

My talk will, first of all, be directed to all the people who, for the last 2 days complained to me that most of the talks went way over their head. They're all mixed up about replacement theology and the opposite, the conservative few and I only want to say that replacement theology misses half of the Bible, and the traditional misses the other half. And we're going to try to get them together today. I want to tell you something that you can work with and, basically, this does not mean that there are no brains required, but it does not mean, either, that I will be anti-church because until today I'm still canon of the church in Iran, special assistant to the bishop and we still work there and visit there. But I will say a few things that you may never have heard before.

One, I take, as a missionary, the missionary point of view. No message that cannot be preached everywhere to all people at all times is fully of God. I came to that thought years ago when I was discussing this issue on the TBN Television in California. I think Hal Lindsay was in the conversation and it was at the high days of communism and they were discussing prosperity theology. I said, "Wait a minute. If you really believe this, you should go to Siberia, preach this message in the Gulag Archipelago and become as famous as Solzhenitshin, at that time, and tell them how to raise funds, buy the camp and then they're free!" That's the implementation of their prosperity theology. For some reason, they didn't do that. Then I say, you cannot preach it anywhere, because God's message is universal: God so loved the world. God loves people, first and foremost. Anything that would limit this presentation, that cannot be of God.

And I apply the same to the message today. I cannot go to Afghanistan (I still do) and then preach about Israel or do that in Pakistan or in Kashmir or in Iran. Well, if I cannot speak about Israel and the Promised Land and Zionism there, then I cannot do it anywhere. It's not of God. As simple as that. That's my standpoint. So, staying with that vision of the universal love of God for all people we are faced with the situation that so many limitations are placed on us as missionaries and I also want to refer to the book that Colin Chapman wrote, "Whose Promised Land?", I think page 287, that the justification of the State of Israel by Christians in the West is a hindrance for the preaching of the Gospel in the Middle East. No hindrance whatsoever is acceptable to us as Evangelicals, or to the church at large taking the great commission seriously. Whatever hinders it is not of God; we must reject it. Whatever hinders it delays the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he said, (Mark 13:10): "This gospel must be preached to all nations. Then shall the end come." So, even end time theologies and prophecies (I always get mixed up between predictions and speculations and prophecy. I don't know the difference really.) But we Christians, by not fulfilling or accepting any hindrance to the full proclamation of the gospel, we prolong the mystery in the world. It's in our hands to further the Kingdom, hasten the coming of the Lord. If we don't do that, then we are guilty. That's what I wanted to say about the missionary view.

The second is an interesting one. Nobody believes the Bible literally. I haven't met anyone yet. We all live by interpretations. Even one of the best known Zionist leaders in Jerusalem spoke to me personally about this and said, "Andrew, all the bad prophecies in the Bible are not for us. They're for the others." It's interpretation. He can have his; let me please have mine. If you believe literally and we must be careful because I don't want to sound negatively or critically. How then do we handle these difficult questions that they put to me when I visit with the fundamentalist leaders. When they cross examine me on my beliefs. When they tell me, "Andrew, I spent 10 or 15 years in prison

and all I had to read was this book, the Bible. Tell me..." and then they go on to Jericho and those famous stories. Do we really believe the Bible literally, or do we realize that if we did, we would not be able to live. I just quote a little bit about the problems that we all face with our young people of today. "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and though they discipline him, he will not listen to them, then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders and they shall say to the elders, 'Our son is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice.' He is a glutton and a drunkard. He is probably addicted to porno or internet or computers. And what do the elders say? They will stone him to death because there was no solution in the Old Testament. So, be careful in our encounter with Islam, and we have many of them, do we really put forth the scripture as if we obey every bit because then they come back to us and say, how about the Koran? If I would select all of the verses that we disagree with in the Old Testament we are not any better than the Koran and we love to emphasize how cruel they are. So are we, if... The New Testament isn't any better. Jesus in the Golden Rule, in the Sermon on the Mount, what did he say about men who look at girls? And, between us, all men do. What does Jesus say? "If your eye offends you, pluck it out, throw it away." Have you ever been to an evangelical church where there were many people with one eye left? Or if your hand steals or fills out the wrong application with the tax man or whatever, did you cut off your right hand as Jesus says you should? Any members in your church that have only one arm? And they would have no arms, but having missed one, they could not hack off the other one anyway. How practical, how honest, how realistic are we really in dealing with scripture? I tell you, you don't get anywhere that way. I know one story that happened in Cairo in the early days of Islam when a cobbler by the name of Shaman, when the church was challenged by the Moslems. "If your God, as Jesus said, can say to the mountain, be moved. If you say it, can your God do it? If yes, we'll believe; if no, we'll kill you." Well, it's a fair proposal. Really. We are still living in the time of confrontation. And they had no answer really, except one man, the man I just described. He was a cobbler and he had to measure women's legs for new shoes and he looked at her leg and he took the consequences. And he went home and he plucked out his eye. And he became very famous as a man of God. And when the Christians panicked, he said, "it will be done." And he stood there and that mountain in Cairo moved and people under the mountain saw he sunset and came back, and today that is the very place where the largest church in all of North Africa is, the Muqata Mountain. It's 15,000 seats. I've preached there 3 times already. I'm now on the blacklist; I won't get in anymore.

Do we really come up with answers that can be applied, that can be understood and that make sense? Or are we living on interpretations, most of them contradictory because there are so many interpretations, so many present day theologians for interpretations that we kill each other. Ireland has already been mentioned, but it is in no way the exception. I tell you, God is too big for that. Don't ever blame God for those interpretations where the truth has been hijacked and caused so much denominationalism. We all suffer because of that.

Now, does God still speak today? The reason that we are here is because we are serious in seeking answers that we can apply to the need in the world. I wish we had time to tell about our experiences. They asked us literally, they asked me and I accepted to lecture in

the Hamas University in Gaza. They asked me to lecture in the madrasas in Pakistan where 90% of the graduates go straight to join the Taliban and the Al Qaeda. But they say, "Andrew, we first want you to come and tell us more about Jesus." This is a day of unparalleled opportunities. If we take an honest view and don't say "this is what the Bible says" because I wonder whether the Bible says what I just mentioned to you. You laughed. Why? Because you recognize it. We want the reality of the kingdom of God which is inside us. But let me go back to the Old Testament for just a minute. When they built a temple in Jerusalem, the first under Solomon, they boxed God in and He never came out again. From that time onward God only spoke through the prophets, not to the people. He was not a personal God anymore. And the prophets, there were many false ones among them. Read the Old Testament. Jesus said, "You killed them." Because people didn't want to hear what the prophets had to say from God. But the temple was still there, and revered. But it did no good at all. Stephen says later, in Acts 7, "which of the prophets did they not kill?" That's an open question. Give me a list, Stephen said. You killed the prophets and then you killed Jesus. That is the truth. And then God spoke again in Bethlehem. He spoke to men and women and children. The angels heralded the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the word became flesh. And then as the canon of the Bible was established and through many incidences, the Reformation took place, and we arrived at the sola scriptura position and then we boxed God into a book and we won't let him come out. I tell you, those fundamentalist Christians that I meet, they believe the Bible from cover to cover, but they make every attempt to keep Him between the covers. But God wants to jump out, to reach our hearts and do something. The Word has become flesh but we keep God within the book, and then we have selected verses and every denomination and every direction and every whatever has their own hobby verses and all those interpretations tend to lead us away from Him who is the truth. The result, of course, is all the many sects, the many denominations and truth has been hijacked. And again, God is too big for that.

The Bible is not a handbook for war, not even Deuteronomy in spite of what General Dayan said, that he used the Bible as a textbook. The Bible is NOT a textbook for war. But through it, the Bible still speaks to us. How does God speak to us today? Does God speak to you? Are you part of the solution or are you still part of the problem? By aligning yourself with a certain interpretation you move yourself outside into the parking lot where you cannot be reached and God cannot reach you anymore. I want you to be open to the voice of God today. And please don't agree with everything and everyone and I believe you don't even have to agree with God as long as you fight with him. But don't let Him go. Let God speak to your heart. Be real and then the other side will respect us. They will say "Andrew," they will say "John," they will say "Peter," whatever your name, come and tell us more about Jesus, because this is the Jesus we want to love, this is the Jesus we want to follow, this is the Jesus we want to hear more about. I don't think there will ever be a full fledged Christian church of ex-Muslims. Maybe looking at the West, coming from the West, maybe our time is just about up. I don't want to sound like a prophet. I'm just saying what I feel in my heart because liberalism and modernism pave the way for another religion or ideology with a worldview. At this moment I only see one in the whole world that has a worldview and that's Islam. We don't have it; we're too ecumenical. We're too tolerant; we're too nice to everybody. Can we still reach them? Yes, we can. As John already said in his

introduction, by calling them your friend. Why do I say that? When Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Judas stepped forward to betray him with a kiss, what did Jesus say? Friend. Friend, is that the way you do it? Friend. Once a friend, always a friend. We have no enemies because everyone is the object of the love of God and we dare not call anyone an enemy. And if we call them friend, by definition we can never preach the gospel to your enemy, but you can share Jesus with your friend. Let's get on and do that, and do it well. God bless you. Amen.