



"The greatest challenge facing mankind is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda."

—Michael Crichton

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A World Upside-Down

[God](#) thunders in [Isaiah 5:20](#), "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" In this verse, He pronounces a curse on those who judge a matter exactly opposite to reality, and its connection to the surrounding verses suggests that such people do this knowingly to deceive others. The two immediately preceding verses condemn those who [sin](#) blatantly and then taunt God to come and punish them, and the following verse censures "those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (verse 21). The subjects of these three "woes" hang together as facets of humanity in rebellion against God: the brazen sinner, the cunning spinmeister, and the self-righteous know-it-all.

Most people have little difficulty spotting the brash sinner and the puffed-up know-it-all, but the crafty spinmeister can easily fool us into thinking along the lines on which he leads us. Millions of Americans and others around [the world](#) are still twisted like pretzels after the Clinton administration's eight years of spin—to the point that his sixtieth birthday has been marked here and abroad as a watershed event for the Baby Boomer generation. Perhaps there is no clearer example of turning matters upside-down than Bill Clinton's infamous line of defense during the 1998 Monica Lewinsky scandal: "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is." To him, even the meaning of English's most basic word of existence could be manipulated to obfuscate.

We live in a world of spin. From celebrities to corporations to nations, everyone is engaged in a fierce public relations battle for the loyalty and affection of as much of the population as possible. The objective of their efforts is not one of the nobler virtues—[peace](#), truth, freedom, service, and justice, among others, although these words may be used in their rhetoric—but simply allegiance at any cost. A celebrity puts on a public persona to gain fans who will pay for his entertainment offerings, and his "people" ensure his foibles never make the evening news—and if they do, they are paid good money to cast them in a positive light. Companies do this with their operations and products, and nations do this with their policies and practices.

Now even non-state actors—read, terrorist organizations—busily attempt to shape world opinion in their favor by controlling the news. In the case of the recent Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, Hezbollah has

managed to convince most of the world that it won the month-long war in total opposition to the facts on the ground. In reality, their stronghold, southern Lebanon, lies in ruins, devastated by weeks of nearly constant bombing and mortar fire, besides the ground actions of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Hundreds of its fighters are dead, its medium-range missile inventory has been destroyed, and much of its physical infrastructure lies as rubble. Because it provoked the Israelis into retaliating, Hezbollah has lost huge numbers of its dwindling supply of supporters both to death in the war and to disaffection; only a few hundred citizens showed up at its most popular victory march in south Beirut. It is desperately trying to win them back with gifts of \$12,000 per household to pay for destroyed homes and lives (ironically, they are paying in U.S. dollars, most likely counterfeited in Iran and funneled through militants in Syria).

Hezbollah has been successful in this public-relations coup because it set Israel up under a set of parameters for victory that no nation could accomplish. According to the terrorists and their co-conspirators in the media, victory for Israel was possible only by completely rooting out and destroying every last member of Hezbollah anywhere in the world. If only one member of Hezbollah had been able to wave a flag of victory after the IDF had ground Lebanon to dust, Israel would have been seen as failing in its mission. A terrorist organization would have faced and stood up to the military behemoth of the region and remained viable. And this is what happened.

This has been taken to such an extent that the Israelis themselves believe it! Strategic Forecasting reports today:

About 63 percent of Israelis think Prime Minister Ehud Olmert should resign as a result of failings in Israel's conflict with Hezbollah, according to a poll published Aug. 25 in the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*. The poll also revealed that 74 percent want Defense Minister Amir Peretz to step aside and 54 percent want military chief Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz to resign.

Militarily, Israel's action in Lebanon compares favorably with other historic victories since its founding in 1948. Geopolitically, the situation in the Middle East favors its continued dominance over the divided and weak Arab/Muslim states around it. Yet, the *perception* of matters, framed by both the subtle and the blatant use of deceitful images and opinion in the media, is that Israel is vulnerable, weakened, and ripe for destruction. God prophesies in [Zechariah 12:2](#), "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem." The Arab/Muslim nations, in saying that up is down and down is up, are behaving in such a drunken, unrealistic manner.

God pronounces a curse upon those who purposefully turn matters inside-out. In this regard, [Zechariah 12:3](#) relates, "And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it." God has a reason for the descendants of Judah being in possession of the Holy Land at the end time, and Israel will not be dislodged until His purposes are fulfilled. No matter what its enemies perceive, the reality is that Israel is considerably stronger than they are, and God promises to look out for the house of Judah in its troubles with its neighbors (verses 4-6).

The truth is that God is on His throne and maneuvering affairs in anticipation of the end of the age. Are we willing to recognize reality?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Truth \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Nothing is more important than the truth or the seeking after the truth. If we are going to be searching for truth, we should not be seeking it in the philosophies of men (a syncretic system of beliefs having its source in Babylon, a combination of human reason aided by demonic spirits and astrological prognostication - the weak and beggarly elements referred to by the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:9) but rather in the fullness of truth found in Christ with God's revelation as the final arbiter. There must be a continuous searching for more truth with the seeking of the kingdom of God as the highest priority to the end that we grow to full spiritual maturity.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[National Identity: Man's Invention or God's Creation?](#)

by Charles Whitaker

Domestic and foreign policy formulations derive from what a nation's people think about themselves. Charles Whitaker delves into the disproportionate divide among Americans between cosmopolitans and nationalists, and answers the bigger question, "Did we invent our self-image, or did God create it?"

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