

BLESSING ISRAEL WITH JESUS, PART 1

“No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. They pour new wine into new wineskins.” (Mark 2:22, NIV)

I FINALLY COULDN’T STAND IT ANYMORE. I’d make a good swing, the ball would take off looking fine, and then it would come up 15 yards short, diving into a bunker or leaving me with an awkward pitch from in front of the green.

So I went to our resident expert. He said, in all friendliness, “Dude, you’re getting older. I hear the same thing all the time from guys your age.” I wasn’t buying it. “I’ve lost a club and a half in a few months’ time,” I said.

We dug deeper. We found that while I have been progressing with the newer and newer golf balls, I’m still playing older equipment. “You can’t do that anymore,” he said. “If you don’t have tour-level swing speeds, you need to exchange your longer irons for hybrids. That’s how you’ll get the new ball in the air.”

It didn’t strike me until watching today’s accompanying video with Israel College of the Bible’s Eitan Bar that the expert and I had been talking about wine and wineskins. The newness of one demanded the newness of the other.

Jesus spoke of this in the mixed company of the Pharisees and his disciples. The former wanted to know why it was the Jesus was not like John the Baptist. John was austere, even ascetic in his ways. Jesus, comparatively, was a party animal. How could this be if their message was one and the same?

But that is where the Pharisees’ error lay. John was pointing at the one to come; Jesus was that one. And when Jesus had come, things had changed. The kingdom of God was in the midst of the people. The expressions of this Good News would not be like the expressions of the pre-Messianic religious traditions.

In Israel today, men and women are finding again that Jesus is in their midst. These are Jews and Arabs alike, and the expressions of their faith are not like those of the previous generations. The new wine of Christ is being poured into 21st Century wineskins, where grace reigns as it has since the cross, but where the message is being preached in terms and with technologies that capture people’s attention as Jesus’ own parables did. Jeremiah’s “ancient paths” (Jeremiah 6:16) still point to Jesus, but they are being paved afresh so that people today can follow them, too.

Opening questions Are you one of those who keeps up with new equipment, or one who lags behind? • When you think of Israel, what comes to mind?

READING Jeremiah 6:16, Romans 11:11-24, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

An old book in a new time
Critics of the Bible often base their opinions on the age of Scripture. “It’s outdated,” they say, “worthless in our time.” How do you respond to this criticism? How have you found Scripture to be relevant for you today?

Paul, Jews, and Gentiles
How did Paul establish for the Romans the way both Jews and Gentiles have a place in Jesus? Toward what particular stance regarding the Jews did Paul exhort the Gentiles?

Carrying the message
In delivering the Gospel of Christ, how important is it to “speak the language” of those we approach? How can you do this where you live and work?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/7igBPT3W0sU>