

“Jesus is Coming”

William E. Blackstone commemoration and Israel

by Jerry Klinger

Wednesday, September 28, at the Upper Esplanade Courtyard of the Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale overlooking a spectacular vista of the valley below, hundreds of white folded seats were prepared and soon filled with Christian and Jewish attendees honoring the memory of Rev. William E. Blackstone. Jewish Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis proclaimed to the 1916 Zionist convention, “Blackstone is Zionism’s greatest ally outside of its own ranks.” He was and he remains today, 81 years after his passing, a key ally of Jews, Zionism and the State of Israel.



Consul General Israel in Los Angeles, Sam Grundweg, delivered the key note address on behalf of former Ambassador to the United States Dr. Michael Oren who was suddenly called to Israel at the passing of Shimon Peres, Sept. 27. He asked Consul General Grundweg to speak on his behalf with the same historic and respectful tones he would have delivered.

Consul General Grundweg began;

“He wrote and worked on behalf of suffering Jews worldwide, He fought to champion the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland, where they could live in peace. He is referred to by some as the “Father of Zionism”. (Blackstone presented his widely publicized *Blackstone Memorial* to President Harrison calling for the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine five years before Herzl wrote *Der Judenstaat*.) History has not given enough credit or attention to Blackstone or his contribution to Zionism, which is why we are here today to commemorate his legacy and to pay tribute to his immeasurable contributions to the Jewish people and the creation of the modern state of Israel. It is why, for me, as the official representative of the state of Israel, (it is important) to stand here and pay that tribute. It is a great honor and a *tikkun* – a correction of the lack of attention and credit that he so much deserved and his legacy deserved.”

Consul General Grundweg then paralleled how the late Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Rev. Blackstone shared so much in common in their mutual quest for a home for the Jews.

Christian and Jewish religious and community leaders spoke as one about Rev. Blackstone. Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, from the Simon Wiesenthal Center delivered a Jewish perspective on faith and doing the right thing that resonated deeply with Jew and Christian alike.

Consul General Lee from South Korea spoke about the challenges of modern Israel and how he came to understand and support Israel in the face of Palestinian terrorism directed against the innocents. Israel Defense Forces responded not against the innocent but against the terrorists, he pointed out. It was the difference he observed between Israel and the hatred of the terror.

After the hour long commemoration, a long, long processional of cars drove to William Blackstone's gravesite.

Graves in much of Forest Lawn are difficult to find even with maps. They are ground level bronze plaques. The plaque for Rev. Blackstone was humble. It has his name and his dates of life and passing with the words *Jesus is Coming*, in Loving Memory. The simple plaque and words reflected how he described his life as "*God's Little Errand Boy*."



A wreath was laid jointly by Consul General Grundwerg and a member of Blackstone's family. Psalms were read, memories shared and a hymn was sung.

Blackstone had worked in life to bring Jews and Christians together in common dialogue and purpose. He succeeded and continues to do so. Wednesday Rev. Blackstone was honored by Jews, and for the first time by the Government of Israel, for his foundationally vital, steadfast support for Zionism. He inspired millions of Christian Zionists then, and continues to inspire them today, through his small book, *Jesus is Coming*. The small book has been translated into 48 languages. Published copies run into the

millions and millions. *Jesus is Coming* affirms prophecy through the Restoration of Modern Israel to growing numbers of Christian faithful worldwide. Yet, Blackstone, as are the many Christian Zionists, remains an enigma to many Jews— a Christian who walked his personal path with God, saving Jewish life and doing the right thing.