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# Messianic Perspectives

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

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By Dr. Tim M. Sigler

A gospel that obscures the story of Israel will soon obscure the story of Jesus. It's a claim that may sound outrageous to some believers in Jesus, but let's examine it through Paul's teachings in Romans 9—11. After all, Jesus' messianic qualifications include the fact that He was born a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, the Son of David, in

Bethlehem, and was called the King of the Jews. He came, not to Tokyo, New York, London, or Paris, but to Jerusalem—where He died, was buried, and rose again.

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## FIRST IN A THREE-PART SERIES

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In Matthew 24—26, He promised His disciples that He would return to the Mount

of Olives in Jerusalem to set up His messianic kingdom. When He returns, He will sit upon the throne of His father, David. After the end-time judgments, He will create the new heavens and the new earth, and will cause the New Jerusalem to come down from Heaven. And from this New Jerusalem, He will rule the earth. On this, Scripture is clear. Yet, many believers are unaware or unaffected by the fact that they believe in a Jewish Messiah, who came from—and is returning to—the people and land of Israel.

Yes, many are aware of the historical facts of Jesus' origins. But to many believers this is all a story of the past, and that is where it stops. They happily read verses like John 1:11-12 as if the final word on the Jews is that God has used them for His purpose but is now done with them. *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."* (John 1:11-12). God's salvation came through the Jews. Israel rejected her Messiah. Salvation has spread to the Gentiles. End of story.

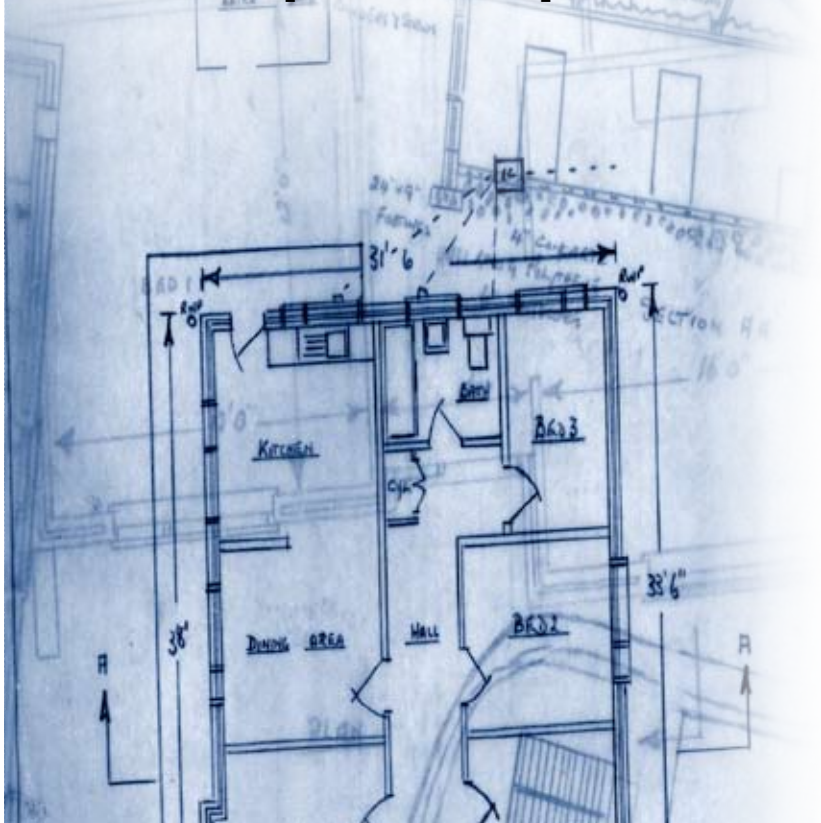
Well, not so fast! Upon closer examination of God's redemptive plan, there is not only a past for the people of Israel but a future as well. But why should this matter to a group of Jesus-believing Gentiles? Let me propose several ways this impacts your faith:

- **You are a part of something big**—God's redemptive plan.
- **You are a part of something bigger than yourself**—understanding how you relate to God's redemptive plan helps give proper perspective and avoids an egocentric "me-ism."

# GOD HAS A PLAN

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## The Ongoing Place of Israel in God's Redemptive Plan [Romans 9-11]



- **You are not the plan**—but you are part of the plan. To be clear, Israel is not the plan either. But since it is often left out in the way that many Christians explain the plan, we will examine its unique and ongoing place in God's redemptive plan.
- **You can worship God with greater appreciation of His plan**—a plan that began before He created the world, and would include Jews, Gentiles, and a Messiah who would bring salvation to all who trust in Him.

Romans 9—11 is the clearest, most intentional, and complete treatment of God’s redemptive plan available to us in Scripture. For that reason, we will examine each chapter verse by verse in this three-part series. Romans 9 speaks of Israel’s **past election**. There, we will learn that this is part of *God’s plan*. Romans 10 tells of Israel’s **present rejection** and assures us that such is consistent with *Jewish history*. Romans 11 explains the nature of Israel’s **future reception** and encourages us that their rejection is only *temporary*. We will see that God is far from being finished with Israel. He has a plan to bring His salvation full circle—from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth, and back to Israel again.

But before we consider Israel’s ongoing place in God’s redemptive plan, let us consider the redemptive plan itself. Using the chart on page 4, I would like to take you on a fast tour of redemptive history and prophecy. What does the Bible say about God’s plan for humanity? To what end

Romans 2, Paul zooms in on his ultimate target—even religious people, who know God’s law and fail to obey it, are condemned. In fact, even the advantage of being Jewish (see Romans 3:1-2), does not provide a person with a righteous standing before a holy God. Quoting Psalm 14:1-3, Paul reminds his readers, “. . . *There is none righteous, no, not one;*” (Rom. 3:10).

Thankfully, Paul does not leave us with only bad news. In Chapters 4 and 5, the issue is **justification**—an accounting term. A number of accounting terms are used in these chapters to demonstrate that we are all in the negative column when it comes to adding up our non-existent righteousness before God. You justify your checkbook or the numbers in an accounting ledger. Similarly, our sins count against us until God brings a solution to our condemnation, erases our sin, and puts the righteousness of Messiah in our positive column. Only then are we declared righteous—we are justified. This represents a legal change in God’s record books. It is the so-

# THE ARGUMENT OF ROMANS

Condemnation	Justification	Sanctification	Dispensation	Application
Chapters 1 — 3	Chapters 4 — 5	Chapters 6 — 8	Chapters 9 — 11	Chapters 12 — 16

were we created? Where is history going? What is God doing? So, grab your Bible (as it will provide some instructions about the tour) and let’s go!

## Israel’s Rejection of Messiah: Part of the Plan

It is actually part of God’s plan that the Gospel would be shared, the Gospel would be rejected, and that—in the end—the Gospel would be accepted. In Romans 9—11, Paul makes a logically thought-out case that explains what God is doing with the Jewish people today. When observing these three chapters within the larger literary context of the Book of Romans, we begin to understand how they fit into Paul’s argument. The message of Chapters 1—3 is that you stand condemned before a holy God—**condemnation**. “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*” (Rom. 1:18).

Further, in Romans 3:23 we read, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” Throughout these first three chapters, Paul has argued that all people miss the mark of God’s perfection and stand without excuse for their rebellion. In Romans 1, the pagan person is condemned. Then in Romans 2 the moral person is condemned. Further in

lution to our condemnation before God. He declares us righteous on the basis of Jesus providing Himself as a sacrifice.

Chapters 6—8 speak about the life of the believer and how to be freed from the bondage of sin’s control. The issues here relate to the doctrine of **sanctification**. Now that we are declared righteous, how can we really *live* a righteous life? The answer is found through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who works in us to do God’s will.

The end of Chapter 8 is filled with encouraging promises: “*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is [Messiah] who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of [Messiah]? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor*

## Messianic Perspectives®

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*principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in [Messiah] our Lord*" (Rom. 8:31-39).

### The Reaction of Paul's Readers

It is at this fantastic high point in the book, almost nine chapters into Paul's argument, where some in the church in Rome could have rightly begun wondering: "You know, those are some rather lofty promises you're making, Paul. *Nothing* will separate us from the love of God? What if we mess up? I mean, I don't know about you, but I'm not always consistent in doing everything I know that's right. Believe it or not, sometimes I sin willfully. I don't recommend it, but I do it. And, what then? Could such sins separate me from God's love?"

Considering the recipients of this letter in Rome, quite a few Jewish people were living in the *Diaspora* (a term describing Jews who were scattered and living outside of Israel) and some had become followers of Jesus. You can imagine how Jews in the *Diaspora* could have begun wondering about God's promises: "God, are you sure that nothing will separate us? Because we heard some promises like these once before—promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But look at our people now. We heard some things like this through the prophets, but we're not experiencing that life of blessing and salvation. Nor are we sensing your presence with us in a great way these days. We're feeling much more condemned. We're under the hands of the Romans; we're not in control of our land." At this point, Israel was a vassal kingdom under the Roman Empire. And it wouldn't be long after the writing of this book that the Temple itself would be destroyed.

So it was a logical question to ask: "Paul, are you sure you know what you're talking about? These are some rather lofty promises that you're making." And it is for that reason, I believe, that Paul addresses the issue in Chapter 9. He is assuring his readers that God's promises made long ago to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants will still come true. Why? Because God always keeps His Word!

### Romans 9, 10, and 11: Not Just for Jewish Readers

In Chapter 9, God's righteous reputation is at stake, and Paul seeks to defend it. Many people go right from that lofty set of promises at the end of Chapter 8, "nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God," and skip over anything having to do with Israel because they figure, "Well, I'm not Jewish and this really doesn't apply to me—skip, skip, skip." They go to Chapter 12:1 and begin, "*I beseech you*



*therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*"

It seems to fit. And I think a lot of people—in fact, some theological systems—really have no plan for God to deal with the Jewish people ever again. They, therefore, move right along to Chapter 12, and simply bracket out Chapters 9—11. Chapter 12 picks up on the sanctification theme of Chapters 6—8, and talks about holy living—and maybe we could even call it the *application* of a proper understanding of God's good news (see Romans chart on page 2). Chapters 9 through 11—this little

section bracketed out by many people—is about God's election of the people of Israel. Some prefer, because of their theological system, to call it **dispensation**. In other words, this is an explanation of God's plan for Israel and the Church. Both are spoken of here, and there is a distinction between how each of them fits into God's redemptive plan. The term *dispensation* means something like "household management" or "a period of stewardship" entrusted to human beings at a certain time to live according to the instructions that God gives.

The instructions God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden are different from the instructions that He gave them outside the Garden. The instructions that Adam and Eve had outside of the Garden were different from the instructions that He gave to Noah, which are different from the instructions that He gave to Abraham. Abraham's instructions were different from the instructions that God gave to the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai, which were also different from the instructions that He gave to the Church through the apostles beginning at Pentecost. And these apostolic instructions also differ from the instructions He will have for us when we live during the time of Messiah's reign upon the earth in His thousand-year millennial kingdom (see Revelation 20:1-6). Those different periods of God's instructions—and the fact that we are accountable to live by God's directives in any given age based on what He has revealed for that time period—is called by some, the various "dispensations." Essentially, these

describe time periods of divine stewardship, and explain how mankind was to obey God at any given point throughout redemptive history.

### In Defense of God's Messenger (vv. 9:1-5)

Returning to our examination of Romans 9, Paul begins by defending himself as God's messenger: "*I tell the truth in [Messiah], I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from [Messiah] for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, . . .*" (vv. 1-4).

In Verses 1 through 3, Paul speaks of his concern for Israel, but then moves to the privileges connected to Israel in Verses 4 and 5.

When he says in Verse 3, “. . . *I could wish that I myself were accursed . . .*” you see how sincere he is about desiring the salvation of his people—his own ethnicity, kinsmen according to the flesh. And then in Verse 4, he describes their privileges: “*who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.*” The Jewish people have a special, chosen relationship with God: **the adoption as sons**. The term “glory” refers to the *Shekinah* glory, or divine presence, that hovered above the tribes of Israel during their wilderness wandering, eventually inside the Tabernacle, and later the Temple—the *glory* of God.

God made His *promises*—His *covenants*—with only *this* group. Note to whom belongs “the giving of the Law.” Israel has a divinely chosen relationship to the Torah itself. The Jewish community commonly discusses, “Has Israel kept the Torah throughout history?” The rabbis often answer with the familiar quip, “No, but the Torah has kept Israel throughout history.” In other words, the Jewish people are often called the People of the Book. No other nation had God’s presence dwelling among them within the Holy of Holies or the sacrificial system—“the service of God.” While other nations had sacrifices and sacrificial systems, God did not command or accept them. God gave special promises to Israel—the Jewish people.

### Ethnic or Spiritual Israel?

To whom did God give these promises? Note Romans 9:5, “*of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, [Messiah] came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. . . .*” The patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—received the promises. Paul defends God’s righteousness, and begins by defending himself: “I really am God’s messenger, and I am also concerned about the salvation of the Jewish people. I would give my own salvation in exchange for the salvation of my brethren.” Paul describes who they are, so we can be absolutely sure that this is not code language for another group. This is Israel, the Jewish people, and not the Church or any other group of people. In these passages, Paul clearly characterizes Israel. “I’m talking

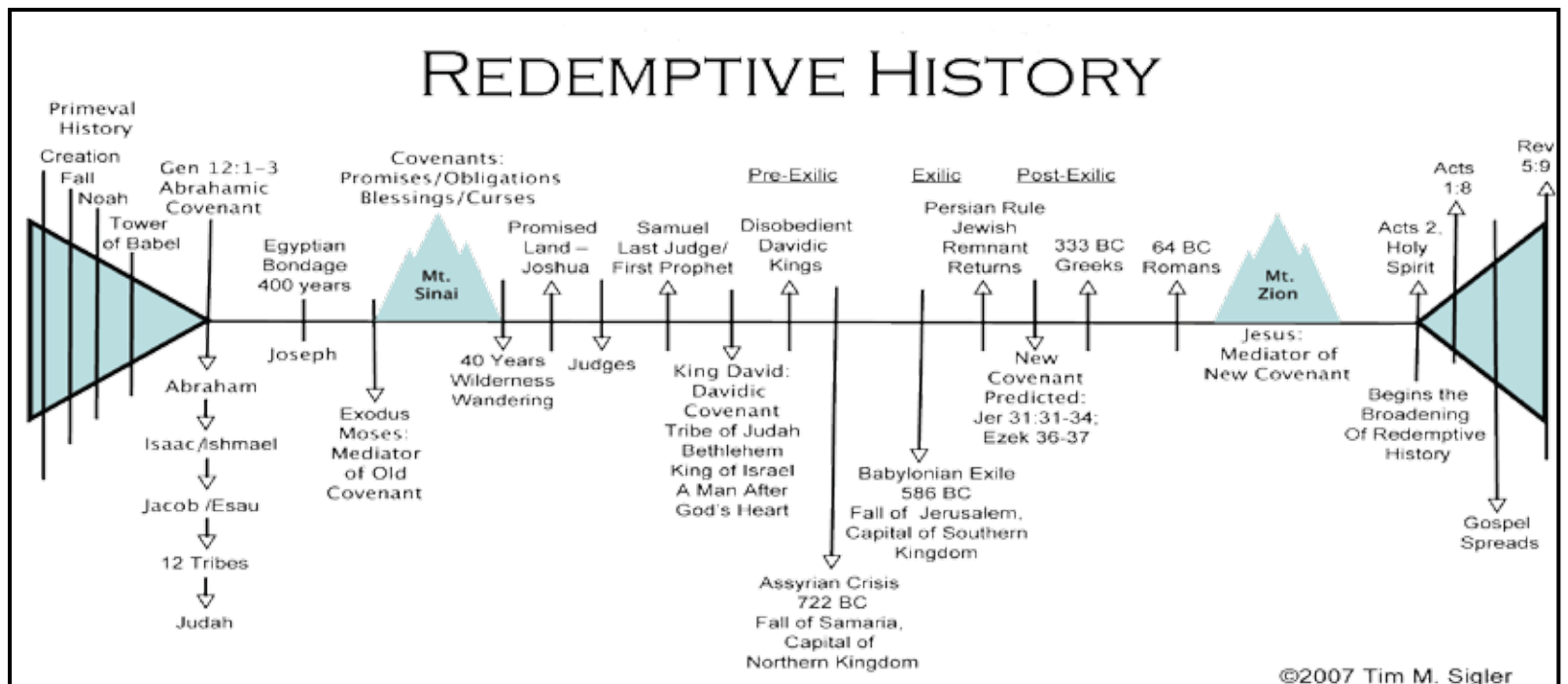
about the Israel that has adoption, glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the temple service, the promises, the patriarchs, and the Messiah’s ancestors.” So, with those eight descriptors, Paul can only be speaking about one group—the Jewish people, or “ethnic” Israel as opposed to a so-called “spiritual” Israel.

“Spiritual” Israel is a term that some people use to describe how the Church has promises similar to the promises given to Israel. While it is true that God’s promises to these two groups are similar—and we will ultimately be one big happy family in a new Jerusalem—for now there is a real distinction. As a group, the Jewish people have mostly rejected the Gospel, and are therefore not a part of the Church—although there is a remnant of Jewish people who have accepted God’s provision of salvation through Messiah Jesus. This remnant concept will be discussed further in our examination of Romans 11.

### In Defense of God’s Word (vv. 9:6-13)

To return to the larger argument of Romans 9, Paul is first of all defending himself (see Romans 9:1-5). “See, I am sincere. I am concerned about my people, the Israelites, the Jewish people.” Further, he goes on in Romans 9:6-13 in defense of God’s Word. “*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed*” (Rom. 9:6-8). He reminds his readers that it is not as though God’s Word has failed. And no one is born into a faith relationship with God simply by being born as a descendant of Abraham. Abraham’s faith does not guarantee that all Jewish people have the faith of Abraham, or his same standing before God simply because Jewish people can claim to be his great-great-great-great-grandchildren.

Just as no one is saved from God’s wrath due to their family status, so also no one is saved by doing good works: “*And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the*



younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated’ ” (Rom. 9:10-13). Here, Paul argues that we are saved by the mercy that God *plans* to give us. It is amazing to think that every saved person is selected by God to be saved. So, God’s purpose according to election stands—not because of works—but because of Him who calls. It was said to Rebecca that the older would serve the younger. See, before they were even born—before either had done good or bad—the order was already determined. The older will serve the younger. That was God’s elective choice. And such was also His choice of Israel as a nation.

**To Be (Chosen), or Not to Be:**

**The Controversy**

The concept of *election* is certainly a hot-button issue. You probably know about the big rift in the Church between one theological system called Calvinism and another one called Arminianism—and I am not

attempting to solve that particular issue here. However, I encourage you to read the text and get your theology described by biblical terminology before selecting or rejecting a system. Using the biblical terminology is extremely safe. It is clear in Romans 9 that our salvation is not dependent upon our good works. Who determines salvation? Many believers have memorized Ephesians 2:8-9, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” Clearly, salvation is a gift from God. By recognizing God’s elective purposes, who gets the credit for your salvation? Only God! It is not because you were better than somebody else, or that you had a clearer understanding of spiritual truth than your unsaved counterpart, but because God—in His grace—somehow planned for your salvation ahead of time. (Note: both Calvinism and Arminianism teach that God elected people to salvation according to His foreknowledge [see Romans 8:29], but the debate is over what such foreknowledge means.)



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**... just as an artist who creates a mold, or a sculptor who forms an image is in charge of those creations, so God is sovereign over humanity.**

This is essential in understanding God’s selection of Israel. He selected ahead of time how He was going to use the Jewish people in history—even before they were born as a nation. Before the twins even came out of the womb Scripture says, “the older shall serve the younger; Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” So in defense of God’s determinative Word, Paul says, God is not caught off guard with Israel’s rejection of the Gospel. He was not in Heaven wondering, “Oh no, what am I going to do now? They didn’t accept my Messiah. Oh no! Where’s my plan?” No, instead, God could declare, “This is fitting exactly according to plan. Don’t panic. I’m in control. This is nothing to worry about.” Through these verses, Paul has now defended God’s messenger, and defended His Word!

**In Defense of God’s Justice (vv. 9:14-29)**

Notice the continuation of Paul’s argument as he resumes his vindication of God’s righteous ways by defending His justice in Romans 9:14-29. “*What*

*shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*” (v. 14). Immediately, when we talk about God’s selection of some, it is natural to begin to wonder about what happens to the others. Since these others are not selected, some people get really bent out of shape and think, “How could God fail to select some people to be saved? He could have selected them, but He didn’t. That’s not the loving God that I want to believe in.”

Before going too far down this accusatory path, let’s consider its implications. If you and I create the God that we want to believe in, then there would be all kinds of things that would be different from the God who revealed Himself in the Bible. But instead, we have to ask, “How has God revealed Himself in Scripture? What is a biblically defensible view of God’s plan of salvation—especially in His dealing with Israel?” God revealed how it is, and if you want to be a worshiper of God—which is what God calls us to be—

you must repent! Turn from your own ways, and turn to His ways. He is not saying, “Why don’t YOU come up with a plan, and I’ll just camouflage it in a divine fashion—I’ll become the God you want Me to be.” No. God reveals His plan in Scripture and calls us to accept it humbly.

**Five Demonstrations of the Righteous Justice of God: Pharaoh (vv. 9:14-18)**

Beginning in Romans 9:17, we read, “*For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*” God raised Pharaoh up as a demonstration of His power. “*Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens*” (v. 18). God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. While Exodus shows occasions in which Pharaoh hardened his own heart (see Exodus 8:32), God ultimately closed the deal: “. . . and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, . . .” (Ex. 11:10).

### People (vv. 9:19-20)

In a similar way, people of all times demonstrate God's sovereignty. "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'" (v. 19). To paraphrase, if people are lost, then that is how God willed them; and if people are saved, then that is how God willed them. "Who resists His will?"

"But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (v. 20). In other words, people are a demonstration of God's sovereignty—just as an artist who creates a mold, or a sculptor who forms an image is in charge of those creations, so God is sovereign over humanity. I have a friend who is a talented sculptor. He is in the process of making a horse for me to display in my office. It is a beautiful, powerful-looking horse, standing on its hind legs. On occasion, I have seen him pull off a leg just because he didn't think it looked right. I cringed, "Oy! Don't pull the leg off, it looks fine to me!" But he is the sculptor; and he can do whatever he wants to do.

### Pottery (v. 9:21)

Paul uses similar terminology to demonstrate God's right to do what He wants in election. "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" (v. 9:21). Here, the potter could make a beautiful vase, or a trash can—one for honorable use and the other for dishonorable—it's up to the potter.

These vivid illustrations of God's righteous choices prove that God is just in what He has done with Israel—and He is just in what He does with all of humanity. God is always just. He is the Creator, and He can do whatever He wants. He is God! Thus, in speaking of His right, Verse 21 says He has power over the clay—a demonstration of God's right.

### Patience (vv. 9:22-24)

"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (vv. 22-24). Here, Paul continues his previous images of a potter and clay by introducing the vessels of wrath that were made for destruction.



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## God has a plan to bring His salvation full circle—from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth, and back to Israel again.

In keeping with this pottery imagery, we learn that all of humanity has something in common—whether Jew or Gentile. We are *all* part of the same "lump" of sinful humanity. We are *all* doomed (or rightly under God's wrath as pointed out in Romans 1—3). Nevertheless, God in His grace has chosen to save some. He has prepared some as "vessels of mercy." It is by an act of His mercy that we are not separated from Him, and under His wrath forever.

### Prophecy (vv. 9:25-29)

The final defense in Paul's argument for God's righteous justice is prophecy—a demonstration of God's plan. Beginning in Verse 25, he quotes from Hosea 2:23: "As He says also in Hosea: 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who

was not beloved'" (v. 25). Paul goes on in Verses 27 and 28 to cite another famous prophecy: "Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.'" This concept of the remnant is essential in Paul's argument.

Early in our marriage, my wife and I bought furniture that desperately needs to be replaced now that our three kids have trampled all over it. But there was a time when that furniture looked great in the room. When we were planning the room, we took little swatches of the loveseat, couch, and chair and matched them with paint chips and carpet in the same color scheme. We didn't take the *whole* couch, we took a remnant of the fabric. We didn't take the *whole* carpet, we took a little piece. Similarly, the remnant concept in Scripture speaks of a small number of the Israelite population. Think about 1 Kings 18, and Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal. He felt alone next to all the false prophets. But God's words of encouragement were that He had reserved for Himself 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and who were true to God.

Seven thousand is not a big percentage of the entire Israelite population. In fact, you can find prophetic judgments against the Israelites who were bowing before false gods throughout the prophetic and historical books. Molech, Baal, and Asherah were all worshiped at altars and sacred pillars and "under every green tree"—a common prophetic phrase. The term "every green tree" is a blending of Israelite faith and pagan Canaanite fertility cult worship. They

# Where There's a Will, There's a Way!

were acting out fertility rites with cult prostitutes, and sacrificing their children in fire for their false gods to bring fertility to the earth. But even in this vile period of Israel's history, God had preserved a remnant of faith-filled Israelites who followed Him, like Elijah.

Returning to Paul's argument in Romans 9:25-29, he notes that Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth" (v. 28).

## God has a plan, and He will continue to work His plan—and part of that plan is that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.

God is going to make happen what He said would happen—thoroughly and quickly! And further quoting from Isaiah in Romans 9:29, ". . . Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah." In other words, without God preserving the remnant, there would be no remnant—the Jewish people would have been wiped off the face of the earth. In reviewing Israel's political history, many have tried to annihilate the Jewish people—Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, the Romans, the Crusaders, Hitler, etc. But God has preserved the Jewish people in general, and He has also preserved a saved remnant within the Jewish people who have turned in faith toward the Jewish Messiah—Jesus.

### In Defense of God's Method (vv. 9:30-33)

Romans 9 concludes by defending God's method of dealing with Jews and Gentiles in His redemptive plan. "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;" (v. 30). There is a plan of salvation by faith, which in God's design has been accepted by many Gentiles. They didn't deserve it. They were not God's chosen people, nor were they more righteous than the Jewish people. But God—in His righteous, divine, selective plan—chose for His salvation to go to the Gentiles. Not because of their good works, and not because Gentiles were somehow better than Jews. Simply by trusting in God's Word, which we call faith, Gentiles "who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness." Gentiles, who were not seeking God, were found by God.

"But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness" (v. 31). While some suggest that this phrase should be translated "pursuing a principle of righteousness," I think "law" is appropriate here, when we understand Judaism's pursuit of righteousness through the keeping of the Law, which Paul develops elsewhere.

The cause of Israel's failure to acquire God's righteousness is explained in Verses 32 and 33, "Why? Because they

did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'" This time quoting from Isaiah 28:16, Paul is defending God and His plan of election—that all this is part of God's plan. Note: ". . . Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily" (Isa. 28:16).

In Romans 9—11, Paul explains how we can know that God will keep His promises—that is, because God is a God who keeps His promises to nations and to individuals. In fact, even when you are tempted to think otherwise, God is still working according to His plan. God has a plan, and He will continue to work His plan—and part of that plan is that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all people, Jews and Gentiles alike (see Romans 10:14). The part of God's plan that deals with Israel and her future salvation will also come to fruition. We have His Word on it!



Tim M. Sigler, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Hebrew and Biblical Studies at Moody Bible Institute. If you would like to schedule Dr. Sigler to speak to your group, please contact CJF Ministries. Dr. Sigler often addresses issues related to Israel and the Middle East conflict, the feasts of Israel, Jewish culture, the Land of the Bible, and biblical archaeology.

This article was transcribed from a presentation delivered at Life in Messiah International.

### Gifts of Cash

Cash gifts are an excellent way to donate to CJF Ministries. When we receive a cash gift, it can immediately begin assisting CJFM by paying for general operating expenses, supporting missionaries and radio programs, and other outreach needs as they arise. Cash gifts can be made online, through the mail, or by simply calling (800) 926-5397 and making a donation through our operator. We can even accept credit card donations. If you wish to make a cash donation by mail, please send a check or money order made payable to CJF Ministries. As always, if you itemize deductions, with cash contributions you can deduct up to 50% of your adjusted gross income.

### Gifts of Stocks and Bonds

Stocks and bonds that have appreciated and incurred capital gain taxes (and for which you no longer need the income) may benefit CJFM. Simply contact your financial advisor and let them know of your intentions in this regard. Then contact CJFM's Stewardship Services for delivery instructions.

### Payable on Death

This is a simple way to ensure that you have resources for your lifetime and emergency needs. Implement this plan with bank accounts, brokerage accounts, IRAs, pensions, and any other accounts that allow you to name a beneficiary of the account upon your death. This plan allows you to avoid probate costs and can reduce your federal estate taxes. Contact your bank, broker, trust company, or IRA and pension administrator for details on how to make CJFM a beneficiary.

### Life Insurance Policies

Another way to make a gift to CJFM is through life insurance policies. You may currently have a policy that you purchased for other reasons and no longer need the coverage, or you may receive dividends on certain policies for which you no longer need the income. These are just two examples of ways to give through life insurance policies. Contact our life insurance agent or a qualified financial planner to explain how you can make a gift through life insurance, and take advantage of charitable contribution benefits.

### Bequests

The easiest and most inexpensive way to make a deferred gift to CJFM is to include us in your will or revocable trust. Each individual legacy contributes to the financial strength of CJFM. A bequest is easy to arrange. It is not payable until death, so it does not affect your assets or cash flow during your lifetime. It is private—your will is not filed or made public until your death. And, it is revocable—you can change the provisions in your will or trust at any time prior to death. Some of the largest gifts made in support of CJF Ministries throughout the years have been through bequests left in a will or trust. If properly written, a will can reduce the taxes paid by your survivors—which will result in a larger amount being left for your loved ones or charitable organizations. A properly written will ensures that your assets will be distributed as you intend. Contact your attorney or estate planner for more details.

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or call (800) 926-5397.

# Why Would Anyone Go on a Tour?

By Michael Hedrick

“Why would anyone go to Israel?” I’ve heard that question many times from many different people—usually when they learn that I lead tours to Israel every year. My response is invariably the same: “Why would anyone *not* go to Israel?”

The blessings received from a trip to Israel are so wonderful and unique, it amazes me that some believers might not want to take at least one visit in their lifetime. It’s difficult to quantify the benefits—especially the spiritual ones—that come from such a trip. Ten different people may go on one of our Israel tours and return feeling blessed in ten different ways. During my 15 years’ experience as both a tour leader and participant, I’ve seen that most benefits fall within the four major areas around which we center our tours. Let’s take a closer look at those areas, and how they might impact you if you decide to join us for one of our tours to Israel.

## Experience

Many of our participants have spent years, perhaps even decades, reading the Scriptures, studying God’s Word, and learning the history of God’s work here on earth. They know all the stories, all the major characters—even some of the places and geographical locations. Then, when they visit Israel, all of that head knowledge suddenly has an outlet, and they are not just reading Scripture, they’re *experiencing* it.

They read about David and Goliath from 2 Samuel while standing on a hill overlooking the Valley of Elah. They read in Exodus about the Tabernacle, and then visit a life-sized recreation of it in the wilderness of southern Israel. They go on a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and read from the Gospels about Jesus and His disciples on that very same sea. Of course, Scripture stands on its own, and it’s an incredible thing to read and study God’s Word—but seeing and experiencing the Land of the Bible is a unique, memorable, and powerful way to enrich your understanding of Scripture.

## Study

In Psalm 119:15, the Psalmist tells God, “*I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.*” In this verse, we see both the Psalmist’s commitment to study God’s Word and to contemplate the way of living that God commands. Both of these aspects—study and application—are integral aspects of our tours.

Because of the immense importance of studying Scripture, a large portion of our tours is devoted to diving into God’s Word. Using messages and teaching from a messianic perspective, teachers like Dr. Gary Hedrick, Gideon Levytam, and Rob Styler immerse participants in a journey through God’s plan for mankind—past, present, and future. Traveling to Israel isn’t just about sightseeing, it’s also an opportunity to learn about the Jewish roots of our Christian faith.

Similar to the Psalmist, we want to do more than study the Scriptures; we seek to contemplate the way of living that God commands. We don’t want to simply read God’s Word; we want it to govern our way of life. Our Bible teachers



make the connection between reading and living, helping each participant apply Scripture to their daily lives. You'll learn how to apply biblical principles to things like relationships, important decisions, and even finances. You'll also learn how to share the Gospel of Jesus with the Jewish people, and the importance of countering anti-Israel sentiment within the Church.

### Connect

In addition to experiencing the Land of the Bible and studying God's Word from a messianic perspective, each tour participant has the opportunity to *connect* with what God is doing in the here and now. Most of our tours will include visiting some of our workers in Israel to connect with the community of Jewish believers in the Land. It's an amazing and encouraging experience to hear firsthand how God is working among His people in the Land, and to be able to bless them through prayer and encouragement. If you follow our ministry's work, it is an especially meaningful experience to witness some of the work that you hear and read about through our radio broadcasts and publications.

### Share

A trip to Israel isn't just about your own personal experience; it's something that will pay dividends for the rest of your life. The knowledge and experience you will gain on the trip will equip you to share your faith more effectively with those who have not been reached with the Gospel. Our ministry's mission statement is taken directly from Romans 1:16:

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of [Messiah], for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*

It is a clear, biblical prerogative to share the Gospel with the Jewish people, as well as with the Gentiles. In theory, it sounds wonderful, but in practice, it can be more difficult than it seems. During your trip to Israel, you'll learn the reasons why many Jewish people are unreceptive—or even hostile—to the Gospel, and ways you can share the message of Jesus more effectively with them.



When I speak to groups about our tours, many people ask if it's a "mission trip." I tell them yes, it is, but not in the way that they might think. When most people hear the term "mission trip," they think of a two-week visit to a third-world country, during which you aid the local population, share the Gospel, and then go home. This is not what our tours are about. I like to call our tours "inside-out" mission trips. Instead of traveling to Israel for 14 days, sharing the Gospel, and then leaving, you spend 14 days in Israel *learning how* to more effectively share the Gospel—especially with Jewish people. You will return home better prepared to be a missionary wherever you are, at all times.

If you've never been to Israel, I strongly encourage you to go with CJF Ministries on one of our tours. The trip's sights, sounds, experiences, and relationships will stay with you for the rest of your life. You can receive more information at [cjfm.org/tours](http://cjfm.org/tours), or you can call our toll-free information line at (800) 926-5397.



Photos by Rick Higbee

**QUESTION:** *Your teaching sounds very Calvinistic at times. My problem with Calvinism is that if we place too much emphasis on divine sovereignty, it tends to cancel out human responsibility. It's all well and good to say that we believe in God's control over all things, but some people take that to mean it doesn't matter what we do because God ultimately controls the outcome anyway. Other people go to the opposite extreme and emphasize human action so much, it almost sounds as though we can overrule God's purposes by our choices. How do you resolve the tension between those two biblical teachings (i.e., God's sovereignty and our responsibility)?*

scene in Matthew 23 where the Lord pled with His people to come to Him: "" (v. 37).

Here is the sovereign God of the universe, wanting to gather and protect His people like a mother hen gathers and protects her little ones; however, they were not willing to come to Him. He said, "But you were not willing!" Those five little words (three in Greek) speak volumes. Yes, God is sovereign; but He wants us to trust Him, and to cooperate with Him in what He is doing in our lives (see 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13). That's the tension we're talking about here.

I have always admired the balance that

**QUESTION:** *Can you help settle a friendly dispute we're having in our little Bible study group? It's about the so-called Smart Card that everyone has been talking about lately. Some people say it's the Mark of the Beast, and others say it's nothing more than a glorified driver's license. What's your take on it?*

**ANSWER:** You're right! This proposed federal ID card (Smart Card), which is similar to ID cards that have been used for years in Europe, has been getting a lot of attention recently. Many Christians, and other conservatives, are opposed to the US's adoption of the Smart Card because of:

- the many logistical problems that



# Bible Questions AND Answers

By DR. GARY HEDRICK

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**ANSWER:** Around here, our goal is simply to preach and teach the Bible from a messianic (first-century, Jewish-Christian) perspective. On some points, we closely align with Calvin (especially on salvation) and on other points, we do not (such as prophecy). That's why people have trouble pigeonholing CJF Ministries—they're never quite sure what label to hang on us!

Yes, of course, these two biblical teachings—divine sovereignty and human responsibility—must be held in tension. In fact, each one depends on the other. If either is allowed to stand alone, it becomes something other than what the Bible teaches. Divine sovereignty, out of balance, quickly degrades into a form of fatalism. Human responsibility, at the other end of the spectrum, morphs into a kind of philosophical indeterminism. Neither of these extremes is compatible with the reality we see reflected in the Bible.

Whenever I think about the balance between divine sovereignty and human choice, I'm reminded of that heartrending

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) had in his teaching and preaching. He was an outspoken Calvinist, as most Baptists were in his day, but he also believed in human agency and responsibility. My friend and colleague Ed Johnson recently emailed me this quote from Spurgeon, and I'd like to share it with you:

The Lord Jesus does by His messengers, His Word, and His Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come in that they may eat of His marriage supper. And this He does, not by any violation of the free agency of man, but by the power of His grace.

Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of

the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he yields cheerfully to His government, subdued by sovereign love!

have already been identified with the program (including hazy details about how it will be funded),

- the lack of thorough debate and discussion in Congress,
- its redundancy with other forms of identification, and
- the potential for abuse.

For these reasons, and others, several states have already notified the Department of Homeland Security that they will not be joining the Smart Card program, and are enacting legislation against it.

It's unfortunate, however, that some "Christian" organizations are spreading

disinformation about the Smart Card. Some extremist groups, for instance, are claiming in their newsletters that the Smart Card includes a GPS (global positioning satellite) chip that enables the gov-

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# Fruit from the Harvest



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By Violette Berger

## A BORN-AGAIN FAITH

**Brian Zuckerman, CJFM missionary (Las Vegas, NV),** pens: “In evangelism, when approaching someone for the first time, you rarely know whether you are the first or the twentieth person to share the Gospel. It becomes apparent, on some occasions, that God has prepared the person’s heart for this conversation.”

Such was the case when Brian met Dave (not his real name) one afternoon while distributing tracts at the UNLV campus. Although Dave admitted that he “believed in Jesus,” it became clear that he was not born again. He believed in Jesus with his head, but not with his heart. Brian explained the difference between “religion” and a “personal, spiritual” relationship with God through His Son. He continued to share the Gospel message with Dave and read him 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, which confirmed the truth. God’s Word pierced Dave’s heart, and he eagerly prayed with Brian to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. “*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (Rom. 10:10).

## PASSOVER SALVATIONS

The “Fourteenth Annual Passover Seder” held in Phoenix and led by **Barry Berger, CJFM Director of Missions Emeritus (Phoenix),** was a huge success. Barry writes: “Although it was held at a new venue that couldn’t accommodate as many guests as in previous years, tickets for the maximum seating of 400 sold out quickly. The service went well, and the messianic Gospel music by the ‘Levitones’ and the five-course, kosher-style meal were wonderful. In my last Ministry Update Letter, I asked everyone to please join us in prayer so that many unsaved Jewish and Gentile people in

attendance would come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus. At the Passover Seder’s conclusion, I gave an invitation to receive by faith, Jesus, ‘The Passover Lamb,’ who was slain for our sins. And by the grace of God, **16** people prayed with me to do so. Praise God, for He answered our prayers exceedingly and abundantly beyond what we could ask or think.”

**Michelle Beadle, CJFM missionary (New Orleans),** also praises the Lord that she had the privilege of sharing Messiah in the Passover at 33 meetings—in churches, schools, women’s groups, home Bible studies, and a homeless shelter—and **31** people gave their hearts to the Lord. Although all salvations are blessed events, one in particular stands out in Michelle’s mind.

Michelle was asked to present Messiah in the Passover during chapel at a large Christian high school in Baton Rouge. She didn’t expect many decisions for the Lord because a number of students had received Him the previous week during the school’s spiritual emphasis week. Nevertheless, as she usually does, Michelle concluded the service with a presentation of the Gospel message, and led the entire high school in the sinner’s prayer.

Michelle relates, “One young woman raised her hand, confirming that she had just prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Later, the youth pastor told me the young woman had just moved there from Los Angeles to live with her mother after having been emotionally neglected growing up with her father. She had never been taught about Jesus, but had watched *The Passion of the Christ* video the night before making her decision for the Lord at my Passover presentation—which was only her *third* day at school. What an awesome event!”

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ernment to track card bearers. This is a fabrication. GPS chipsets require too much energy and space to be placed on a card that would fit in your wallet. The chip in Smart Cards is virtually identical to the technology that's already used in many credit cards, as well as the new e-passports; and it has no GPS functionality. Some Smart Cards—like the Pass cards intended to help with security lines at airports—are embedded with radio frequency tags, but they're only readable from a distance of 30 feet or less.

One conspiracy website says, "they" (and I suppose that means the government) now have a microchip the size of a speck of dust that can be injected into the bloodstream so "they" can track a person's movements via satellite. This is pure, unadulterated balderdash. (It sounds as if someone has been watching too many reruns!) We need to keep our wits about us; and if we're opposed to the Smart Card, let's be sure that we're opposed to it for the right reasons. It's not really necessary to falsify the Smart Card's shortcomings—it has enough real problems.

We need to be cautious about jumping onto every prophetic bandwagon that comes along—including this movement that says the Smart Card is the "mark of the beast" mentioned in Revelation 13:17. Many years ago, some naysayers claimed that Social Security numbers were the fulfillment of this same prophecy. They warned everyone against getting a number and thereby "taking the mark." Now, however, many older Christians would be hard-pressed to make it through the month without that Social Security check! Several decades later, the prophetic hot-button issue was barcodes (because the bars were supposedly arranged in three sets of six—666). But these days, most of us don't think twice about barcodes when the checker is scanning our items at the grocery store.

We can speculate endlessly, but the reality is that no one knows for sure what that mark will be. All we can say with certainty is that the Scriptures indicate that people who will be here during the Tribulation Period will be unable to transact business—that is, they won't have the capacity to buy or sell anything—without the mark. Could it be a credit/debit card that people will be forced to carry? That's a possibility. Or is it a retinal scan, as depicted in the 2003 Tom Cruise sci-fi flick, ? Some people think it's a microchip that's inserted under the skin. These are all possibilities. But we don't have

enough information to say for certain. Since the Book of Revelation combines both literal and symbolic elements, the mark could also be a metaphor for the future global economic system's ("Babylon") uncanny ability to reach out like a swirling black hole and draw everything and everyone within reach into its vortex of control—meaning, essentially, that resistance will be futile. These are just a few of the many possibilities.

My advice is that whatever view you adopt, ensure that it's based on good, solid facts.

Whenever the truth stops being our friend, it means

there's a disconnect with reality—and that's not a healthy place for a Christian. A helpful source of information about the Smart Card program is online at [www.1105govinfo.com](http://www.1105govinfo.com). Wikipedia also has an informative article at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart\\_card](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart_card), including an overview of the different types of Smart Card technology that are currently in use around the world. Be informed and take a stand!



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