

# CHRIST REVEALED



**Episode 7**

**Transcript**

Gretchen Jensen: Welcome to Episode 7. I can't believe we're already at 7 out of a nine-part series, but hey, coming up today, you are going to hear a fabulous interview. This is from Peter Tsukahira. Also, you can hear the very end of your last interview with Greg Koukl, and don't forget, we have [Hermana Vilijeon 00:01:20]. But right now, tell us what was it like talking to Peter?

Patrick Gentempo: I wasn't sure exactly what to expect when we were climbing Mount Carmel to get to interview Peter Tsukahira. He's a Japanese-American that was called many years ago to move to Israel with his wife, and the work that he's doing there is extraordinary. This interview is heavy on the inspiration side but there are some things about this interview that really connected me personally with some of his past experiences prior to his walking in faith. You're going to find aspects of Peter's story that I think you'll bond to or they'll remind you of somebody that you know. When you see what it's emerged or what it's evolved to, it's very inspirational. I'm really looking forward to sharing this particular interview with you.

Peter, thank you so much for taking some time today. Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Peter Tsukahira: Patrick, I'm a Japanese-American-Israeli. I have a Japanese-looking face, an American-sounding voice, and an Israeli passport.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: My wife and I came here as immigrants 30 years ago. In fact, 30 years ago this year.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: We're both American-born. She's from a Jewish-American family. I'm from a Japanese-American family. We came to the Lord out of the hippie counterculture of the 1960s and the 1970s. We met in Boston, in a university there. But as soon as God got a hold of us, He began to speak to us about His plans for our life. He told us we should get married and we would go into ministry, and that we'd end up in Israel. Back then, neither of us had ever been here. We didn't know more about Israel than what we'd read, but we knew 40 years ago that we would end up here.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: We prepared for the ministry in the US, ministered there and in Japan for a while. In 1987, God opened the doors for us to come to this land. It was an experience like we had never experienced before and nothing that we could've really even adequately prepared for. To come as immigrants, it's the big reset button. You really start your life all over again. We went through the culture shock and the language shock, but we knew that we would land here in this city, the City of Haifa, and that we would be planted on this mountain, which is Mount Carmel.

Of course, biblically, it's the Mountain of Elijah, the Prophet and where he confronted the false prophets of Baal, rebuilt the Altar of the Lord, pray the Prayer of Faith, and God answered with fire that change the nation of Israel back in the days of Elijah, change the whole nation for more than a generation. We have felt for a long time that that was our mandate to once again bring the sacrifice that please God, rebuild His Altar, pray the Prayer of Faith, and that God would answer by the fire of His presence to turn the hearts of the people of Modern Israel, Jews and Arabs back to the Living God.

Patrick Gentempo: You've landed at a beautiful spot here. We're outside, on top of Mount Carmel. As a matter of fact, you just said this over my shoulder, "Here is the very top of Mount Carmel." It's the highest point of Mount Carmel.

Peter Tsukahira: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: There's a lot of significance as you alluded to biblically in this area. Did you seek this out when you first came here? How did you end up here?

Peter Tsukahira: Yes, we knew that this was the place that God had selected for us. But when we got here, it was really an experience of discovery. First of all, Mount Carmel is not a mountain in the traditional sense. It's really a ridge and about 20-some miles long. The northwestern edge sticks out into the Mediterranean and the southeastern end, overlooks the Valley of Armageddon. It's a ridge maybe 500-some meters above sea level at its highest point and this is the highest point. We're right in the middle of it right here, where our worship center and our ministry center are located.

[inaudible 00:05:32] is our worship center, the worship center of the Carmel Congregation built here on Mount Carmel. It's the first building built in modern times by an indigenous Israeli Messianic Congregation for the purpose of worshiping Jesus in His own land, among His own people, in His own language. This is the first building built for that purpose in modern times.

Patrick Gentempo: What was it like coming to this country and bringing a Christian message here? What has evolved over time? Have you seen any changes since you've been here?

Peter Tsukahira: First of all, when we arrived here, it was a lot different than it is today. I would say, 30 years ago, there were less than 200 believers in our entire city.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: This is the third largest city of Israel about 300,000 people. Less than 200 believers, that meant that within a year, we basically knew the names of just about everybody. There were two small fellowships that were already in operation. Now, we wouldn't call them Christians because they were mostly Jews, and so we call them Messianic Jews. They prefer to maintain their identity as Jewish people, although they fully believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, the King of Kings, and the

Lord of Lords. They're disciples of Jesus, but they identify with the original apostles before Christianity even became a movement.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: First of all, that was a discovery that we had to make, that believers here call themselves Messianic Believers. They call their communities, congregations and not churches. There's a new expression of faith in Jesus, biblical faith in Jesus, but it's arising from the people of Israel. The same people that Jesus knew many, many years ago. He's being worshiped in His own land, in His own language, by His own people for the first time in 2,000 years.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: Even though the numbers were small, we realized from day one, this was remarkable. This wasn't something that could've been taught to us in Bible school. It wasn't something that they could've, that they had textbooks about in seminary. We had to come and actually meet these people ourselves and learn how they were solving problems, what it meant for Israeli Jews and Christian Arabs alongside of them, in many cases, to worship Jesus in His own land and in His own language for the first time. It was a great discovery process.

Patrick Gentempo: This is what I'm curious about, if you could remember when you first got here because it's been some decades now, but Israel and the Land of the Bible, if you will lived abstractly in your mind when you were training, right?

Peter Tsukahira: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: What was the difference between understanding it from your classroom training and reading versus putting your feet on the ground here and being here? Was there a different experience relative to that for you?

Peter Tsukahira: That's a really good question, Patrick. It was like really coming to ground and it was a process of having those obstructions stripped away and realizing when it says "Nazareth," it means Nazareth. If it says, "Mount Carmel," you don't have to translate that into, you know, "This Carmel," or "That Carmel," "Our city," "This continent," "Our nation," it meant here.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: It was that process of really entering a more substantial, biblical reality. Also, realizing that there were tremendous challenges and spiritual enemies that had to be overcome in order to bring the faith that was originally released by these people to the world to bring it back to them 2,000 years later.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: It really was a period of spiritual and cultural shock that we went through as immigrants 30 years ago.

Patrick Gentempo: What was the most shocking thing?

Peter Tsukahira: First of all, it was the language.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Peter Tsukahira: I studied Japanese, I spoke English and now, Hebrew has no relationship to either of those languages. It was completely starting afresh. Then, to learn that, it's a reborn language. People didn't speak it as an everyday language for over a thousand years. It was basically recreated for the purpose of use in the modern nation. To struggle with learning a new language, and then, after we'd been here two or three years, of course, we had our first war experience. In 1991, the first Gulf War took place. If you remember, Saddam Hussein who was ruling Iraq at that time had taken over Kuwait and the first President Bush had given him a countdown, a deadline, "You get out of Kuwait by this date or there's going to be war." So, the whole world is counting down.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: What Saddam Hussein said in the Arabic Press, which is of course immediately translated into the Israeli Press was that, "If any Western power attacks me, I will immediately attack Israel." That may not sound logical, but in this part of the world, that's how it works, okay?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: "I'll immediately attack Israel," and he was boasting that he would burn half of Israel with weapons of mass destruction. In the countdown to the war, we were following our government's instructions to get gas masks. We had two small children at that time.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: We had to seal our room in our apartment and they gave instructions how to put tape on the windows and seal the doors. Our son was too small to have a gas mask issued to him. What they issued him was a small plastic [inaudible 00:11:30] that you had thrust the little baby inside, zip it up, and then, you could kind of feed him a bottle with the gloves, you know, the thing [crosstalk 00:11:38].

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow.

Peter Tsukahira: The fear was that Saddam Hussein would carry out his promise and attack Israel with nerve gas.

Patrick Gentempo: It's a very strange characterization to hear the words, "our first war."

Peter Tsukahira: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: I could remember watching the news back in the States, the first Gulf War and the countdown and everything, but boy, being here and coming from a place like the United States to this hotbed, which biblically over time, I mean, it's just always been that way, right? Here you are, you're

having to get tents for your little child and have a whole preparation done. It became a new way of life, so I guess that's culture shock, huh?

Peter Tsukahira: Everybody who becomes a citizen of Israel has to have a first war, it seems.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: This was ours. As new immigrants, we are just barely being able to understand the television and the radio, when to go in the room, when to come out of the room, when to put on the gas mask. It was a dislocating and frightening experience. We also saw the Hand of God miraculously protect the nation.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: I think what was said after that, 39 big Scud missiles fell in this country, nine of them in our City of Haifa. These were not the little rockets that are shot by Hamas in the south or Hezbollah from Lebanon. Those rockets, they fire by the dozen from the back of trucks.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: They're dangerous because their anti-personnel terror weapons. They're loaded with ball bearings and if you're in the open, they can seriously wound you or even kill you. These Scud missiles were like, they had 500 pounds of explosives in them. They would take out entire buildings. I think it was about 100 days of war, only one person was actually killed as a direct result of those missiles, which is a miracle.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: In fact, there are some people who say that during that first Gulf War, the death rate in Israel actually went down. Fewer people than normal actually died and if that's true, it's because Israelis didn't drive as much.

Patrick Gentempo: Interesting.

Peter Tsukahira: They only launched the missiles at night and so, you knew when it was like four or five in the afternoon here, it's already six or seven in Iraq, so people stayed off the roads.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. You know, what's very interesting is many of the people I've met here since we've been in Israel have this sense of God's protection for the State of Israel.

Peter Tsukahira: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: They don't have it just abstractly, but like to cite specific instances where things that would defy normal logic occur that seems to just protect this place.

Peter Tsukahira: Absolutely. Not only have we heard those stories, but we've experience it ourselves. When we came through that war experience, I think

something changed in us. After the first Gulf War, we felt like we'd somehow turned some kind of spiritual corner and that our roots after three years were finally beginning to go down into the rocky soil of this land, and that we began to feel like we were Israelis. What's interesting is that just in the months after the end of the first Gulf War, in the spring of 1991, God put us together with another couple. They were pioneering a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in another part of Haifa. A small bible study had started there. We came alongside with them and began to pray together, and God spoke to us that spring, "Start a new congregation." That's how this ministry was born about 26 years ago in 1991.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. Leading up to all the anxiety before your first war, as you described it, did that have any impact on your faith? Were you starting to question whether you really did the right thing?

Peter Tsukahira: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell me what that was like.

Peter Tsukahira: You know, being an immigrant was one of the hardest things I ever did. Nothing can prepare you for that. You really start your life again. In our case, we didn't really have family here. We didn't have friends. We didn't have connections. We didn't know the language. We didn't understand the culture. We didn't know how to get things done in the society, in our neighborhood. Within a year or two, our children were speaking more Hebrew than we were.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: After a while, you know, the years past and you're begging your children to read the electricity bill to you. You can't help them with their homework and if something happens in the school, you can't walk in and help them sort it out. There's this huge feeling of helplessness, and people look at you and wonder how long you're going to stick around here because they've seen so many people come and get discouraged, then go. There wasn't that sense of commitment and permanence in the relationships. It was really difficult. Now, I realized, that's the experience of all refugees and all immigrants.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: I've a great compassion for people who are forced to leave their homes and start afresh somewhere else. In fact, years later, we were privileged to be able to start a shelter here for refugees and reach out to strangers who have walked across the border of Israel. We've been able to share out of compassion what we learned in those early days of difficulty as new immigrants here.

Patrick Gentempo: What is that like when you see, I mean, there's obviously a lot tragedy going on not that far from where we're sitting right now. A lot of displaced people who are victims of horrible circumstances and they literally, like you said, walked across the border. What's it like to take them in and to try to give them some sense of hope in their life?

Peter Tsukahira: What we've learned is that this nation, Israel, it really biblically and prophetically, it's the center of the world. This is where the worlds are in collision. Our entire region is in a massive and historical era of change. All the old, colonial borders are being erased by different people groups. It's really what Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 24. He said, "A nation will rise against a nation, kingdom against kingdom. There'd be wars and famines in various places. These are the beginning of birth pains." We feel those birth pains. We have contraction, a crisis, and then, a period of calm but we know we're just getting ready for another contraction, another crisis is coming.

All around us, in Africa and the Middle East, people are being forced from their homes by the hundreds of thousands. In the case of Syria, by the millions. Some have, for the ones from Africa actually escape genocide in Darfur out of Sudan in the early years before the creation of South Sudan. Of course, that is now descended into civil war, they walked up the Nile into Egypt and then, met tragedy and mistreatment, abuse in Egypt. Some of them, this was 12, 13, or 14 years ago were paying Bedouin guides to take them into the Sinai and point them in the direction of the Israeli border and they were walking into Israel.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Peter Tsukahira: We started a shelter for the women and the children, many of them widows and some of the children who were orphan, really to obey the biblical command; to care for the stranger. These people are really strangers. Like us, they had no language skills. They didn't know how to ... They couldn't work. They had no legal status. They had no advocacy for them in the government. We began taking care of some of them.

We really believe that the Bible teaches that our faith without works is not useful and that if we really believe the right things, we're going to do the right things. Particularly, the Lord commands us to reach out to the widows and to the orphans, to the helpless, and to the needy. This is part of our ministry expression of our faith and that is to reach out to the stranger, to the refugee, to those women who are seeking asylum. Their husbands are lost somewhere back in [inaudible 00:20:08], their families have been torn apart, some of these women have been trafficked on their way across the Sinai. They come to us in pretty rough shape, some of them.

We're taking care of a number of women and an even larger number of children. Over a hundred children have been actually born over the years to women who have been seeking shelter here. They know that they're going to get better treatment in Israel. We try to be a part of that, God's compassion. Here, we have this activity called Africa's Heart where they make handbags. It's really to give them an activity, so that they can do something that's useful, give them a sense of purpose and dignity, and sell these bags and all the profits, all the proceeds of course go directly to the women.

Patrick Gentempo: That's wonderful, wonderful work. It's interesting from your own personal experience and following a calling, when you came here all



those years ago, would you have envisioned that you'd have this kind of shelter, being taking care of these types of refugees? I mean ...

Peter Tsukahira: When this happened to us, our congregation was already maturing. Our congregation's already 15 years old and we were growing. We knew, we're more confident of our call to reach the Jews and Arabs of Israel, and to build and to plant congregations, to teach and to raise up a Messianic remnant that hadn't been around for 2,000 years. That was consuming us. The idea of now caring for African refugees who are really out of our scope was, we struggled with it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: We struggled with it until the Lord finally had to show us. This was the call of the chosen people is to care for the stranger. It's something that, I think touches the heart of God and certainly, we learned so many things by the process of learning to accept them and really to make them part of this community.

Patrick Gentempo: This is interesting then about the inspiration because as I'm looking at how you've answered the calling to come here in the first place, it's something when you came to faith ... What inspired inside of you to say, "Okay, we're going to do things, we're going to do radical things based on this." Would you describe and I'd like to understand how you experienced it, what that was and if that was more kind of an internal thing? And inspiration from the external work like working with these refugees that, is that a similar type of inspiration or different? How do you experience it?

Peter Tsukahira: It's both biblical and experiential. I think what originally lit the fuse of our passion to come to Israel and to become a part of this nation was a biblical understanding that it was the people of Israel who gave us this one book that tells us about God. It's written by Israeli Jews and was preserved by Israeli Jews, and then, the apostles and Jesus himself were Israeli Jews. Now, there is an Israel again, a nation alive from the dead after nearly 2,000 years. I guess, we thought as new believers, why wouldn't you go, right? Why wouldn't you go if you had the chance? When we came, Israel was less than 40 years old as a modern nation.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Peter Tsukahira: We saw an opportunity and we really felt that God was drawing us into this to become a part of this nation and participate in not only building up the nation, but reestablishing a Messianic witness like there was back in the days of the Book of Acts, and actually before the days of The Book of Acts.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: When it was Jesus and His disciples walking, serving, and ministering right in this part of the country. That was an amazing excitement. Then, when we got here, in spite of the difficulties, as we begin to meet those and overcome those challenges, what we realized is this nation is so rich. So rich not only in history and archeology, but it's almost as if

spiritually, it's a place where God has hidden secrets knowing that we would come 2,000 years later and rediscover these things. Even just the geography, if you love the Bible, the geography tells you about the Bible.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Peter Tsukahira: They went from here to here, and now we know how long it took them. For example, you know that Cana where Jesus performed his first miracle, on a car, it's a less than a five-minutes drive from Nazareth. So, how long did it take them to walk? Well, probably about half-an-hour. That means, they knew everybody there, right?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: Maybe that explains why Mary, Jesus' mother had so much authority there. It's probably relatives of Jesus and she has been asked to kind of emcee the wedding. These things become more obvious from just knowing how the land is laid out and why they mentioned this city and that city, and why they walk from here to there? When He's in Lebanon meeting with the Syrophoenician Woman, they didn't get there by accident. You don't get there by accident, not on foot.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: You walk several days.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: He was there on purpose and Caesarea Philippi is the same thing, near the lebanese border. We began to learn and then, of course, when you go to Jerusalem it's just layer upon layer of secrets.

Patrick Gentempo: I know.

Peter Tsukahira: The archeologists, of course are taking down historically, but biblically things are being revealed. Now, I think, really it's a sign that we've entered the final chapter of really, the End Times. God is preparing ourselves and Christians everywhere for the last part of this great, great story.

Patrick Gentempo: It seems that this story of the Bible is so much the story of this land and there's people and characters in it. The land somehow comes to life and it's very different being here and walking it.

Peter Tsukahira: Absolutely. This is where our roots are. The name Israel is mentioned in the Bible more than any other name. I think it's more than 2,300 times more than Jesus, more than God, more than any other thing. Israel, and of course, the land is the Land of Israel. It's really as our roots. Not just the roots of the Jewish people, not just the roots of the Arab people, but every Christian, we receive that Spirit of Adoption whereby we call the God of Israel, Abba, Father and we know from the writings of Paul that by faith, we have become the children of Abraham, and of course, the Prophecy of Malachy is to turn the hearts of the children back to the

Father's. I tell the fathers aren't Martin Luther and John Calvin or Billy Graham. The fathers are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When we Christians begin to really get that sense, the Bible becomes many times richer than if we're only understanding and focusing on the New Testament.

Patrick Gentempo: For someone who doesn't have faith, how would you describe what the experience is or what the inspiration feels like experientially and maybe even existentially?

Peter Tsukahira: Maybe I should start with my own story in brief. I was not raised in a believing family. We went to a church, but I came to the conclusion when I was 13, that not only did I not believe, no one in the church really believed. We're all just going through the motions.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: I didn't go back into a church really for 10 years, but what brought me back was the death of my best friend who was my roommate in our university in the Boston area. He killed himself, and I had tried my best to convince him not to do it. I mean, he'd shared his feeling with me, he'd shared his plans with me. We talked for weeks about it. There was even an incident where he'd ... He is from Denver. I'd gone out to his home and he bought a handgun. I was 22 years old, I'd never done anything in my life, but I wanted to save him. I didn't know what to do.

One afternoon, we were out in the fields, out towards Kansas all alone and I took the gun from him. These crazy thoughts are racing through my mind. I thought, "What should I do? I have to do something. Maybe I should shoot myself. If I shot myself, maybe I could save him." Then, I thought, "No, that might not work." Then, I had a terrible thought right after that, and it was this that even if I knew that by taking my own life, I would save him, I still wouldn't do it because the bottom was that to me, my life was more precious than his.

Later, when I met real born again people, they challenged me. They said, "Well, you know? Jesus died for you." A year earlier, I would've said, "Why? Did I ask Him to do that? What a waste!" After I'd had that experience with my friend and lost my friend, I wanted to know. I said, "Wait a minute. Are you telling me that this Jesus, He thinks my life is more important than His? He's the kind of person that He would make a decision that He would give up His life just so that I could live?" They went, "Yeah, yeah, yeah!" But they didn't know what I've been through. So, that's why I said to them, "Well, tell me more about Him."

That really started this search biblically and coming to faith, and realizing that it's not just a biblical story, but He's alive by His spirit. That's the testimony of these men who wrote the Bible, that He's not dead. He rose from the grave and His Spirit is alive. Now, as a 20-some year old young person and as a teenager, I had drug experiences, I'd been on hallucinogens and other drugs. I'd had spiritual experiences. I knew there was a spirit world, but I'd never met the Spirit of God.

These first Christians in the United States, they told me, "God is a spirit and you need to worship Him in spirit and in truth." I said, "How do you do that?" They said, "Pray." I said, "What's a prayer?" They said, "Talk to God." I said, "That's it? No book? I don't recite something? I don't have to sign anything? I don't have to join anything?" They said, "No. Just you and God. You talk to Him. When you really mean it, He's going to send His Spirit. It will come to you." I said, "Okay. What's this spirit like?" I mean, I'd had very spooky, dark spiritual experiences up until then. They said, "The Spirit of God is just like Jesus." I said, "Well, I know something about Jesus. He's a good man. He didn't advocate violence. Okay. I could meet that spirit."

I would just walk out into the desert. This was in New Mexico. I'd walk out into the desert and talk to God, and maybe it felt strange, but about the third or fourth day, I really felt there was a presence there. There was something from the very start I connect to this, this is the God of Israel. This is the God of the Jewish people. When personal relationship was established and I've gone through the basics of repentance, of forgiveness, and what is the Bible, who is God and what is He like, and how to approach Him; there was just this fire was lit. I've got to find out about Israel. Somehow, Israel to me was from the start was the evidence. If this story is more than a good story, if this story is more than just religion, then the evidence will be in Israel. I knew from the start, we'd at least have to come. I didn't know in the very beginning that we'd end up living our lives here.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. You made a distinction, which is interesting that I'd love to hear your thoughts on because you said, you're experiencing some form of spirituality as you were experimenting with hallucinogens what have you, but that's different than what it means to have your faith now and what that experience is. Can you make the distinction?

Peter Tsukahira: The distinction is what spirit you end up in contact with. I was doing all kind of things and looking for a spiritual reality in Peyote and Mescaline, and Native American religions and I was having experiences. I knew there was stuff out there. For me personally, most of it was frightening and dark, even demonic. I mean even then, without knowing the Bible, I knew that some of it was just demonic, was evil.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Peter Tsukahira: I was getting to the point where I didn't want to have those experiences anymore. That was when I met the Christians. They said, "Well, you need to meet the Spirit of God." That's why I asked them, "What is your God's spirit like?" I'm not sure if I want to meet just any spirit. I think that's the differentiation. God is alive, but there are other gods. Ask the Hindus, they know. They know. There's millions of gods. My ancestors from Japan, there's a god for every neighborhood. There's a god in every shrine. There's lots of gods out there. Native people in just about every culture on the planet know that's true.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: This Book tell about this God. It's more than just a spiritual experience. It was when that spiritual experience came into focus and aligned with facts, facts, history, land, people. It just kind of got a lock on me. I realized, I had to pursue this and find out more. That's one of the things that led us here.

Patrick Gentempo: You know, what's interesting is that, and I think that's a big part of the point is this isn't just some kind of a whimsical experience with a spirit.

Peter Tsukahira: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: There's a lot of history and a lot of things that have unfolded that at this point, well-documented and through this process for Christ Revealed having interviewed many of these biblical archeologists and the people in the polygenic community and looking at how it all comes together. There's a deep amount of comprehensive sphere of history and evidence, and evidence that continuous to unfold to support it. Now, you're here living in it and more and more comes out. In your work that you do here, what have you seen as far as inspiration in people that come to your congregation here?

Peter Tsukahira: The amazing thing is that we're seeing more and more Israeli Jews open their hearts to Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus The Messiah. It's really an amazing thing. The older generation really has deep, deep wounds from the Holocaust. When we first arrived here 30 years ago, it was not uncommon you'd see elderly people on the bus holding on to the strap and you notice that on their arm, there was the concentration camp tattoos. We met Holocaust survivors. We shared our faith with some of them. What we found is that many of them came back as survivors from that systematic mass murder, that genocide shaking their fists at God.

Some of them saying to God, "I'll never believe in You again. How could You have allowed this to happen to our people?" We saw this brokenness. It wasn't just hostility to the name of the Jesus. It was just a brokenness and inability to even deal with the concept of God again. But now, the younger Israelis, the ones who've been born and raised in this land and are growing up now, it's a really different attitude. The land, in a sense is healing them. Now, there's a growing interest in this, "Who is this Yeshua? Who is this Jesus, this Israeli Jew who changed the world?"

Even among non-believing Jews, there's the beginning of this sense. Whether we believe in him or not, that's another thing, but let's be honest. This is the guy who did more to change the world than Sigmund Freud or Karl Marx, or Albert Einstein, or even Stephen Spielberg. This guy, he's a giant. There's even some non-believing Israeli Jews which is new in this country that are beginning to say, "Why, if we need to know about him, if we want to know about him; why do we have to go to the foreigners?"

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Peter Tsukahira: "How come our people aren't teaching us everything we need to know about this Israeli Jew who changed the world?" There's a generational

change taking place and I think that's the most remarkable that Jesus of history is really becoming the living Jesus for people like myself, but also now for members of a new generation of Israelis.

Patrick Gentempo: In summing all this up, is there any words of inspiration that you might have for people who are watching this right now?

Peter Tsukahira: I would say, you know, for Christians everywhere, we should all realize, we're the first Christians in 2,000 years who can come to a nation called Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. Not only that. The first Christians in 2,000 years that once we come to this land, we can find our way into a house of worship where Jesus is being worshiped by His own people, in His own land, in His own language for the first time in 2,000 years. The last time this happened, they wrote about it in the Book of Acts. Now, you can get off a plane like you've done. You can come in and see it with your own eyes. It's something you can touch with your own hands.

First of all, all Christians should go, "Wow, I'm part of a chosen generation. This is an amazing fact." But then, I believe we need to open our hearts and allow the implications of that fact, of that truth to sink in. It means that God is in the business of changing the world and finishing what he started and keeping all of his promises. It should lead us back into the Bible with renewed interest. I would also say that all Christians, somehow, they need to come here. Find a way to come to Israel. See this place and learn what God is doing here.

Patrick Gentempo: I've only been here for a few days and I can't help but agree with you.

Peter Tsukahira: Oh, okay. That's good.

Patrick Gentempo: So much so, it's been an amazing experience and thank you so much for bringing all these to life here. It was an amazing, amazing representation and conversation. Thank you for your time today.

Peter Tsukahira: Thanks, Patrick. It's my pleasure.

Gretchen Jensen: Welcome back to the studio. Right now, we have the final interview with Greg Koukl. What was that like?

Patrick Gentempo: By now, you've seen two parts of our three-part Greg Koukl interview and you know that he's a very precise thinker with very passionate arguments for the faith of Christianity. So, now we're going to bring it all in the last part of our interview with him, which is part three. Tune in, lean in, clear your mind. You're going to get some great stuff out of this.

Speaking of turbulent, it seems that in recent years, the atheists have really scaled up their assertions about the existence of God or that you can't prove the existence of God, et cetera. That's another one, I think, of the big challenges right now.

Greg Koukl: Sure, yes. They're selling a lot of books. There's the Front Four; Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennet, and Sam Harris also

known as the New Atheist, but there's a whole lot of people that arrive in their coattails and taking advantage of the surge, which I think in some way got a leg up at 9/11 because here is a religiously motivated disaster. 2,977 innocent people lost their lives in 9/11. This got a lot of people bugged about dogmatic, religious claims. These guys had a field day. Chris Hitchens' book was How Religion Poisons Everything.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: God is Not [Good 00:41:58]: How Religion Poisons Everything. I think they were able to get some traction. Now, what they did is they created a kind of a trend that I don't know how long it's going to last. It's starting to bait just a little bit right now, but it certainly is a trend in which it's become sophisticated to be an atheist and they're getting more respect in a certain way. I guess, they've considered themselves somewhat personas non grata in the past because you have to be able to believe in God to be a real citizen and a good person. They've advanced arguments to show not only that God doesn't exist, but it's the religious people that are the dangerous people, not the atheists. Atheist can be really good even without God.

This then presents a challenge for us because our story starts, "In the beginning, God ..." Then, if there's no God, there's no story. It's become beholden upon us, I think to be not only more visible with good arguments in favor of the existence of God and answering some of those challenges, but also making these arguments more accessible to the rank and file. I think that's happened in response to the new atheists and others like them that we have been able to take the cosmological argument and the teleological argument, and the moral argument, see these are fancy philosophical terms.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Greg Koukl: But, we can put them in language that people can understand. For example, the cosmological argument. What's that? That's an argument for God based on the existence of the universe, the cosmos and ask the question, why is something here rather than nothing? Now, here's the way I put it. Most people believe in the Big Bang. I think there's justification in that. It doesn't create any problems for me. Some Christians don't like it. But I don't think they see how well it fits into their story. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Big Bang. There it is.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: This is perfectly consistent with our story. The way I put it to put a handle on it for other people is a Big Bang needs a big banger. I mean, that's pretty straightforward. That is the cosmological argument, at least one form of it in a nutshell, so to speak. Very accessible to people and very common sense. When I talk to people on this issue for example, to make it accessible, I'll ask them a couple of questions. "Do you think things exist?" "Yes, of course. I do." "Do you think the things that exist always existed?" "No, they came into existence like the Big Bang." I said, "Okay, great. What caused the Big Bang?" "Oh, I don't know.

I'm not a scientist." "Oh, you don't have to be a scientist because you only have two options. Either something or no thing." I want to be careful with saying nothing because some people start treating nothing like it's a kind of thing they call nothing. That's why I want to say it's no thing, that it have no cause, either something or nothing.

That's pretty much a complete set of possibilities there. What's you got to say? Now, the atheist doesn't want to say something because the minute you say "something caused everything else," then, there's something else outside of everything else and they don't want to say that because their whole project is, this everything else is all there is. The something outside of it, it's going to have to be pretty smart, pretty powerful. All of a sudden, they're starting to sound like the G-word there, God. They don't want to go there. But what's their only other alternative? It wasn't something. It was no thing. This is wildly counterintuitive. That's worse than magic, actually. Because in magic, you have a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat. But in this case, you have no magician and you have no hat. You just have the rabbit.

Patrick Gentempo: No thing, yeah.

Greg Koukl: [crosstalk 00:46:06] coming to existence.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: Come on, you know? Who believes that that kind of thing actually takes place? Now, you might want to say that something can come from nothing like that without any cause. If you believe that, you're welcome to it. That's what I say. But you got more "faith" than I got because it's certainly not the odds-on favorite.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: If your wife came home and saw in your garage the Mercedes SL there and said, "Honey, where did that Mercedes come from?" "Darling, it just popped into existence out of nothing. It happens all the time, you know? That's the way they think the universe came to be, after all." Do you think any wife is going to believe that nonsense? No, no. Where's the smart money? That's my question here. Even if you want to say, "Maybe something can come from nothing." Is that the smart money? No. That's not the smart money. The smart money is on something. The minute you say something, you're in my camp. That's God, all right? That's just one little piece of evidence. I think that, the way I describe it, quite accessible, pretty straightforward, and very common sensible. There's a whole raft of things like that that we can point to.

Patrick Gentempo: The corollary now is science and Christianity, right?

Greg Koukl: Right. Well, this is, you know, there is this conflict. I'm just going to tell you, this is contrived. This is a contrived conflict. It started towards the end of the 19th century. Before that, there was no such thing as a conflict between science and religion. If you think about virtually all of the fathers of major disciplines of science, whether it's Kepler or Faraday, or whether it's Gregor Mendel, the monk, or whether it's



Newton himself; they were all biblical theists. Rather than religion being a science stopper, what the atheists say nowadays, it was a science starter. Science started in the fertile soil of a Christian worldview. These people are convinced that an intelligent God made an intelligible world that followed certain patterns that we could discover to use for ourselves and learn something about the Creator. Okay.

It wasn't until the late 19th century that enlightenment sensibilities started to [inaudible 00:48:39] against the existence of God and used science to do it. There's nothing about the methodologies of science that preclude God's involvement in specialized circumstances when the evidence seems appropriate like the origin of the universe or the origin of life. These are two singularities, so to speak that are examples of the kind of the thing that science ... Let me put it this way. Naturalistic, mechanistic explanations are not going to do. It's just not going to ... You're not going to get something from nothing using scientific principles. It doesn't work that way. Science works with the natural world. It doesn't explain how the natural world came to be.

When it comes to the nature of life, life is very complex and it's running on information. That's what the DNA double helix is all about. Well, who wrote those books? You got to have new information going into the genome for life to develop. All attempts to explain that by a naturalistic process has failed miserably. If the evidence points to God, why can't we invoke intelligence when it seems in evidence? Forensic pathologists will go to a crime scene and look for a fingerprint. Is that unscientific? No. He's using the science to find the bad guy or the person who did it. Well, that's what we're doing, using science to find the person who did it, the big thing, the universe. Why is now that disqualified, we're talking about God, okay? That seems to be a false move.

There's a reason for this happening though. The reason that it happens, the reason that science that points to a designer is not science but religion, it's because there's another religion in play. That religion is called materialism. Now, maybe saying it's a religion is a little self-serving but because there's no God in materialism, that's the competition. Materialism is just a view of the world that says the only thing that exists are material things and motion. That's the competing religion.

So, what has happened is a scientific methodology which is perfectly fine and adequate to its own task, and many Christians have used in the past like I mentioned. Now, it has been hijacked by a different religion called materialism, which says that whatever way you use your methodology is fine as long as it doesn't violate the principles of materialism, as long as your methodology doesn't indicate something that exists that is immaterial like God or souls, or something, or even consciousness.

Patrick Gentempo: I'd say consciousness is important.

Greg Koukl: I know. See, this is the craziest thing because Daniel Dennett, one of the new atheists, now he's saying and you could go to YouTube and look it up; Daniel Dennett: Consciousness is an Illusion. Now, you're going to

get to YouTube. He's sitting on his easy chair out on the patio talking all about it, which is crazy.

Patrick Gentempo: Right. The materialists would look at consciousness as just an epiphenomena of the brain, basically.

Greg Koukl: They might say that.

Patrick Gentempo: Yup.

Greg Koukl: This is what Daniel says. He said, "Epiphenomena, which would be like a spinoff result of the brain, kind of, would still be something.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: The problems with that view that you just described, and so Daniel Dennett is going to say, "Believe or not, consciousness is just an illusion." Really? Why has he got to say it? Because it doesn't fit in his materialistic box. Pardon me, but it's a foolish thing to say.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Greg Koukl: The reason is is because you can ask yourself, what is an illusion. An illusion is when your consciousness is being appeared to in a distorted or false way.

Patrick Gentempo: How could you say you're conscious of something?

Greg Koukl: You have to be conscious in order to have an illusion. What's having the illusion another illusion? You could see how this is just-

Patrick Gentempo: Infinite regress.

Greg Koukl: What they end up saying things that are just again, wildly counterintuitive and foolish because there's no way out for them.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: But see, this is what's going on in this so-called battle between science and now, they're going to say, faith. Science and faith. See, it's just another way of marginalizing our view, "That's just that faith stuff." That's not the knowledge stuff, we got that [inaudible 00:53:14]. It's this faith stuff that you just conjure up. About 10 years ago, it was about 20 years ago now. Time flies. But there was an article written in the New York Review of Books by Richard Lewontin, Richard Lewontin was a Harvard geneticist, at the very top of the pecking order of these things in the scientific community. He wrote a piece that he dedicated to Carl Sagan who had just died. It was about Sagan. It was called Billion and Billions of Demons is the title of the article.

It's easy to look it up though, that's why I'm giving you some information here so people viewing here can just check it out because what I'm about to tell you is going to stun people. In that article, there's a long quote where Lewontin actually describes the true battle between

science and religion, and he admits it's contrived. That is, it's not the methodologies of science that require us to come to conclusions that are materialistic but it's rather our imposed philosophy of materialism, our A Priori commitment to materials is the way he puts it. That means before the evidence is in, that force us to accept what he calls just-so stories or concepts that are beyond common sense or contrary to common sense because of this commitment.

Then, his famous line, "Why? Why rig the game this way?" He says, "Because we cannot allow a divine foot in the door." There it is. Richard Lewontin, one of the brightest minds in the business is admitting to the world that the game is rigged. He's not the only who's done that. There've been many more, but his is the most famous example because it's so bold and unapologetic. He does it before the world in the New York Review of Books. This is what's going on. There is a conflict, but it has to do with the way science is now arbitrarily defined based on a philosophic commitment that itself is hostile to anything somebody might characterize as religious.

You let science just do its thing in terms of its general methodology and follow the facts with a lead, follow the evidence where it leads without this bias, without this external disqualifying element, well then, I think you're going to come up with entirely different answers. I think the intelligent design crowd has done a really good job in showing how the evidence we have from the natural world, read science here, points to a God in lots of powerful ways. This is all on my side here. When it comes to the science and faith kind of so-called battle, that's all contrived. I can go to science and use the evidence of science to bear testimony to the existence of God, which is the same thing that Paul said, we referred to it earlier that everybody has at their disposal the faculties to know that God actually does exist. Now, with the scientific age, we have that material in spades because we're so good in looking at the world.

Patrick Gentempo: Perfect segue because you're talking about books.

Greg Koukl: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: The books that are written. You've written books.

Greg Koukl: I have a few, yes.

Patrick Gentempo: You have a few books and you could write about a lot of subjects. Obviously in this conversation, you covered a lot of ground, many areas of interests, decades of study in precision and thinking. I could see how precise your thinking and the words are; what books did you write and why did you choose those particular subjects?

Greg Koukl: I've actually written seven now and the ones I think that are most important, I'll just talk about three because they really fit a particular paradigm. Actually, I like writing. I write because it's something I'm capable of doing for an important purpose. I'm entrusted with it with a stewardship. That's the way I look at it. Because I don't particularly enjoy the process, it's a lot of work, I want what I write to be durable

and it will only be durable if it speaks to important things, in a way that people can understand and apply.

The first book that I wrote, I wrote it with a colleague, Dr. Frank Beckwith and the book was called *Relativism* and the subtitle is *Feet Firmly Planted in Midair*. This is where we take on the topic of moral relativism and in its various forms, and why culture has embraced it in different ways and the impact it has for example on the question of abortion or on sexual issues and other policy concerns in our culture. Then, what objective morality says about the existence of God. That book is over 20 years old, almost 20 years old and it's still selling. It's still meeting a need because the problem is still there.

The second book I wrote that's in this category is a book on maneuvering in conversations. Some of the materials, most of the material people read in the area that we're talking about now is information stuff, good stuff. We need it. But how do you get the information into play?

Patrick Gentempo: What's the title of this book?

Greg Koukl: This book is called *Tactics*.

Patrick Gentempo: *Tactics*, okay.

Greg Koukl: *A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. I actually start out a plan, a step-by-step way of approaching a conversation, so they look more like diplomacy than D-day, okay?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: A lot of times, it ends up too crazy and we don't want to go there. We want it to be pleasant and nice for people. What I notice is that there's a missing bridge, the bridge from the content to the conversation. How do you get the information into play? That's where the material in this book comes from or what it addresses. What I showed people to do, a number of maneuvers in conversations that will help them in conversations. The core enterprise is technique of using questions to maneuver effectively a conversation. Now, I call it the Columbo tactic because of Lieutenant Columbo. Remember that guy?

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, yeah.

Greg Koukl: He always scratches his head, smoke his cigar, "I don't know. There's something about this that bothers me." That kind of thing and then, he asks that question. It's very simple to use and very, very effective the way I laid it out for folks. That's the second book and this is-

Patrick Gentempo: In that book, with developing that skills that you're describing here, I'm kind of asking a leading question here but ...

Greg Koukl: It's okay.

Patrick Gentempo: Do you find that because somebody, as you develop that skill, it actually self-empowers, not even ... I mean, it's obvious the issue of being able

to be effective in communication, but the more that you become effective and being able to communicate, your own conviction can grow also.

Greg Koukl:

Yeah, yeah. I think what happens in situation more than the conviction growing is the courage to communicate the conviction grows because there's two things that ... probably more, but two things I think that cause, that create courage and one is preparation. You got to plan. Then, you can put on your game face and execute. Even though you're like, "Oh, okay. We got a plan." Then, execute is action. You move. You start moving and that helps you. If people who are nervous and sitting in the sideline, sitting on the bench are given a plan and encourage to just move forward a little bit, they're going to do it or more likely to do it.

So, what I tell people regarding this material as I say, you don't have to swing for the fences is my baseball metaphor here. I say, you don't even have to get on base. That is, you don't have to lead people to Christ. Don't worry about that yet. You don't have to be a great [inaudible 01:01:22], you don't have to be a great theologian, you don't have to even get on base. I just want you to get into a batter's box and this game plan will help you to do that.

Now, this book is a bestseller as it turned out over the last eight years since it's been out. There's a study guide out and everything on it [inaudible 01:01:38] Tactics. I also wrote a book that just came out earlier this year, 2017 in January. The title of that book, which is going to sound familiar because I've been working into our conversation here this whole hour or so that we've been talking is The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and everything important that happens in between.

Patrick Gentempo:

Wow.

Greg Koukl:

Now, that sounds like a lot. The word important is really important there to the title because it is a world history. It's less than 200 pages. What I do is I look 30,000 feet kind of view of Christianity, the big picture, so people don't get lost in the details. I mean to show how it all fits together not only so Christians can understand but for tire-kickers who are thinking about what's going on here.

I can show the coherence and continuity of the Christian worldview from beginning to end in a way that makes sense of the world as we experience it. Back to that earlier comment, my daughter, it's the best explanation for the way things are. Earlier, when I was talking about some of the core concepts of Christianity, I actually walked through my outline from the book because the outline can be given with five words.

Patrick Gentempo:

Go ahead.

Greg Koukl:

Those words are God, man, Jesus, cross, and resurrection. Here, I mean the final resurrection or secured by the resurrection of Jesus, which I do speak about, but I'm talking about the end. I got the beginning, I got the end, and I got everything important that happened in between. You think about it, the important things that happened in the order they

took place, which by the way makes it memorable. It's just five. I just did it on my fingers.

My nine-year-old when she was six, she could do this; God, man, Jesus, cross, resurrection because our story starts with God and then, He makes the most valuable thing in creation human being to be in friendship with him, but then, man got himself on a heap of trouble that required that he get rescued. So, God becomes a man in Jesus to initiate the rescue operation. He accomplished that by the way He lives His life and something He does on a cross, and what we believe about what He did on the cross will determine what happens to us in the final resurrection. There's kind of the big picture. I intend it to be kind of a ... Please forgive me for the comparison, but I wanted it be like a Mere Christianity for a new generation.

Now, I'm a little uncomfortable that because CS Lewis is in a class entirely by himself, and there will be another. That's also true of Mere Christianity. A lot of people find that Mere Christianity is not as accessible for them now as it would've been to an earlier generation and it's been written I think in 1951. My attempt is to write in a kind of accessible style of Lewis covering a lot of the same ground that he did and in an affable manner, you know, a genial way like we're doing now.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: We're just sitting down and talking. I'm talking with the reader. I'm not talking at the reader, I'm not talking to myself or my the reader listening in. I'm talking with the reader and engaging. I'm trying to anticipate objections to what I had just said and then, answering them. My hope is that this will fill a niche not only for younger Christians who want to lay a foundation or for older Christians to clarify the foundation, but this is a book that any Christian can give to a non-Christian friend without embarrassment because I'm not condescending, I'm not patronizing, I'm not overly triumphal in this and I'm not using a bunch of Christian lingo.

I'm just talking like a human being, much like I think we've been talking here in our conversation, in a way that's accessible to people, but still making the case that Christianity is the best explanation for the way things are. Those are the three big titles and there's a spinoff that are in the works for them, but I think if people are interested in learning some of the things that I've said here, then, those would be sources they could go to, to get some really good working knowledge that will help them engage the friends, their acquaintances, other family members.

Patrick Gentempo: With this kind of integrated view of reality, or let's talk about saying there is a view of reality; do you think that there's a fundamental or innate human need to have an integrated view of reality, a way to be able to have things kind of come together and say, "Now, I have a view of reality that I can embrace."?

Greg Koukl: Human beings are true seekers by nature, okay? Some atheists have made the observation that we look to sense out of things, all right? Therefore, because we have this tendency, they are dismissive of intelligent design arguments, "Oh, we're just telling ourselves a story."

We find patterns. That's a way of dismissing what seems to be a pattern of intelligent design. I think that objection defeats itself because maybe we're, yeah, we're finding patterns, which strikes me as a design feature itself. That's one thing.

Secondly, we're finding patterns that are real patterns. I mean, they seem to think that they found a pattern in Darwinian Evolution and it's not enough for me to say to the Darwinists, "Oh, we're just pattern-finding creatures," and just wave my hand so that evolution goes away. That's not the way to treat that kind of idea. I think that we are pattern-finding creatures because there are patterns to be found. One of the patterns, the most meaningful pattern that we're looking for is a pattern that makes sense of our own existence. What's it all about? That's a question that is at the heart of every human being and they ask it at some time in their lives.

Sometimes, people are so distracted by pleasure. People are wealthy enough to distract themselves from the big thing. They can just kind of keep feeding their own senses and keep them distracted, but I think most ordinary people realize that there is meaning to be found and we're not just wishing on a star when we're looking for it. CS Lewis has a famous argument called an argument from desire. Essentially it is, we feel thirsty because there are things that can slake our thirst. If there is nothing to satisfy thirst, there would be not thirst feeling. The same thing with hunger, and sexual desire, and a host of other things.

It says we also have a desire for something else. We have a desire for justice, for example, if justice is not done in this life, on this earth. Therefore, there must be a place where justice is done. There is meaning. As one of the prophets put it, eternity in our hearts. It's built into us. It gives us a hunger for these things, and all of these things suggest that there is a place in principle, at least, where those hungers can be satisfied. They are not satisfied in this world, they must be satisfied in another. It's a huge theme in Lewis' writings and it's one I developed in *The Story of Reality* as well, this yearning that we have.

When Lewis says that, "The door that we've been knocking on all of our lives will finally open," he's referring to this existential yearning and hunger, desire that you just identified for meaning in our life. There is a door that we can go through that will answer all of those questions, but we don't have to wait until the end of life to know that there's a door to go through. We can be on a path towards that door now and we have clues to that, that the author of the story has already given us. There was other clues that we can discover without reading the story, you know, some things are obvious and other things, the author has to tell us. That's where we go to the Bible.

The ancient Hebrew prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, and the people who Jesus taught Himself, personally taught to follow after Him. These are the places we can go for insight into these things. I think when we read these things, and we give it a chance, we don't read it necessarily with a skeptical eye because it's not charitable to pick up an author and just read it with a skeptical eye. Why don't we just let the guy speak for himself and see what resonates with you. I think that what people will

find is that when they read these accounts and what Jesus had to say and what the prophets had to say, then something just happens inside. It resonates with a deep intuition. It provides answer to this question about meaning that churns in all of us at one time or another.

Patrick Gentempo: This brings me to my last question for you.

Greg Koukl: All right.

Patrick Gentempo: You've led a robust intellectual life. You've done a lot of thinking, you've written books, and you have a, maybe mischaracterize but it's called a Christian intelligence.

Greg Koukl: Okay. I'm okay with that. That sounds good. I've not heard of that phrase before, so thank you.

Patrick Gentempo: Okay, great. You have this Christian intelligence that's earned and it turned over a lot of time, and a lot of effort. But there's also to go with it, a Christian heart.

Greg Koukl: Heart, indispensable.

Patrick Gentempo: That's what I like you to speak to now because the passion and the intellectual passion is all there and then, there's this ... Now, you characterized this as an indispensable Christian heart.

Greg Koukl: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: Can you just give me your sentiments around that, even in a personal way?

Greg Koukl: Sure. Yeah. It'll be fair to say that the entire enterprise is about that. When Jesus came, and this is fairly famous like at the Last Supper where He breaks the bread, He gives the wine, He says, "This is the blood of a new covenant. This is My Body broken for you." New covenant. Where did that come from? "New Testament, New Covenant. Oh, right. That's why it's called that." Yes, Jesus is breaking something new, but it had been spoken before. If you go back to the ancient Hebrew prophets like Jeremiah, Jeremiah talks about a new thing God would do that He calls a new covenant, or contract, or agreement, whatever and He says, "Though you have hearts of stone, I will give you a living heart. I will write My laws on your heart."

One of the provisions or the core provision of the New Covenant, which is the point of it all, it's the apex. It's what the whole story has been building towards what God is giving us and made possible through Jesus is a brand new heart restored from this broken, sullied, corrupted, twisted heart that was a result of the fall that we've inherited. Now, we get a new heart. That's why Jesus said, "You must be born again." That's what He's talking about, okay? There's something new that's going to happen. This is the new life. This is the whole point. This restored friendship, relationship, with God that then allows us to track in the kind of direction that God wants us to track and to have the kind of life that He wants us to have.



Jesus talks about eternal life, but sometimes we think about often the future sometime, "When I die, I'll get eternal life." He didn't say. His last night while He was alive, when He was with his apostles in that upper room, He prayed a prayer. He prayed a prayer to the Father and in that prayer, He actually said, He talked about eternal life and He said, "That they may know You." This is eternal life, That they may know you and Your Son, whom You've sent." Real life, it can be handed right away and that is that restored, renewed relationship with the Father. That's what it's all about.

There's a certain sense in which all that we have talked about has really been stepping stones to get people to the door where they enter into what it's really all about, that communion and union with God and that friendship that He intended with us from the beginning. All this other stuff is finding off the naysayers. People trying to drag you away from the path and the door, or whatever. You get the door, "I don't go there. That's dumb. That's stupid. That doesn't make any sense. That's wrong. That's evil. That's bigoted. That's narrow minded." We're answering all of that stuff, so we get people to the door to meet the man, the man, Jesus be restored to the Father.

Back to a parable that Jesus describes, you know, the son who goes away to a far country and spends his money illicitly, and then, he's left not free. Let's go back to the earlier comment about my own destiny. You got to do your own thing, it's free. No, it's free of slavery. He slaved and he said, "Oh, if I could just go back to my father. I do better as a servant, than I'm doing here. Maybe he'll take me back." As he goes back, his father is waiting and he's looking. It's interesting how Jesus tells the parable because it says that he is ... He sees, He speaks, He runs, and He embraces. It's the eyes of love, the mouth of love, the arms of love, the legs of love. It's all welcoming and pulling the son, "My son who is lost is now found."

See, that's what we want. We want people to go back to the Father. We want people to go back to the Father. What happens when they go back to the Father? Well, they are restored to the right relationship with God. Now, they're back in the family, but this is when the fun begins and I kind of raise my eyebrows because fun is not always fun when you're in the midst of it because we're a mess. Even though we're made right with God because of what Jesus did for us, we still got a lot to learn and to do. This is when we embark on a lifetime existential journey with God as He puts us through our paces to raise us up as children into adults, spiritually. That's not easy. That's not fun.

A lot of times, you hear Christians, in my view, they're a little over triumphal. Everything is great. Everything's wonderful. Wow, fabulous. Isn't it great to know the Lord? He'll fix your marriage. He'll straighten out your kids, straighten out your finances, and get your business deal [inaudible 01:16:59], "Wait a minute." That is what He promised. Does Jesus work? It depends on what you expect Him to do. Some things He works really good for, other things, He wasn't intended to do. What God uses, what God does in our life is to make us like Jesus. That's His commitment, and He uses all the hardship of our lives, and the joys as payoffs at different times to do that, but that's a life-long process.

Jesus said, "In this world, you have to tribulation, but, be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." My life, I'm very personal now, my life is ... I've been Christian 43 or 44 years almost now and it's not been easy. It's been a real challenge in a lot of ways. I'm not trying to be modeling or people feel sorry for myself, but I do want to be honest with folks. You want to walk with God, that's where you belong and the alternative is not good. But God's going to be a Father to you, He's not Santa Claus. He's not your Uncle Harry who bought you all the gifts or whatever. He's not your wife. He's not a sexual partner. He is a good father who doesn't make mistakes, has your best interest in mind and knows how to get you there. If you want to walk on that road, that's reality. That is a story of reality.

Patrick Gentempo: On that note, I want to say, thank you so much for sharing all of these with, you know, a lifetime of work with us here. I'm very awed by the communication and the eloquence in which you do it. I just want to say on behalf of myself and everybody who's going to see this that we have a deep appreciation for you. Thank you.

Greg Koukl: It's been a great pleasure for me to talk. Thank you.

Gretchen Jensen: Welcome back. Coming up now is the interview with Hermana Vilijeon. Tell us how that went.

Patrick Gentempo: My interview with Hermana Vilijeon was quite captivating. Hermana Vilijeon is working with Father [Kelly 01:19:16] and Magdala and has really brought a light on that whole project and the female view of Christianity in general. When you watch the interview, it's very engaging. I think it's very revealing in many ways and it's something that I found to be profound. In addition to that, I'm realizing, my goodness, we're down to the end of Episode 7 after this interview, wow. I mean, the journey has been amazing. Hard to believe we're already here at Episode 7 of our nine-part docu series with Christ Revealed: The History, The Evidence, The Inspiration but what I will promise you is that the next two episodes have amazing content that you want to engage it. It actually builds to a crescendo. Stay tuned with us.

Also, I want to remind you that you can own Christ Revealed and while the series is running right now, you can get it at 50% off the normal price. There's a variety of packages for you. We certainly appreciate the people who are supporting this project. There's a lot of great stuff to come, but I would definitely take advantage of getting it at 50% off right now. We certainly appreciate the support and we're going to continue this amazing journey with you.

Thanks for taking some time to speak with us today. This is a very inspired location, right here, near the Sea of Galilee. First tell us just a little bit about your interest, and education, your background.

Hermana Vilijeon: Thank you for the privilege. It's wonderful, wonderful honor. I did a degree in History and Geography of Israel here in Jerusalem. Part of my course included Archeology and I really wanted to do hands-on an excavation. I had the privilege to do so in 2012, which was about the fourth year of the discovery of Magdala. I was able to work here and

just participate in the dig. The synagogue that we discovered here is from the 1st century, 2,000 years old and that was discovered in about 2009. There are about seven synagogues from this period in the country of Israel, but this one's the only one at the Sea of Galilee.

Patrick Gentempo: This is interesting. Talk about how this all unfolded here. How did it become an archeological site?

Hermana Vilijeon: It was kind of a surprise for Father Juan, the person that is the Father, the visionary of the site. He wanted to build a guest house, a program center down at the Sea of Galilee, and that was his dream. He wanted to have a boat and boats as a theme because of the fishers, disciples in the context of Jesus. He just didn't know that in the land that he was raising funds to purchase, it was actually an entire 2,000-year-old city underneath the ground.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Hermana Vilijeon: In Israel, there's a law that if you want to build anything, the Israel Antiquities has to come and probe the soil, so they sunk 10 different squares and everywhere, they discovered something; channels, straights, houses, harbor, and I said the synagogue and also purification baths. It became a sensation overnight.

Patrick Gentempo: This is a synagogue that existed in Jesus' time when He was here.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: This is the area that Jesus spent much of His time.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes, yes. There are many, many synagogues in Israel, but there's only seven from the 1st century. Some of them are at Masada, close to Jericho, near Tel Aviv, but it wasn't Jesus's area.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Hermana Vilijeon: Like you said, this is the only here at the Sea of Galilee, which allows us to see how it looked in the setting where He would've engaged people.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Hermana Vilijeon: I don't know if you know that, but in archeology, we discovered a fishing industry, a salted fishing industry here. Josephus had his military headquarters here, so he wrote a few things about Magdala. One of the things that he wrote is that there was a salted fishing industry. We actually discovered those fishing pools right next to one another. It's actually like a shop. There's a street area. You come off the street into the shop and then, it has these basins that are plastered and each one of them has a fresh water well. It's very much a fishing town. Like you said, right on the Sea of Galilee with all the elements of Jesus' disciples right here. It's very exciting. Josephus also says that from the fishing industry, they exported as far as Rome and Damascus, which gives an understanding of why archeologists see the synagogue as the most

beautiful and the base preserved. Josephus indicated that there was a huge economic benefit in this city.

Patrick Gentempo: Josephus was the historian who wrote about this city.

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right, yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: This becomes kind of interesting because so much of what's written in the Bible is corroborated by an independent historian. Again, we're in the area of Jesus and understanding that you're right here in the Sea of Galilee where we are, you're fishing and there's still people out there fishing.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: 2,000 years later.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah. I mean, if I look out the window, you can see ... Not there now, but early in the morning, you'll surely see a fishing boat and the nets. It's amazing. They're still doing it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, [inaudible 01:24:55]. One of the prime discoveries, I guess, that came out of the dig is the, they call it the Magdala Stone?

Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah, that's right.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell us about that.

Hermana Vilijeon: In the synagogue, almost in the center of it, we discovered a stone which is called the Magdala Stone that has ... I don't even know how to describe. Probably about three-quarters of a meter to half a meter and its parameters are also half-a-meter high. This is the first time that we find anything that represents the temple at the time of Jesus. On the front side of this carved stone, it's a beautiful sculpture, we have the oldest menorah in Israel that we've ever found an archeology. On the back side, we have a primitive expression of the Chariot of Fire, God's mobile throne. On the sides, you have the colonnades and on the top, we have several symbols. The largest of them, which is a rosette that has become the insignia of Magdala. Right now, that stone is in Rome on display. We've two replicas available here for people who visit the site that can look at it and discuss it.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, we are in the area that Mary Magdalene is from.

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: Hence, Magdala, it describes this particula area.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: It's interesting, you know, as we sit here in this church and I was getting the interpretations of the inscriptions that are around us, and it brings forth the understanding of the feminine in scripture. You've been having

some experience, I guess, with this particular topic. Can you speak to that a little bit and what you've been doing?

Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah. I'm glad you noticed that because the artist was very careful to give the worship center, the shape of a woman. There are a lot of rounded shapes and the colors are more muted than you normally see in Tiberius. In Tiberius and the Galilee area, you'll see black stone, white stone in sharp contrast. But over here, it's brown and beige. In the atrium behind me, there are these columns that have been shaped according to Greek architecture, the exact parameters, but it has a feminine, a slender shape. On each of them are the names of New Testament women, more than one. There's Mary and Martha. There's the mother-in-law of Peter. There is several other names; Mary Magdalene, et cetera. Then, one column without a name.

The reason for this women's atrium, which is where you read the inscription is that Father Juan said, "If Mary Magdalene got healed of seven demons, then, other women must also find hope and healing in this place." He fondly sometimes say that, "Every woman that loves God and loves by faith can write her name on the column that doesn't have a name on it." Then he says, "My mother raised 13 children and she's worthwhile honoring." Yes, it's a high priority for Father Juan who felt that this center should represent the public life of Jesus, that specifically his tender treatment of women should be drawn forward, it should be displayed. There's various places in this building where you see a focus on women.

Patrick Gentempo: There's a particular part of the Scripture that I think you said speaks to this that I'd love for you to share with us.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes. In Luke 13, there's a moment where Jesus engages a woman in a synagogue. Now, the important thing here is to understand that even though later on, woman had a separate court in the temple, at this stage when they were still in the synagogue, it's open for women, for men and for various kinds of approaches to religion like we read of Sadducees, Pharisees. Jesus' ministry is launched in a context where it's not homogenous thinking. It's not just people that think in one direction like today's synagogues and churches would have a specific, you know, like the Methodist or the reformed synagogue. Over there, it was open. It was a public space.

First of all, these women in here, it says in Luke 13:16, "On the Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then, He put His hands on her and immediately, she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So, come and be healed on those days, but not on the Sabbath."

The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites. Doesn't each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it

water? Then, should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had kept bound for eighteen long years be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her? When He said this, all His opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things He was doing." Now, what strikes me about this passage is, number one, Jesus says to this man, He uses two extremes. First of all, He calls this woman, a daughter of Abraham, which was unheard of. He innovates her dignity to a place where people were shocked, like only men were called sons of Abraham.

Then, He compares this man's hypocrisy, and He refers to animals. Now, if you see the context, the culture context in which Jesus engaged women, you will understand that especially from the Greek background, which influenced Roman thinking, which then had a profound effect upon Judaism, a woman was considered like an animal. In fact, Semonides, which came a little bit later than Homer that wrote the first creation story of where a woman came about, Semonides said a woman came about by one of ten animal sources; a donkey, a dog, a weasel, a fox. I think the most positive one is a bee. When Jesus says to this man, "Your animal, you would've untied him," it's not an unfamiliar idea to them because they believe that you could use a woman, you could enslave her, you could sell her, you could in some cases even you can kill her.

The civilization that had the worst attitude towards women were the Greeks. If you read their wise men and what they said, it's really shocking. But Jesus comes and in that backdrop, He treats women with the greatest respect and He spends the longest recorded conversation with a woman, the Samaritan woman at the well. We see that very soon, there was a following of women that went after Him. It says in Luke 8:2 that some of these women supported Him with their means. Also, the cross, when the men leave, Mary Magdalene remains and His mother, and several of the other women. So, yeah, Jesus had a profound ... I almost would dare to say, a revolutionary approach towards women.

Patrick Gentempo: It seems again, that here, from almost the moment you come in, the Magdala Stone, you come into this church, there's an honoring of the feminine in this place. Now, you've also been having, I guess, interaction with women in Israel and Arab women, et cetera. Can you speak to that and what the experience has been?

Hermana Vilijeon: I think I just need to say this to create the context for it. It's not like that there has been a male dominance and women were subjugated, and now, the scale is swinging to the opposite. It's not that. Jesus carried the Heart of the Father. In the Father's Heart, there are ... It's just His family, your sons and daughters. When the prophet Joel says, "I will pour out my spirit on your sons and your daughters, your menservants and your maidservants," he's laying the templates for what Jesus would begin to live. We're seeing now that in certain cultures like for example, the Arab culture, it is the first time ever that they are beginning to feel they have a voice.

We have just completed last week, we just completed an Arab women's conference which was the fifth of its kind and without going into too much detail because it was very emotional and very sensitive some of the things that happened here, but at this conference, we felt that we had to give men an opportunity to ... or at least one man an opportunity to speak on behalf of men. It's normally just women that lead women, and teach women how the Holy Spirit flows and give them opportunity to get healed. We had a gentleman, a fairly elderly gentleman that spoke and he just apologized. He just said, "The wrongs done to women are ancient."

Some of these cultures without singling-out, some of the Pagan religious cultures, they view a woman as less valuable. When a baby girl is born, they don't celebrate her, but in some cultures, they actually try to get rid of her. In the Arab culture, it's often just a case that in the family, she's seen as the person that's supposed to be in the kitchen, be the servant, eat after the men, and then when it comes to church, she definitely does not have a voice. This gentleman was a pastor. He was just apologizing from his heart, repenting, and saying, "We realized that the way that we've viewed you has done damage to the value that the Father created in you. We want to say, we're sorry for that."

Also, he spoke about the sexual approach sometimes towards women in which even though there might not be physically taken advantage of, there's a whole viewing. He just apologized and when he did that, there was a very, very overwhelming response. There were many of the women that were brought to tears, and the next day, we had to do deep, deep ministry, healing and deliverance because of the things that rose to the surface when he spoke. We're seeing beautiful things happening in this land.

Patrick Gentempo: That's wonderful. There's a lot of significant, just talking to other people about this archeological dig, this stone, et cetera. There are some people have described a great, great importance to it. Do you see it that way also?

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes, definitely. Often, when I guide groups here, I say that the stone is like the diamond in the ring. The setting has [inaudible 01:37:33] in gold and beauty. The whole city that was discovered here is so precious. It's such a treasure that God has given us after 2,000 years. How do you hide this city of this size for so long? It's really a remarkable discover, but the stone is something like the Jewish people would say, mashu mashu. It's something very special. Why? Well, number one, it is a representation and artwork that speaks of the temple and that actually portrays a person that was an eye witness. Like if you look on the Arc of the Triomphe in the Titus Arch in Rome, you would see that the [inaudible 01:38:24] has a steep structure as its foot.

Over here, it has a tripod. It has three legs and you must believe that it's a person that was an eye witness, that actually saw it. For me personally, the backside of the stone or the Holy of Holies is the most beautiful and the most valuable. The reason I see it that way is the Chariot of Fire opens up a whole different theme. We know that the glory of God departed from the threshold of the temple. First from the

Holy of Holies, and then, the Book of Ezekiel it says eventually, it leaves the temple itself. Then, it leaves the East Gate of the country. But, then, there's a place in the Book of Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39 where it says, "The glory returns".

What is this glory? What is it about in the physical representation, it was a chariot that had four living creatures with four different faces, and it had wheels within wheels, and fire and lightning all over the place. What it essentially communicates is that when somebody's in trouble, God comes and He rides the clouds very swiftly. It makes me think of Jonathan Helser who says, "My father can fly faster than I can fall." I think for Israel per se, it's a beautiful encouragement to just say, "God is still on the throne and when we cry, He is super fast." Here in Israel, just beyond the Golan border, we have some real dangers. It's good news to know that He is there and that He responds when we're in trouble.

It's a message of encouragement to everybody like the lion faces, you know, "When you're in danger, I'll eat up your enemies." The ox says, "I'll be a servant to you and the burden that you bear." The eagle says, "I'll lift you out of your circumstances and give you perspective, and make you see what I see." The man says, "I have compassion because I really understand." These four sentries, when we look at them in archeology, like we found ... Archeologists have discovered 10 of these living creatures or cherubim throughout the world, but if I personally stand next to the ones in the British Museum, I don't even reach its knee. There were always pictures of strength and intelligence, and speed and they were mainly found at the gates of cities and at a king's throne, next to a king's throne. What they say in this context as we look at it in our study of the stone, is they just say, "These are attributes of the Father himself, that He cares, that He hears, and that He is a Savior at His essence.

- Patrick Gentempo: The stone, you refer to it as a representation of the temple. You're talking about the temple in Jerusalem. This is the Second Temple, I guess.
- Hermana Vilijeon: That's right.
- Patrick Gentempo: Is this considered one of the more accurate artifacts depicting the temple? Are there any other artifacts that show like a model of it?
- Hermana Vilijeon: There are not. There are not. This is the only one that they had found. It's the only 3-D model that they had found.
- Patrick Gentempo: That's important. That's like, it's not just some [inaudible 01:41:57] with some kind of a flat picture or a drawing, but it's literally a 3-D model of the temple at the time that it existed.
- Hermana Vilijeon: That's right. Yeah.
- Patrick Gentempo: It doesn't exist anymore.



Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah. It had a very interesting shape. It kind of slants, so that you wonder if it's a foot stool and it had these art croppings in the corners that you're thinking, "Okay, was there a wooden lectern put on top of it? Was it the Torah reading stone or was it just liturgical furniture? What is this exactly?" What is interesting to me, is that that stage with the Second Temple period, the real Arc of the Covenant wasn't in it anymore. Remember that that was removed at the time of the Babylonian exile.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Hermana Vilijeon: The interpretation that we have of the Chariot of Fire are spiritual thinkers. It's people who have a high value for God, and of the temple, and the Holy of Holies. They're using, they're connecting a number of scriptures in the Bible in order to come to this representation. But for them to say, "Yes, we know. We go to the temple three times a year, but we want that temple to be in our midst." It's says something of the Jewish heart and appreciation towards the temple and its value for it.

Patrick Gentempo: You talked about the Holy of Holies. That was like the most inner sanctum in the temple.

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: I think, was it only the highest rabbi that could enter once a year, I think?

Hermana Vilijeon: The high priest.

Patrick Gentempo: The high priest, rather ...

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: ... could enter once a year and that was it.

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right. That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: It was sort of this fabled thing, but to say that, "Wow, there's actually a 3-D model of it," that comes from then, did we learn anything that we didn't otherwise know about it?

Hermana Vilijeon: The top surface fascinates me. This big rosette is still a question. Rina Talgam from Hebrew University was the professor tasked with researching this stone and she's been doing that for the past five plus years. What we thought is going to be an archeological article is now a book. They're asking, "What is this rosette? Is it like an embroidery on the veil?"

Patrick Gentempo: Yes, it sort of looks like a flower?

Hermana Vilijeon: That's right. It's a six-pickled flower.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Hermana Vilijeon: If I'm allowed to give my opinion, I think it has a different meaning. In archeology, I've noticed that this specific symbol is found very much on ossuaries. From that period, you find that when ... First of all, I have to say that the approach towards burial and resurrection has changed by the time of Jesus. In the time of King David, or even earlier with Abraham, the Scripture would say, "He died, and he was gathered to his Fathers," which just means his bones were thrown into a common repository and that's how he was gathered. But by the time of Jesus, there's a distinct belief in resurrection. By now, they put the person up on a flat slab to have his bones decompose and then, gather the bones. They get the corpse to decompose.

They put the person into a [inaudible 01:45:10] which is half-a-meter high, half-a-meter wide, and they put their embalmed body into the shaft and then, they close it with a [inaudible 01:45:16], stone that fits into it. Then, after a year, they take the bones and then, they put that in an ossuary. An ossuary was as wide as your skull and as long as your femur. On most of these ossuaries from the 2nd temple period, we find a rosette. If we look at gravestones and why, and how we engrave our tombstones today, you would immediately think, "Why this specific symbol repeats? Here, it has six petals. In the next ossuary, it has eight petals or ten, or twelve, or a myriad of petals. Why always this flower?"

Then, I'm beginning to say, "Well, maybe it was the symbol of the hope of afterlife." Now, suddenly, not on an ossuary, but you find it on this stone that represents the temple. What if the artist was saying, "Okay. The greatest hope of afterlife is God himself." Like you said, the high priest had a brush with death when he would go in there especially if it was a reverent. In my opinion, I think that that rosette has something to do with the very theme of Magdala, which is the message that Mary Magdalene come away with, which is He is risen.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. When you said you had a desire, I guess, earlier, you said that you're hoping you'd get in on a dig; did you ever expect it to be something of this significance?

Hermana Vilijeon: No. What I didn't expect is that it would attract so much interest. Busloads full of internationals come and see this site. It's become one of the must-sees in the land and in the Galilee. But, a large percentage of Jewish people come here and they not only see the archeology, they see the synagogue, they see the Mikvaot and then, they ask, "What is this building?" They come down here and when we see them again, they're not coming with a group. They're coming with their families and they run down to this place first. They say, "This is such a nice place. I like the artwork and the feeling is so good." All of this is surprising to us. It adds to the treasure that we've discovered.

Patrick Gentempo: What's it like when you get down into the actual dig and you're uncovering things through that process? What's the experience like for you?

Hermana Vilijeon: It's very, very hard work.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Hermana Vilijeon: We dig in the summer, which means it's very high temperatures and we arise at about four in the morning, four or five in the morning. We have our breakfast, our first bowl of cereal at that stage, and then, by 11:00, you're ravenous. You're hungry again. You work really, really hard but every person that comes has this expectation to a greater or a lesser amount that they will find something. It's like a glorified treasure hunt. You hope to find a coin. You hope to find even a horse's tooth or a piece of glass or something. It's amazing. If you find something in stone like I once found half a grinding stone, but when we discovered specifically the big stone, the one that's represented above the temple, it was something else.

Actually, Dina Gorni who was the archeologist that oversaw this dig right in the beginning, she said when they began to excavate the wall of the synagogue, she was in shock. For three days, she didn't tell anybody that she actually thought this was a synagogue. You know, archeology is a science. If you make a foolish exclamation right from the beginning, yeah, you get forgiven, but later on-

Patrick Gentempo: Hurt your reputation, yeah.

Hermana Vilijeon: Hurt your reputation maybe [inaudible 01:49:03]. She was so excited that this place was found and of course, the Mikvaot, the purification pools, when we discovered that the water started coming up after 2,000 years, we had to have it connected to a pump and get the water pumped out, so that we could excavate that place. It's a great adventure. You know, something radically changed in me. In beginning, I thought, well, long before I studied, I thought, "What makes somebody want to get into a hole and not get out of it?"

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, in great heat.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yes. But now, with archeology, you get in there and you just want to go to the lowest level. What is special about Magdala is that, because it's a First Century dig, it means it is the lowest level for us, at least. We haven't found any lower levels and it's a single period find which is an archeologist's dream.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Hermana Vilijeon: Tel Megiddo, if you cut a shaft through that city, you'll find 21 or 25 layers of civilization and at the top, you find a stone that was used in the Chalcolithic period.

Patrick Gentempo: Right, right.

Hermana Vilijeon: It's a great joy when you discover things that have not been dismantled in order to build something else and it's just almost in situ, as is.

Patrick Gentempo: This is, what's I guess, really remarkable. It is a find from the time of Jesus, in the place where Jesus lived and spent much of His time, and so many of the stories and the history Jesus comes right from this area.

Hermana Vilijeon: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: There it is, all in place, sitting there in the ground just being uncovered. That would be quite an extraordinary experience. How has it impacted your faith, if at all?

Hermana Vilijeon: Wow. I think if I look at the word magda which means tower and its root is gadol which means big, and [ligadol 01:50:58] that means grow, I think in Mary Magdalene, I saw a woman that was within the short span of her engagement with Jesus, grew to a point of maturity that I would like to be. Somewhere in those three years, whether it was at the beginning of His life or whether it was in the last year of His ministry, she was set free from seven demons. When we engage her at the point where Jesus entrusts the good news to her, to go tell His brothers, we see that she has walked to a place of faithfulness where she didn't run away at the crucifixion. She was the first one there at the morning of the tomb, after the Sabbath.

How did she come to a place of such rapid growth? For me, it's become an inspiration that in the shortest possible time, she has loved Jesus so much and she has probably walked in the road of obedience to such an extent that He entrusted her and had surely become an inspiration for me. Just what Jesus carried in terms of His love for the Father, and who He was as a Man, you know, that painting down in the Encounter Chapel, which shows His feet as really big, sometimes, I sit there and I think about Him and I think how big He is, and how He became small, He became small enough to fit in a woman's womb, but He is so huge in what He has accomplished and what His heart is, and the honor the Father bestowed upon Him. I think I've come to know him a little bit more and the desire is growing as I have the privilege to be in this place.

Patrick Gentempo: We have had the privilege of being with you and I very much appreciate you sharing your inspiration with us. It's been really a wonderful experience to learn about the work you're doing and what this place is meaning to the world.

Hermana Vilijeon: Thank you so much.

Patrick Gentempo: Thank you.

Hermana Vilijeon: You're welcome.

Gretchen Jensen: That was amazing. I am just blown away by all that we've been able to show you, and I've been a part of it, too. Coming up tomorrow on Episode 8, we have an interview with Dr. Gabriel Barkay and he will be taking us through a wonderful journey to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We also have another interview with Kim Dorr-Tilley.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes. So, a very special day tomorrow. For me, I know what's coming and it makes me kind of well up with a lot of joy because there's some really special elements that we're going to be bringing to the table starting with Dr. Gabriel Barkay or we call Gabi was how we referred to him when we were talking to him. This is a man who's got a very distinguished pedigree, if you will, a background that is somewhat

unmatched in Israel for some of the discoveries that he'd made which we'll talk about tomorrow.

He's just such an intelligent man with a great wit and we started out with an interview on a rooftop in Jerusalem. It's an outdoor interview, amazing conversation. Then, we walked right up the street and we go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I have to tell you that when you walk in there, you know, you are in a very holy place. That particular tour in that church is extraordinary. I can't wait to walk you through that. You're going to be very moved by it.

Then, we have an interview with Kim Dorr-Tilley. Kim is an associate pastor at the Bel Air Church. I have to tell you, when your mission is to save some souls in Hollywood, you got a pretty big mission and to hear her talk about her years there working in Hollywood, and the type of work that she's been doing, and her experience; it can't help but bring inspiration. I can remember tearing up in that interview more than a couple of times. Get ready for some big inspiration when you listen to Kim Dorr-Tilley.

It also feels a little bit bittersweet to me right now. We're just concluding Episode 7 of our nine-part series. This has been an amazing journey and I have to tell you, there's a crescendo that we're building to. For example, in Episode 9, we have my interview with Governor Mike Huckabee. You just want to tune in for that. I also need to remind you that while the episodes are running right now as we're coming to the end, that you can own Christ Revealed for 50% off the normal price. I think you can see now how important this content is, how inspiring it is, how it can change lives. For yourself and maybe even for some people that you really care about, it's a great time to invest in Christ Revealed.

Check out the packages we have. Make the right decision for you. We certainly appreciate the support. I look forward to seeing you in the next episode.