



"And now I am no more in the world,  
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance  
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®  
or Standard Lesson Quarterly®.

### **FIGHTING WITH ENEMIES**

The strife among the descendants of the biblical patriarchs that began in Old Testament times continues to the present day. This month, four Israelis have been killed in Palestinian knife and gun attacks in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. As this past week began, Israel had killed at least twenty Palestinians in response. Israeli airstrikes and Palestinian rocket fire and car bombings have contributed to an escalating pattern of violence that seems to never end.

### **REACHING TO ENEMIES**

Jewish Christians in New Testament days wrestled with the same prejudices their forefathers had. Finally, a vision caused Peter to reevaluate what he believed about "acceptable" people.

The striking visual image of a sheet filled with animals that Peter had been taught never even to *touch* helped him picture what God was saying. God does not see any person or race as unlovable or untouchable. He wants all people to hear the good news about Jesus.

As a result, Peter preached Christ to longtime enemies of the Jews. What is more, this took place in the home of a commander of the occupying forces that ruled over Israel at the time!

1. Why do you think the struggles between Israel and its neighbors have not been easily solved with international, diplomatic solutions? List some historical, political, and cultural factors that have continued to fuel this distrust and hatred over the centuries.
2. Name some social, racial, and political divides that have long existed in America. What are some historical, political, and cultural factors that have continued to fuel distrust and hatred over the decades?
3. Note how God addressed the Jew/Gentile divide through Peter and Cornelius. How can those with a clear understanding of God's will for all people help heal strife today?

—Charles R. Boatman

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