

The Jerusalem Dilemma
David Brickner
Wasilla Bible Church
August 17, 2008

Pastor Larry: The Lord put David Brickner on our calendar almost three years ago, put it in ink, said “David Brickner, August 17th, 2008, Wasilla Bible Church.” He’s an international speaker—his schedule ends up being two to three years out. He’s a leader of Jews for Jesus, a ministry that is out on the leading edge in a pressing, demanding area of witnessing and evangelism. Our connection with them probably goes back to the 1970s when I first heard a music group from Jews for Jesus called “The Liberated Wailing Wall” in Seattle, Washington. And they had an impact on my life. They’re one of the reasons I’m a pastor now.

About four years ago or so...I forget how long ago it was...we had David here. And that’s when he connected with us as a congregation. And now we have him back again today. He’ll be presenting a message from the Word. He’ll also be presenting his mission, to an extent, so we’re familiar with it; and it’s just gonna be a great time together with him. We’ll be taking a special offering at the end of our time to support that ministry. I encourage your engagement in that.

But above everything, I want you to understand—when God set that date, August 17th, 2008, David Brickner in Wasilla Bible Church—God wanted to say something to us at this time in our congregational life, to us corporately and to us individually. And God has brought you here to hear it. David?

David Brickner: Well, Shalom! It is wonderful to be back here with you after these number of years. Thank you for that warm introduction. We really do feel a warm-hearted connection with you here at Wasilla Bible Church. The last time I was with you, you weren’t in this facility yet. And so it was before you moved to the school, to move to here. So it’s been that long. And I am just so glad to be back here with you.

A lot has happened in the ministry of Jews for Jesus. But for those of you who don’t know much about us, you hear that name and maybe it raises a few questions, you know—Jews for Jesus...isn’t that a contradiction in terms? You know, kinda like saying ‘Vegetarians for Meat.’ Whoever heard of Jews for Jesus? Well, hopefully you know better, because you know that Jesus is Jewish, right? And the disciples—Peter and John and James were all Jewish. All the writers of the New Testament, with the possible exception of Luke, were Jews, and we know that Luke was a doctor, so who knows.

But of course, this issue and this controversy—which was very much a part of Jesus’ life and ministry—is still in evidence today. The Jewish community, in particular, has a difficult time understanding this reality. Not too long ago a Jewish guy came up to me, and he said, “David, how can you be a Jew for Jesus?” I said to him, “Well, think about it. Jesus was Jewish, right?” And he did. And he said, “Yeah, Jesus was Jewish. But then He converted and became a Catholic.”

Now, there’s no greater place in the world where this controversy is very much at the forefront of conversation than in the land of Israel. Since I was last with you, the ministry of Jews for Jesus has grown in a number of ways, but most excitingly in that part of the world. We now have the largest work of our...of all of our ministries around the world; we’re in twelve different countries, but the largest work of Jews for Jesus is in the land of Israel. And that’s pretty much a miracle, because to imagine that Jews for Jesus—in Hebrew, *Yehudim L’man Yeshua*, would be a registered, not-for-profit organization in the land of Israel...how that happened, well, that’s a whole ‘nother story. But the issue is still controversial.

In fact, Israelis don’t even know how to say Jesus’ name in Hebrew, which is *Yeshua*, but they call Him ‘Yeshu.’ And Yeshu...it’s a name that...it’s not really a name. It’s a name that was given to Jesus by medieval rabbis who wanted to actually pronounce a malediction, a curse, on Him. And so ‘Yeshu’ is actually an acrostic for “*Yimach Sh’mo V’zichro*,” from the Psalms, a malediction that says “*May his name and memory be blotted out.*” And so there is a great deal of controversy about this person. And yet, in the midst of this, there is no greater openness in any Jewish community than that which is going on in the land of Israel. I call this the Jerusalem Dilemma.

You know, the first time I ever went to Israel—my parents actually live there now; they live in Jerusalem—but the first time I went I was part of “The Liberated Wailing Wall,” my wife and I. Now, I know that’s a strange name for a group, but we sing Jewish gospel music. It’s kind of a cross between Israeli folk and “Fiddler on the Roof.” It’s great stuff, and we went there to minister. And we were out on the streets in Tel Aviv, and in Haifa, and in Jerusalem. And one particular occasion I was standing at the top of the *Hamashbir*...in front of the *Hamashbir* on Ben Yehuda Street, which is...*Hamashbir* is kind of like the Sears & Roebuck of Israel. And Ben Yehuda Street is a pedestrian walkway. And we were singing, and a crowd of Israelis had gathered.

Now, most Israelis are secular. And they were drawn by the music, and we had t-shirts on that said “*Yehudim L’man Yeshua*” (Jews for Jesus), so they knew who we were; but that was ok. They were enjoying the music; some were clapping. There were some that were even dancing off to the side. I thought to myself, “Boy, this is great! We’re preachin’ the gospel right here on the streets of Jerusalem.”

Then I noticed, right out of the corner of my eye, five *yeshiva buchers*. Now, that’s the ultra-orthodox young seminary students. Maybe you’ve seen the pictures, you know, with the black hats and the black coats, and the side curls, you know. And they were walking towards us with a look of grim determination on their faces, and I knew we were in trouble. And sure enough, these guys got up right in front of us, and they started screaming and yelling. And then one of them reached out to grab my wife Patty...now Patty’s playing the violin, so this guy’s gonna grab the bow of the violin to wrench it out of her hand. And I’m thinkin’, “That’s it. We’re gonna get martyred right here on the streets of Jerusalem.” And then up walked this Israeli—I mean, he was a big guy. He was about six-four, 260 pounds, completely bald; he looked like Jesse Ventura, you know. And he gets up in their faces and he says to them, “You touch them, and I’ll touch you.” These guys backed off, and we were able to continue ministry that day. And I thought to myself, “Praise God!” The Bible says the Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, to deliver them from harm. I just never knew he looked like Jesse Ventura.

But that illustrates this issue of the Jerusalem Dilemma. Here is this city that represents a people, that represents a move of God; the name itself—*Ir Shalom*—means ‘City of Peace.’ And yet, what irony that there has been no peace, and there is no peace in the city of peace. In fact, over 132 separate wars have been fought over the city of Jerusalem, more than any other territory or city in human history. This is a city that’s divided, and representing as it does the hope of humanity in the promises of scripture, it is at the forefront of the conflict that rages in our world today. How do we understand the Jerusalem Dilemma? How does it help us to understand what’s going on in the world and, yes, even in our own lives?

Jesus spoke directly to this issue when, in Matthew 23, he addressed His attention to this dilemma. Let’s see if I can get the Powerpoint to change. Ok, there’s the scripture. If you have a Bible, you can turn with me to Matthew 23, which is largely Jesus’ message just before going to the cross, his last public sermon—which is a diatribe against the leaders who are plotting against His life. Jesus had a popular ministry among the *am ha-aretz*, the people of the earth, the common folk, because He taught with authority, not as the scribes and Pharisees. But it was those scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders, that plotted against His life. And Jesus knowing this, the Bible says, nevertheless set His face like a flint toward Jerusalem. And He marched right into the temple.

You know, when you’re walking in obedience to the will of God you can go anywhere. It doesn’t matter what forces there are arrayed against you, it doesn’t matter what circumstances confound you. When you are in obedience to God, what can stop you? We can’t lose when we’re walking in obedience to God! And there was no one who more completely walked in obedience to God than Jesus himself. So here He is in the temple, preaching the sermon, and in the last...most of the sermon is against the leadership, but in the last three verses He opens up and speaks to all the people when He cries out

“Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say ‘Baruch haba bashem Adonai—Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

And the first dilemma that Jesus addresses is the dilemma of unbelief. The fact is that Jerusalem stands as a place where, more than any other, God’s revelation has been heard and seen, miracles have been done, prophets have ministered. And yet Jesus says ‘You’re represented, you’re symbolized, by unbelief, by rejection of the messengers. In spite of this amazing history of God’s grace in revealing His truth in you, O Jerusalem, you killed the prophets.’

Israel has not had the greatest track record when it comes to following after God. You know, what other nation experienced such mighty deliverance as Israel, in God bringing us out of bondage and slavery in Egypt? The miracles, the parting of the Red Sea... But we got into the wilderness, and the first thing we did was we 'kvetched,' you know, we complained. We said, "Moses, we didn't have enough trouble back in the land of Egypt, and now you brought us out here to die?" And the Bible tells us the entire generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. And that has characterized the ministry of the prophets. They've all experienced that rejection.

And so Jesus, now coming in fulfillment of all the hope and all the promise of all the prophets, is not taken off guard by that. He is likely, obviously, to experience...and will soon experience...that same unbelief, full force, in His own body. And I've heard people talk about this reality of history, and talk about the 'stiff-necked Jews'. Have you heard that phrase before? The stiff-necked Jews... Well, God was the one who first used that about Israel, and He can get away with it. But my mother always told me, "Be careful when you point a finger at somebody else, because there's some pointing back at you." And really, Israel has not cornered the market on unbelief. Israel is an example of what all humanity has been saying to God since the beginning of time, shaking its fists at the heavens and saying, 'You'll not rule over us.'

And so all of the controversy that we see swirling in Jerusalem is really a mirror that the world looks in to see the controversy within. The Jerusalem Dilemma is the Wasilla Dilemma; it's the dilemma of the human heart. And so it's important for us to notice, then, Jesus' response to this unbelief, this rejection.

"How often I've longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings."

In other words, in the face of unbelief, God's unrelenting response to human unbelief is to say, 'Hey, I wanna gather you. Despite your long history of rejecting My messengers, My passion as I look down the corridor of time over this vast history,' the Son of God, in His most divine aware statement, says, 'I wanna gather you.' And here I believe He's reflecting the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 91,

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

...verse 4...

...under His wings...

Whose wings? The Almighty's wings...

...you will find refuge.

And Jesus says 'Come under My wings, O Jerusalem. There's a place of grace that I want to establish for you in spite of your unbelief.' And so committed was Jesus to that place of grace that not many days after He said this, He stretched out His arms on a cruel cross and shed His blood to pay the penalty for your sin and for mine. But because of who He is—because He is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God—death could not hold Him, and the grave could not keep Him, and He rose again from the grave. And now that same resurrection power of God is available to be applied to the lives of all those who trust Him, in Jerusalem and around the world. That is the answer to the Jerusalem Dilemma, the dilemma of unbelief—the mercy and grace of God, this place of grace that whosoever will may come under and find God's forgiveness.

And you may be here today and you're thinkin', "Well, I would like to believe that for myself, but I don't know if I can. Because, you see, I've messed things up so badly. Oh, I've asked God for forgiveness," maybe you say. "I've asked Him for forgiveness, but then I've gone out and I've fallen flat on my face, and I've messed it all up again. And I keep on doing it. There's gotta be a time when God says, 'I'm through with you.' Maybe He's done that to me."

Well, let me ask you somethin'. When has God ever said that to Jerusalem? In spite of its history, hundreds and thousands of years, He never has and He never will, and He'll never say it to you, too. In fact, there's only one thing that you can do to put yourself beyond the grace of God, the forgiveness and love that Jesus died to purchase, and that is if you refuse His invitation. There's a place of grace today for God's people to find forgiveness. It solves the dilemma of unbelief when we step in and receive that invitation. Isn't that good news?

That's the good news that's gonna make the difference in Israel right now. I just returned from Israel, where we had our first evangelistic campaign. We handed out over 132,000 tracts in downtown Tel Aviv. We had over 2,000 Israelis give us their names, addresses and phone numbers, asking for Hebrew New Testaments, and 32 Israelis stepped into that place of grace to receive Him as their savior. Isn't that wonderful? Wow! And it's just the beginning of a six-year program that we're having.

My son, Isaac, is here, and I've asked him to grab Pastor Larry's microphone. And he just got back from a program that he was involved with. You know, one of the challenges that we have in Jews for Jesus is to raise up the next generation. And there's a lot of openness today in Israel and among Israelis, especially the young people. And so Isaac was part of a group that ministered; just got back a few days ago. And so, Isaac, why don't you tell us about it?

Isaac: *Shalom Aleichem!* Yes, as my dad said, I just got back a few days ago from Israel, and also India. You might say, 'India...hmm...that's interesting.' But in fact, there's a ministry going on in India as we speak that we were able to be a part of, and I'll tell you about that in a second. Me and about thirteen other young people like myself, college-age, just got back from Israel and India. And we first went to Israel for about seven weeks. And in Israel we were able to take part in a discipleship program that has been set up for young college-age Jewish believers in Yeshua, called *Massah*—which means 'journey' in Hebrew. And basically what it is, is it has three goals. The first goal is to further each person's relationship with Yeshua—with Jesus. And the second one is to become more...become more firm in your Jewish identity, and finding your Jewish identity in Yeshua, Jesus. And third, to basically equip you and implement you in the...in the task of ministering to our Jewish people.

In Israel we had a variety of speakers and leaders come in to help us further those goals in our own lives. And I can say for myself that I personally grew leaps and bounds in my faith in Jesus. And it allowed me to step out in faith and to talk to other Israeli Jews about Jesus, those who don't believe in Yeshua. Our first week, actually, in Israel, we went out in Tel Aviv and did something very similar to the campaign that had gone on about a few weeks before we had gotten there, which is to hand out gospel tracts to Israelis, and to talk with them and offer them New Testaments in Hebrew. And that was one of the most crazy experiences of my life, not only because you don't know the language in Israel when you first get there, but there's a lot of hostility as well. But God did an amazing work through that time, and it allowed us to become more familiar with the culture, more familiar with how we were actually going to share the gospel with Israelis.

So now let me get to India. So in India there is a very interesting community of Israeli backpackers who...most of them have just gotten out of their two-or-three-year army service in the Israeli Defense Force. And they go on a quest. Basically what it is is spiritual enlightenment or trying out new things; and India is one of the main places that they go, in northern India. And there is a ministry there which is basically...just now it's just a coffee shop, a local hangout that a lot of Israelis like to go. And there is a Christian brother there named Rajam who runs the coffee shop, and who we met up with when we got there. But we were able to, once we spent our seven weeks in Israel, fly to India and make that our kind of home base, and then travel around to different parts of India where there're Israelis backpacking, and basically just befriend them and get to know them and who they are, and what kind of dilemma they're facing, themselves. And most of them, like my father said, had never heard the name Yeshua. They still know him as 'Yeshu.' So we were able to shed light on...and just be a light in our friendships to them, and kind of just enlighten them to who Yeshua is, and the love that Yeshua has for them.

And for me, that personally has changed my life, making me realize how much God has a plan for each and every one of us, and how much we all need to witness to our fellow unbelievers; and for me, as a Jewish person, to my fellow unbelieving Jewish family.

We were able to talk with over...with hundreds of people in Israel about Yeshua, Jesus; and many of them also received Hebrew New Testaments that we were carrying around with us. And some of us would write personal notes in the New Testament to the Israelis who had become our friends. And they would...they were so grateful, because we were investing in them and loving them for who they were, and showing them who Jesus was, and who Jesus can be for them and in their lives.

As I said, it's all kinda still stirring around in there in side, because I just got back about two or three days ago. But, yeah, ...

David: Thank you, Isaac.

As we were flyin' up here yesterday, Isaac showed me his journal. And he has a list of about twenty-five names of Israelis that he's praying for, that he met, that he shared the gospel with during his time in India. And of course, they're all on Facebook. And so the contact and the ministry continues.

There's so much that's going on right now, and we want you to be involved with us in the ministry of Jews for Jesus. When you came in, in your bulletin today you should have received a card that looks like this. If you take that out right now...and you'll notice there is a perforation on the card...we want to invite you to fold it along the perforation and then tear it, because the smaller section is for you to keep. It's a prayer reminder card. And we really think that prayer is the most important way for you to be involved in Jews for Jesus. And so we encourage you to take this card home with you and fill in the blanks that are there so that you might, first of all, become a prayer partner with us. If you're interested in praying especially for the ministry that's going on in Israel, take this larger portion of the card; and if you fill in your name and address, and especially your email, we'd like to have you as part of our prayer team. We'll be sending out weekly prayer requests for the ministry going on in Israel. The first campaign that I mentioned before, that took place in Tel Aviv, is fast now going into the second campaign which will take place in upper Galilee. That includes Tiberias and Tsefat, which is a really bedrock of mysticism and occult behaviors among the Jewish community there. So we really need your prayers. There's a lot of opposition, as Isaac said, and yet there's a lot of opportunity. If you fill this card out and drop it in the offering as it's passed, we'll send you our free newsletter, and we'll send you prayer requests if you put Israel in the card here.

I also want to send you the testimony of one of our Israeli staff members— Shlomi Abramov, who used to be a body guard for Ariel Sharon. And God broke his heart. He used to break legs, and now God broke his heart, and he's preaching the gospel in Israel.

There's a lot that I could tell you about. I want to encourage you to stop at the literature table after the service; that has a lot of free material as well as some not-so-free stuff. Since I was here last time, we produced this DVD, called "Forbidden Peace," which tells the story of how Israelis and Arabs are coming to faith in Jesus, and then being reconciled together through the power of His love. And we're seeing that happen in the ministry of Jews for Jesus. And so we want to encourage you to be involved, to support us in the offering if God should lead you; but most importantly, to recognize what's happening there right now, I believe, is the fulfillment of God's promises. And I say that with some fear and trepidation, because I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and I work for a non-profit organization. ☺

But what we see in Israel, the conflict that is spilled out throughout the Middle East, really which is all about Jerusalem, is an ongoing reflection of the fact that there is judgment. There is judgment that is going on in the land, and that's the other part of this Jerusalem Dilemma. When Jesus was standing in that temple, He spoke that that judgment was coming, that there's a reality to the judgment of unbelief. He said "I long to gather you, but..." what? "You were unwilling." God never forces His way on human beings. And so because Jerusalem was unwilling to receive His grace, judgment was coming. He says, "Look, your house has left you desolate!" What did He mean by that? Remember where He is. He's standing in the temple there in Jerusalem, the place where God had promised, through Moses,

"There I will meet with you, there I will hear your prayers, and there I will forgive your sin."

And now Jesus in that temple, just before going to the cross, says, 'From now on this place is desolate.' And Jesus' words have echoed down through the centuries. Not a generation after He uttered this promise, Titus and his Roman legions marched into that city and destroyed both the city and the temple. And from that day until this very present there has been no temple, and there is therefore no sacrifice in Judaism. Only we could sacrifice in...the only place was in the temple. And therefore there has been, and there is today, no confidence of atonement, no confidence of forgiveness. If you were to stand outside of a synagogue on the day of atonement and ask those leaving the service, "Did God hear your prayers? Were your sins forgiven on this most holy of all days?" the answer would be, "I hope. I hope, but who can know?" Who indeed but those of us who have come under the wings of the Almighty, who've entered into that place of grace where forgiveness is assured for the dilemma of human life. Judgment is very real and we see it played out on the pages of the newspapers and on the television. It's very real.

When Isaac was in Jerusalem he was there to witness some of that judgment, some of that conflict, when a Palestinian from East Jerusalem took a bulldozer and went plowing through a score of cars, killing numbers of people. Judgment—you can't miss it. And Jesus talks about it, but He didn't leave us there. There's a promise of a return from this judgment. Jesus concludes His message there in the temple by saying this—"I tell you, you will not see Me again, you will not experience what I have come to bring, this place of grace which I have and will soon establish...you will not see Me again until you say, until you're able with conviction to articulate, these words: "*Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai*—Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Once again quoting again from a Psalm, this time Psalm 118:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief...the chief corner stone. And this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Save now, we beseech Thee; save now, O Lord!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

'You will not see Me until you can acknowledge Me as the One who's come, as the stone once rejected by the builders, but now the chief, until you say "Jesus, You're the Messiah!" Not many days after He said these words there were some three thousand Jews who saw Him. After His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to glory, Peter on the day of Pentecost preached in Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit fell, and those three thousand heard the word of God, and they repented. They turned from their unbelief to faith, and He came to dwell in their hearts. They saw Him.

And I'm so grateful to God that here I am some two thousand years later, a Jew who has said to Jesus, "Baruch Hab-ba bashem Adonai"; and yet most of my people have not. They're still waiting. And therein lies the burden of my heart, and of Jews for Jesus, and I want to invite you to share that burden with us today. I want you to do it in a very specific way, by singing these very words of the Lord from Psalm 118. I'm gonna ask the band to come back up and help me.

Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai.

Let's try those words in Hebrew. Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai. Again, it means 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' Will you stand with me? And if you're here today, and you've never entered into that place of grace, you've never received the love and forgiveness that Jesus offers, then you can through singing these words—first in Hebrew, then in English. Invite Him to come—welcome Him in the name of the Lord! That's what He said. You need to do that.

Maybe you've been wandering far from the Lord and you know He wants you to come back. You can sing these words as part of your coming back to Him, part of your repentance and return.

Or maybe you want to intercede on behalf of someone you know who is wandering, or just pray that "Jesus come." Whatever God has spoken to you this morning, let's sing this together to Him as a praise, as a blessing, and as a welcome for His coming to do what He wants to do.

Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai, Hallelujah!
Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai, Hallelujah!
Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai, Baruch hab-ba bashem Adonai.
Hallelujah!

Let's sing it together now in English. Sing it to the Lord, would you?

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,
(We welcome you, Jesus!)
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Hallelujah! O Hallelujah!

Please be seated.

Larry: Just stay right here a second, David. We're gonna conclude our service in a little unusual way. First we'll be taking the offering; we'll be praying for this ministry when we do that. So I'll ask the ushers to come forward, and we'll be taking that offering for Jews for Jesus. And then we're gonna close in kind of an adaption of our usual closing. You know our blessing song, right? Got it. David's gonna sing it in Hebrew to us. Then we are going to sing it in return, in English, upon David and his ministry, ok? You guys got it? Alright. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven,

We stand before You as a people who've experienced Your grace, and we acknowledge that that grace was first extended to our people through Your people, the Jews; that there is not a one here in this room who would know Jesus and serve Him if there had not been a Jew, generations ago, that spoke Jesus' name to our people. Father, that comes full circle and we wish to extend Your grace back to Your people. And we pray and we ask that as a result of this time here, and as a result of this offering, there will be people among the Jews today who come to say the name "Jesus" with faith.

In His glorious name we pray, amen.

Now as you take the offering, and you remain seated right now, David's gonna sing that blessing upon us.

David: This ancient benediction, from Numbers 6, is something that God gave especially to the priesthood of Israel. He said, "Bless My people with this blessing, and they will be blessed." And so what I'm going to sing is actually what has been pronounced over congregations of Jewish people, and to this very day, by the priests, the sons of Aaron.

*Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'rechecha,
Ya'ayr Adonai panav aylecha vichunecha.
Yisa Adonai panav aylecha v'yasaym l'cha shalom. [Numbers 6:24-26]*

Larry: Isaac, why don't you join your father and come right on up here. Remember how the blessing goes. "Ooooooh" [mimics previous style of singing]

David: Good job! You're hired!

Larry: We do stand, and we're going to continue to take the offering as we stand. And we're gonna sing this upon Isaac and David and their ministry. So, men, join me.

*The Lord bless thee,
(The Lord bless thee,)
And keep thee,
(And keep thee,)
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee.*

*The Lord bless thee,
(The Lord bless thee,)
And keep thee,
(And keep thee,)
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee.*

And be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee.

*The Lord lift up
(The Lord lift up)
His countenance
(His countenance)
On thee and give thee peace.*

Larry and David: Amen.

Larry: Go in grace.