my heart exactly.”

After some few minutes conversation with him, he said to me:—“I want to ask you a question. I have been thinking of it a great deal, and I cannot conceive how you know what to say to each one, where there are so many. We have been talking about it some of us, and we cannot understand how it is, that you can know our thoughts and feelings, when nobody has told you. How can you tell what to say to one after another, when there are so many, and you have never seen some of them before, and they say so little to you?”

“I have only one rule on that subject,” said I. “I aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit. If I perceive anyone truth has impressed the mind, I aim to make its impression deeper; because the Holy Spirit has already made that impression, and I would not diminish it by leading the mind off to something else. If I perceive any error in the individual’s mind, I aim to remove it; for I know that the error is of sin, and not of the Holy Spirit.” “But,” said he, “our impressions are so different.”

“No matter. They are of the Holy Spirit if truth has made them; and he can choose the kind of truth which is appropriate to any sinner, better than I can. I just aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit.”

Said he, “I am confident if you had said much to me, or anything, to turn my mind away from that one thing, it would have done me hurt. You have no idea how much you increased my trouble that night. I somehow wanted you to lighten my burden,—you made it heavier. Then I was soon led to see, that none but God could help me. I had partly begun to think my heart was improving. I found out the contrary, and turned to God in despair. He gave me peace, through Jesus Christ.”



**Rev Ichabod Spencer, A Pastors Sketches, Volume One**

**GOD**  
**DEMONSTRATES**  
HIS OWN **LOVE** TOWARD US,  
in that  
while we were *still* sinners,  
**CHRIST**  
**DIED FOR US**  
ROMANS 5:8

“

**THE GOSPEL DOES NOT  
CALL US TO RECEIVE**

**CHRIST**

**AS AN ADDITION TO OUR  
LIFE, BUT AS OUR LIFE.”**

PAUL WASHER