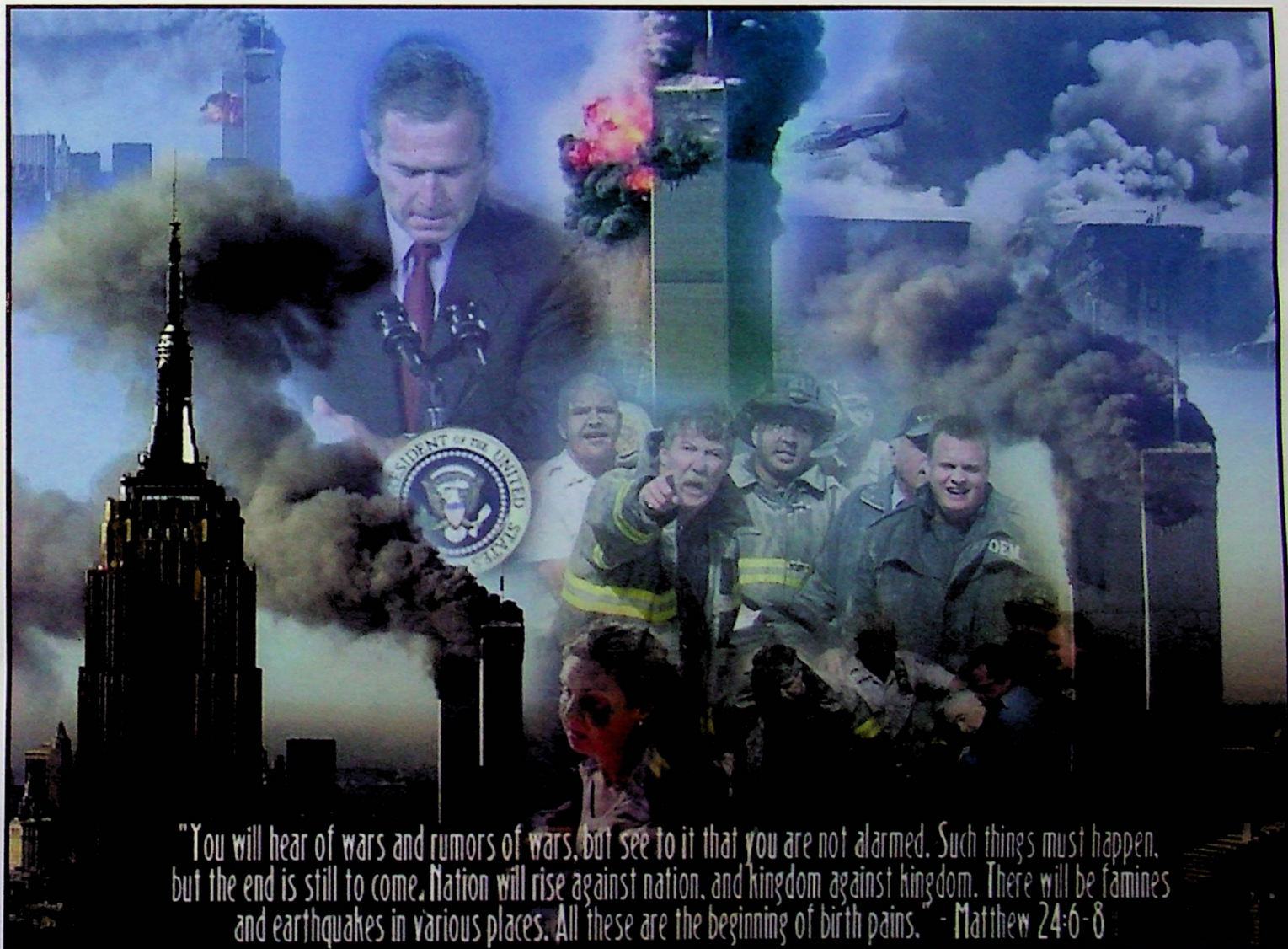


The Restitution Herald

Volume 91, Number 1

October, November, 2001

September 11, 2001



A MESSAGE from the Editor . . .



9-1-1

9-11-01 That's a date that will stay with us as long as we have a collective memory as Americans. We were in our living room having our family devotions that morning when the phone rang. It was my mother calling to say "You should be very glad Karen's flight was yesterday and not today . . . our nation is under attack, someone has crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon." I was shocked; stunned. We pulled out the little TV antenna and hooked it up, and there it was: Dan Rather's voice over the sight of smoke pouring out of the World Trade Center towers. We watched in amazement as first one and then the second tower collapsed. How can this be? We live in America. This isn't Jerusalem or Belfast or Kosovo, this is New York City! How can this be happening? Then, the scene switched to the Pentagon in Washington. "That's the Pentagon!" I grew up 20 minutes away from there. I used to ride the commuter bus from Springfield, Virginia into Arlington and take the Metro into D.C. every day. The buses all came there, to the Pentagon. How is this possible?

Since those initial moments of unbelief you and I have tried to grapple with the meaning of what happened. I've attended community prayer services, our local church has held candlelight vigils, I've preached several sermons (to larger than normal crowds), I've read countless newspaper articles, and, like most of you, I've searched the scriptures and prayed. I've worried about my children and the prospects of war. There are many unanswered questions and much about the future that

we still don't know. But in this I take great comfort: "I may not know what the future holds, but I know the One who holds the future." God is still in control!

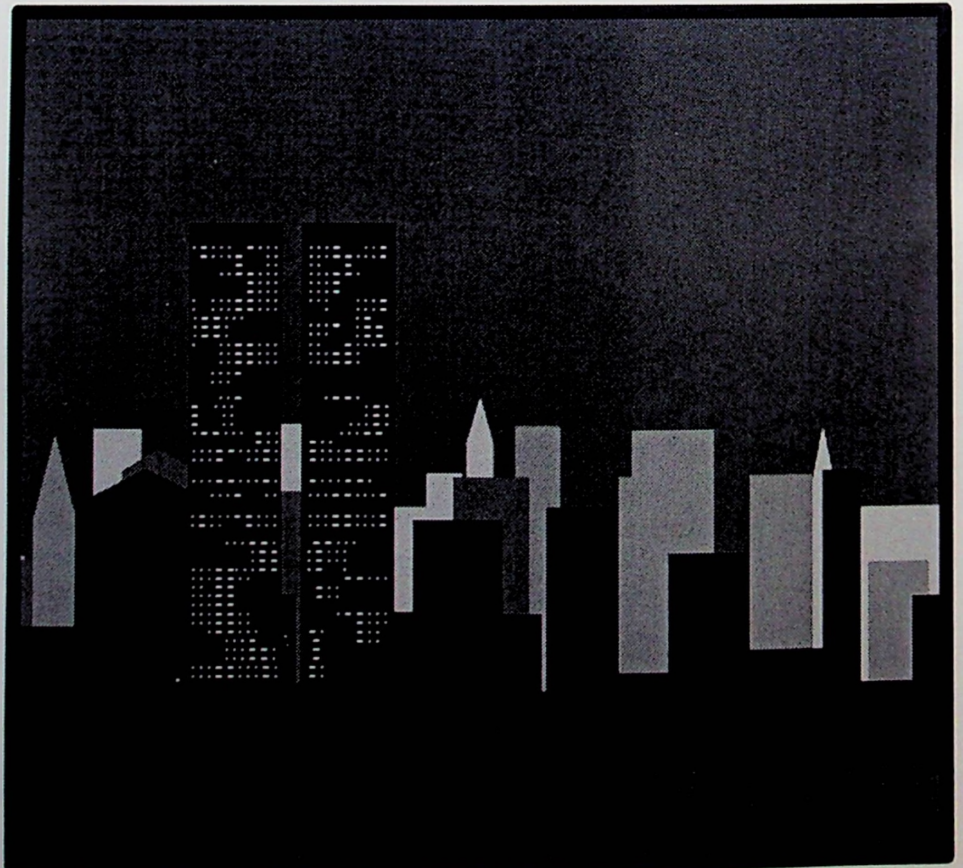
In response to the terrorist attacks on September 11 we offer this special edition of the *RESTITUTION HERALD*. It contains news, commentary, scripture study and prayer relating to what has happened. There is also an article about a recent mission trip to Africa. This article reflects on experiences in Africa, and speaks of the great love and trust in God which exists there. Our nation makes the claim to trust in God. Do we really trust in God?

May God bless you and yours with safety throughout the days and weeks to come.

And let us all remember to pray for the Peace of Jerusalem and the coming of God's perfect and righteous kingdom. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Jeffrey Fletcher

Editor



The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Stunned . . .

BY PASTOR RUSS MAGAW, STILLMAN VALLEY, IL

Stunned... numb... questions...
anger... then silent prayers.

If you are like me, that's the order your emotions took as you watched or heard live coverage of the collapse of buildings in New York and Washington on Terrorist Tuesday.

Even television anchor persons stared in stunned silence as buildings disappeared in smoke clouds.

Numbness followed immediately, especially as clouds drifted to envelope lower Manhattan Island and the area around the Pentagon.

Then came the questions: Who could senselessly and callously fly a plane into the side of the World Trade Center? What was the dread hundreds experienced as the fireball consumed their aircraft? Could anyone survive inside as 110 stories crushed down? How could news reporters without feeling interview those in fright fleeing the rubble?

My worst emotion followed—inflamed rage. “If U.S. leadership has any guts, we should annihilate those responsible and take over their countries!” “How can anything like this be allowed to happen here?” “Where is national security? We spend billions and get this?”

After the anger came sobriety. Silent tears flow inside. Prayers for mercy ascend for thousands of dead victims and other thousands injured and for families desperate to hear from loved ones in the area. Lord, have mercy.

Days have passed now. Feared gas wars subside. The nation's airlines return to the skies. The stock market is trying to correct. Yet life will never be the same. September 11, 2001, lives in infamy.

Where are we now? What have we learned? How will life change forever?

After the shock and numbness, another emotional slide shapes us. We look askance at everyone in airports now. A deep-set distrust keeps us on edge as we inhabit international public places.

Can we be sure of any
security? *we ponder,*
thinking deeply.

.

In spite of those feelings, a new sense of who we are takes hold. We are Americans all. We will take each other's hand and go forth in confidence. We shall not be overthrown. This often hidden enemy will be uncovered and defeated.

That new confidence gradually erodes as we have quiet moments of reflection. *Can we be sure of any security?* we ponder, thinking deeply. That takes us to another more trusting level. We begin to turn to Someone we know personally: God, through His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Fantastic promises come to mind, several are in one New Testament letter alone:

God . . . in these last days has spoken to us in His Son . . . Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness . . . for this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it . . . take care, brethren, lest there should be . . . any . . . falling away from the living God . . . God is not unjust so as to forget your work and love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered . . . to the saints . . . let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds . . . He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will ever forsake you”; so that we confidently say, “the LORD is my helper, I will not be afraid, what shall man do to me?” (Heb. 1:1a, 2a, 9; 2:1; 3:12; 6:10; 10:24; 13:5, 6).

One day, we shall see how God will take control of this world. He will

give relief to you who are afflicted . . . when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God (2 Thes. 1:7, 8).

We pray for mercy on those who have suffered on Terrorist Tuesday. We pray for courage to face the future. We pray, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). □

Another Day That Will Live In Infamy

BY PASTOR REX CAIN, BEDFORD, OH

To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, we have come through another day that will live in infamy. He spoke regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The events of September eleventh, 2001 have numbed and shocked America. Only the Civil War, WWI, Pearl Harbor and the consequent WWII have shaken our nation to its very foundations like this. We still wait for the final casualty figure, but it will be far above Pearl Harbor's 2400 men.

Terrorists, using our own people, our own planes, our own fuel to light an inferno, penetrated into the very core of our nation. They hit our financial district, the economic center of our country (and shut down the stock market). They postponed primary elections in New York. They entered violently into our national military war rooms – the very heart, the headquarters, of military strategy – and that in our capitol city! Who knows where the fourth plane was headed? The White House? The Capitol building?

This is the first time in our history that all airplanes were grounded at one time. The first time major league baseball canceled all its games since D-Day. A handful of extremists completely shut down our nation's largest city (with seven million people) and our capitol city. The White House, the Capitol, the Pentagon, all federal buildings around the nation were closed and people ran to get far away from them.

I've heard a lot of reasons for this attack on our nation. Whatever the reason, we know one thing for sure. We are hated, as a people, by someone who would take extreme suicidal measures to hurt us. Osama

bin Laden has announced several times for the U.S. to expect punishment. They had dress rehearsals in the bombing of a base in Lebanon, the attack against the USS Cole, once before with the World Trade Center in 1993, and the U.S. embassies in eastern Africa. Punishment for what? The support of Israel. If this attack was executed by bin Laden, as most believe, then the attack was not so much at us as it was against Israel.

The news every day announces the Arabs' hatred for Israel. Palestinians were dancing in the streets and passing out candy to children in celebration of the destruction of the symbol of America's economic

*Jerusalem sends
nations reeling.*

*It's a cup of trouble
that many nations*

would like to remove.

• • • • •
strength, and the damage done to its symbol of military strength. Some were burning Israeli and American flags. We are coupled together with Israel because we have supported them since 1948 when America was the first to recognize them as a nation. I believe that only happened because of our nation's deep spiritual roots that first established our nation when the Bible was still preached and loved here. The leaders knew what the Bible said about God's chosen people, and they behaved accordingly. I'm not convinced our leaders today are as persuaded.

The Bible speaks prophetically about Jerusalem and how she affects the rest of the world. Zechariah writes: "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah [Israel] will be besieged as well as Jerusalem" (12:2).

So, in one line alone, we learn Jerusalem will be in existence at the end of this age and that she will have the world's attention. Does she not at this very hour? Even though the U.S. was attacked, leaders of the nations know that it was not because we are a people at peace or prosperous or militarily strong, but because we support Israel and have made it impossible for the nations 'round about Israel to conquer and annihilate that people.

There is much grumbling in the Arab world about our providing the money and technology for the Arrow anti-ballistic missile system. For the technology and annual money (in our yearly U.S. budget) that we have provided for their entire existence since 1948. I suspect if we had not done so, Israel would not be in existence today and our World Trade Center towers would still be standing.

Yes, Jerusalem sends nations reeling. It's a cup of trouble that many nations would like to remove. Arab maps don't even show Israel. In their minds, it doesn't exist.

Zechariah continues: "On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves."

(continued on page 6)

Another Day That Will Live In Infamy (continued from page 5)

This devastating body-blow to America of September 11 could have been worse (they still didn't use nuclear weapons or biological warfare or attack power grids that would have shut down America nationwide), but it was still rehearsal, just as earlier attacks were rehearsal for this one. I see the attack both as a political statement to the world (we are vulnerable / they are strong), and as a rehearsal for the mighty, colossal invasion of Israel – to indeed remove them from the map. The Arab charter still states that the purpose of the Arab League of Nations is to destroy Israel.

Could it be that this attack was intended to provoke us into war? To set the Mideast on fire – into chaos – into war, so as to persuade all those in sympathy with the Arab League Nations to come down on Israel? I'm just thinking out loud.

Bible students know about the hostility between Jacob and Esau and Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael became the father of the Arab world, Isaac of the Hebrews or Jews or what today we call Israelis.

God spoke to the mother of Ishmael and described what his character would be like (God speaks of things before they exist as though they exist) – not very flattering: “he shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him . . . he will dwell near his kinsmen” (Gen. 16:12). In Genesis 21 we read that God made of Ishmael a great nation and he became an expert in the bow (or with weapons).

Do you suspect that some genetic traits have been passed down? We know that those who boldly and gladly gave their lives to cripple the U.S. were radical extremists. I'm praying this represents only extremism and not the people as a whole. Muslims in the U.S. are frightened that they will be targeted for persecution. They claim they condemn such behavior from these Muslim radicals. Many have already been harassed around the nation.

Whatever the case, in the end times Jerusalem is to be the focal point of the nations of the world and we, it appears, will suffer collateral damage as we head toward Armageddon and the last great battle. We suffer because we help Israel.

When God first spoke to Abraham, He told him that he would become a great nation. Further God promised: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves” (Gen. 12:3). We as a people have for the most part blessed Israel through the years. I feel that's why we're such a great nation now in spite of our many other sins. I pray that even with attacks on our country we will never desert Israel because I want to be on God's side when the Day of the really big showdown comes! Can it be much longer?

Last July, Russia and China signed a 20-year treaty to be partners to become the world's superpowers militarily and economically. If you read Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 9 it is easy to see the scenario that evolves. I may be wrong, but I can foresee the Arab League nations calling upon Russia and China to help them with their invasion of Israel. They realize they can't do it alone, so they get this huge overwhelming horde of soldiers to march upon that tiny nation. Just suppose we attacked Iraq or Iran or Afghanistan, could this trigger a war that leads to Armageddon? The scenario is worth considering!

I won't get into those texts today, but way back in 1980 I put Ezekiel 38 into a commentary paraphrase – over 20 years ago – and today not a word needs changing due to any political or geographic reasons. I urge you to study the Bible on your own. This is just to help clarify what I believe those verses are saying.

Here are a few lines that Pastor Kent Ross wrote recently:

What a horrible day this has been. A terrible tragedy and thousands of deaths. We're still trying to sort out the reasons for such awful events. But we need to remember that God warned us that in the last days perilous times or dangerous times would come. Jesus spoke of the days before He would return to this Planet and said there would be wars [and rumors of wars] and nation rising against nation.

Why is the United States so hated by nations around the world? It seems troubling [in light of] all the foreign aid and help we seemingly have tried to give [to] so many. But one thing we have done that has earned the hatred of so many, particularly in the Middle East, is that we have stood by Israel. That seemingly can never be forgiven or overlooked. But also bear in mind that Israel is God's covenant nation, the people with which He made an eternal agreement. He would bless those that blessed her, and curse those that cursed her. When we turn away from supporting Israel we, along with all the other nations of the world, will be in opposition to God! You need to know what the Bible says about these last days. Time may be ending and the judgment of God may be on this world.

I will close with a prophetic passage from Psalm 83. This speaks of those whose only goal in life is to destroy God's people – His covenant people. Interestingly, it lists by name those who will advance upon Israel. Outside of the alliances spoken of it is Israel's Arab neighbors who hate them, as it has been for centuries. Those who are “round about Israel,” as Ezekiel puts it.

As I suggested at the beginning, in my view the events of Tuesday, September 11th are collateral damage, a prelude, a
(continued on page 20)

War on Islamic Terrorism is Long Overdue

BY DAVID PARSONS

The massive catastrophe wrought by Muslim suicide terrorists in New York and Washington on September 11 has served as a “wake up” call to the United States and other Western democracies to a lurking global menace, yet few understand the radical Islamic theology that has been spawning hatred, conflicts and human missiles for decades. The American-led effort to eradicate this evil hinges largely on isolating the terrorist support network hiding among the world’s one billion Muslims and preventing it from recruiting others to their ruinous cause — an incredibly tall task at this late stage.

Western leaders and mainstream media share much of the blame for the ignorance of many worldwide as to the ambitions of the ever expanding alliance of Islamic elements bent on conquering the world for Allah. This, despite the fact that America has been singled out for repeated attack by Muslim militants ever since the Islamic revolution swept Iran in 1979. The overthrow of the pro-Western Shah of Iran and the triumphal rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini provide a good starting point for reviewing the modern resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism and its holy war against “infidel” nations.

I. THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Like many Muslim radicals who openly live in free Western societies even to this day, Khomeini sparked his revolution from exile in Paris, distributing cassettes of his fiercely anti-American sermons back to Iran’s Shi’ite Muslim majority. He arose as the most prominent voice from a fanatical school of clerics based at Khom in Iran,

which also had a sister Shi’ite seminary near Basra, in southern Iraq. Though the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had advocated similar ideas since the 1930s, Khomeini more than anyone else popularized a unique strain of theology that has now emerged as the ascendant brand of Islam — fundamentalism.

At the time, the Arab/Islamic world had been repeatedly humiliated on the battlefield by tiny Israel, seen as a “cancerous” Western implant in the midst of the Islamic crescent — stretching all the way from Morocco to Pakistan and beyond. In addition, Iran and many other Muslim states were ruled by “corrupt” pro-Western regimes, which were permitting an intolerable invasion of foreign cultural influences.

Khomeini explained to fellow Muslims that they were being disgraced because they had displeased Allah by their lax observance of Islam. The answer, he preached, was to return to the basics or fundamentals of the faith. This included strict adherence to such core Islamic tenets as the call to prayer five times a day, the hajj to Mecca once in a lifetime, the fast of Ramadan, and of course the obligation to engage in jihad.

This line of thinking taught that renewed faithfulness to the religion of the Koran would win Allah’s favor and would begin to reverse the string of Muslim setbacks in the Middle East. An important sign of Allah’s blessing on their endeavors, they submitted, would be the “liberation” of Jerusalem and Palestine from the “Zionists.”

The Ayatollah returned home to Iran in triumph in the midst of the violent overthrow of the Shah, a revolution that also

saw hundreds of Americans held hostage at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran for some 440 days.

II. SPREADING THE REVOLUTION

Once in power, the radical Iranian mullahs began exporting their revolution to other nations, with particular success in Sudan, Algeria and among the Shi’ites of war-torn Lebanon. Pro-Iran militants assassinated Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat in 1981 for signing a peace treaty with Israel after the U.S.-brokered Camp David accords. Not long after, Tehran’s proxy militia Hizb’Allah pioneered the use of suicide bombers in deadly attacks on American and French forces and nationals in Beirut.

In the 1980s, Muslim extremists from many lands were also volunteering as mercenaries to fight the jihad against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Among these holy warriors was one Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi who eschewed his life of luxury for rugged trench warfare. Fellow fighters described him as “fearless,” engaging in hand-to-hand combat with an almost mystical zeal. Bin Laden used his vast fortune — still valued at over \$300 million — to recruit and train other Muslim warriors, including a contingent of some 5,000 Palestinians that saw action in Afghanistan.

Palestinian terrorist factions — though still speaking the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of their Kremlin patrons — began to be influenced by Islamic fundamentalism. With the outbreak of the first intifada in late 1987, Hamas and Islamic Jihad quickly surfaced among militant Sunni Muslims in

(continued on page 8)

Gaza. Though widely viewed during the Oslo peace process as a more dangerous alternative to PLO chief Yasser Arafat, these groups have found safe haven within Arafat's fiefdom, from where they have been allowed to carry out a horrific wave of suicide bombings inside Israel. And in his infamous speech in a Johannesburg mosque in 1995, Arafat himself appealed for all Muslims to join his jihad for Jerusalem, revealing an even more chilling side to the PLO leader's true agenda.

Elsewhere, Muslim fundamentalists have waged insurgencies in an array of countries throughout the 1990s. Afghan-style mercenary armies have joined local Islamic militias in the Balkan states of Bosnia, Kosovo and now Macedonia, as well as in Kashmir and Chechnya. Fundamentalist ideology fuels separatist conflicts in the scattered islands of the Philippines and Indonesia, and in the hinterland provinces of China. For years, the Iranian-backed hard-line regime in Khartoum has been slaughtering and enslaving thousands of black Christians and animists in southern Sudan. And in the past week alone, another 500 people have died in Muslim attacks on Christians in Nigeria.

In the bloodiest of all such conflicts, Muslim fundamentalists in Algeria have waged a brutal uprising that has left hundreds of thousands dead ever since they swept national democratic elections nearly a decade ago, only to be denied power by the military-backed ruling regime.

Like Algeria, Pakistan has nuclear capabilities and thus is also a coveted prize for the fundamentalists. Northern Pakistan is dotted with indoctrination and training camps for the Taliban and for Muslims fighting against Indian forces in Kashmir. When the fundamentalists were poised to seize power in Pakistan not long ago, a military coup set up an emergency secular

government under General Pervez Musharraf. Current appeals from Washington for Islamabad to join the anti-terror coalition in formation will test the ability of Pakistan's army to retain its increasingly unpopular hold over the country.

III. TARGETING THE WEST

Meanwhile, a myriad of Islamic terrorist groups have sprung up over the years intent on taking the battle to Israel and the West. This constellation of terror conducts state-sponsored intelligence activities and runs military training camps, all with the assistance of Muslim diplomats,

Spectacular terror attacks planned in Jordan and the U.S. to disrupt gala Millennium celebrations were averted.

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financiers and technological experts. They maintain support bases and recruiting centers in dozens of countries, with hundreds of interlocking yet compartmentalized cells of hard-core activists who easily move across borders and blend in with growing Muslim communities in European and American cities.

Among their notorious achievements in the past decade are bombings of Israeli and Jewish targets in Argentina; the car bombing aimed at toppling the World Trade Center in New York in 1993; the bombing of U.S. troops in the Khobar towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996; the simultaneous bombings of U.S.

embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; and the suicide attack by an explosives-laden rubber dingy on the USS Cole in Yemen last fall. Spectacular terror attacks planned in Jordan and the U.S. to disrupt gala Millennium celebrations were averted by timely intelligence and alert security.

Bin Laden has been linked in some way to most of these more recent operations, and is the "prime suspect" in the suicidal hijackings that destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center and ripped a gaping hole in the Pentagon, leaving some 5,800 people dead at latest estimate.

U.S. federal authorities remain baffled at how the 19 suicidal air pirates recruited from among the secretive hydra of Islamic terrorist factions were able to infiltrate into the U.S. over several years, take flight training lessons in numerous states and slip on board four airliners at the same time—all without being detected. The logistics of such a well coordinated operation suggests state sponsorship as well, with Iraq being the main suspect, according to Israeli intelligence sources.

[Seattle's Space Needle was suggested to be a target during New Year's 2000 celebrations. Los Angeles International Airport is known to have been one.]



IV. COLLECTIVE HATRED

With the outbreak of the violent Palestinian intifada last September, anti-Israel sentiment has boiled over in the Arab/Islamic world, with many angry at the inaction of their own governments and at Washington's perceived favoritism toward Israel. Hizb' Allah and bin Laden's group Al Qaida have sought to fill the void left by Arab rulers by smuggling weapons and operatives into Palestinian territories to join the battle. Meanwhile, the full gamut of Islamic terrorist organizations put aside their differences and gathered in Beirut last February and again in Tehran in April to chart a common strategy for waging war against Israel and her chief backer — America.

These groups have been able to coalesce because they share a common goal, imposing strict Islamic shari'a law in countries with Muslim majorities and waging jihad against the rest of the world until it too is conquered for Allah.

Islam is a territorial religion and divides the world into two basic camps: "Dar al-Islam" [House of Islam] consists of all lands where Islam has prevailed at one time or another, and "Dar al-Harb" [House of War] is all other unconquered lands where jihad must eventually be waged.

The fundamentalists teach that it is the duty of every able Muslim to join the holy struggle to win back parts of the House of Islam that have been lost over the centuries, including present-day Israel, the Iberian peninsula [Spain and Portugal], and large parts of southeastern Europe up to Vienna. This explains many of the raging conflicts discussed earlier.

The fundamentalists also promote the idea of a promised renewed golden age of Islam, when the faith of Mohammad will rule the entire world. Many Muslims await a modern-day pan-Islamic figure — a new "caliph" — to lead this battle against the infidel nations. It appears that the late

Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, bin Laden, and even Arafat have aspired to claim this mantle at various times by their decrees of jihad against their respective enemies.

This common agenda has been aided of late by a series of fatwas, or religious decrees, by leading Muslim clerics declaring that suicide attacks are an acceptable form of jihad, that the U.S. is an appropriate target for assaults, and — in a very recent ruling — that any Muslim who cooperates with non-Muslim intelligence agencies is an apostate worthy of death.

V. THE RECRUITING WAR IS ON

In the wake of the devastating suicide attacks last week, U.S. President George W. Bush has joined those urging that care be taken in not labeling all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists. "These acts of violence against innocents violate the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith," Bush said this week. "The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace."

While this may seem a fair statement, it is hard to ignore the many public and vocal expressions of outright joy by many ordinary Arabs and Muslims worldwide over the enormous death toll in New York and Washington. And each Muslim must now be viewed as a potential conscript of the fundamentalists.

We all watch in horror each time our television sets replay the explosions in the World Trade Center towers, the scenes of people leaping from the flames to their certain deaths, and the ultimate collapse of these mighty symbols of American pride and progress. But to the fundamentalists, this same footage is a recruiting bonanza, a spectacular success that will be replayed again and again to win more followers to their hostile agenda.

There are many reasons being cited for the build-up of Arab and Islamic resentment against the U.S., including: the UN

sanctions and allied bombing raids in Iraq; Washington's military and diplomatic support for Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinians; U.S. protection of corrupt pro-Western regimes in the region; and the presence of "infidel" U.S. troops on the "holy soil" of Saudi Arabia.

Yet this list of grievances must not be allowed to hide the real root cause of the alarming level of anti-American hatred, which lies in Islamic fundamentalist theology and its vision of world conquest. Militant Muslim leaders view America as the main impediment to their quest to spread Islam throughout the entire world through jihad. Thus, the U.S. is widely presented as the "Great Satan" which must be defeated in battle.

Many voices in the Arab/Islamic world have defended the attacks as a justified response to American support for the "Little Satan" — Israel. Sacrifice Israel, this line of thinking goes, and America will no longer be a target.

Yet such a course of action will only have the opposite effect. Any step or measure at this time in which the U.S. appears to distance itself from its democratic ally Israel will be interpreted by Muslim extremists as an achievement in their terror campaign. Rendering Israel and Jerusalem more vulnerable will only fuel radical Muslim thinking that their dreams of world conquest are one step closer, and enhance their ability to draft the masses of ordinary Muslims to their cause. □

Source: INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EMBASSY JERUSALEM, PO BOX 1192, JERUSALEM, 91010, ISRAEL.

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David Parsons is the editor of the ICEJ Newsservice from Jerusalem.

God Shakes the World: An Assessment of the U.S. Terror Tragedy

BY GRAHAM BACON

There is ample evidence in scripture that, at the time of the end and during the establishment phase of Christ's kingdom, the kingdoms of men are to be subject to a chaotic, tumultuous and demoralizing time. The Bible provides just the barest outline of the nature of these events – just sufficient to indicate that those who experience these occasions will suffer anxiety, uncertainty, some terror and some danger. An example of some of these outcomes plus the promise of better times is provided by Haggai 2:6-9:

For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the desire of all nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts.

"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts. "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts."

A puzzling question has always been the timing factor. The return of Jesus Christ is anticipated, with

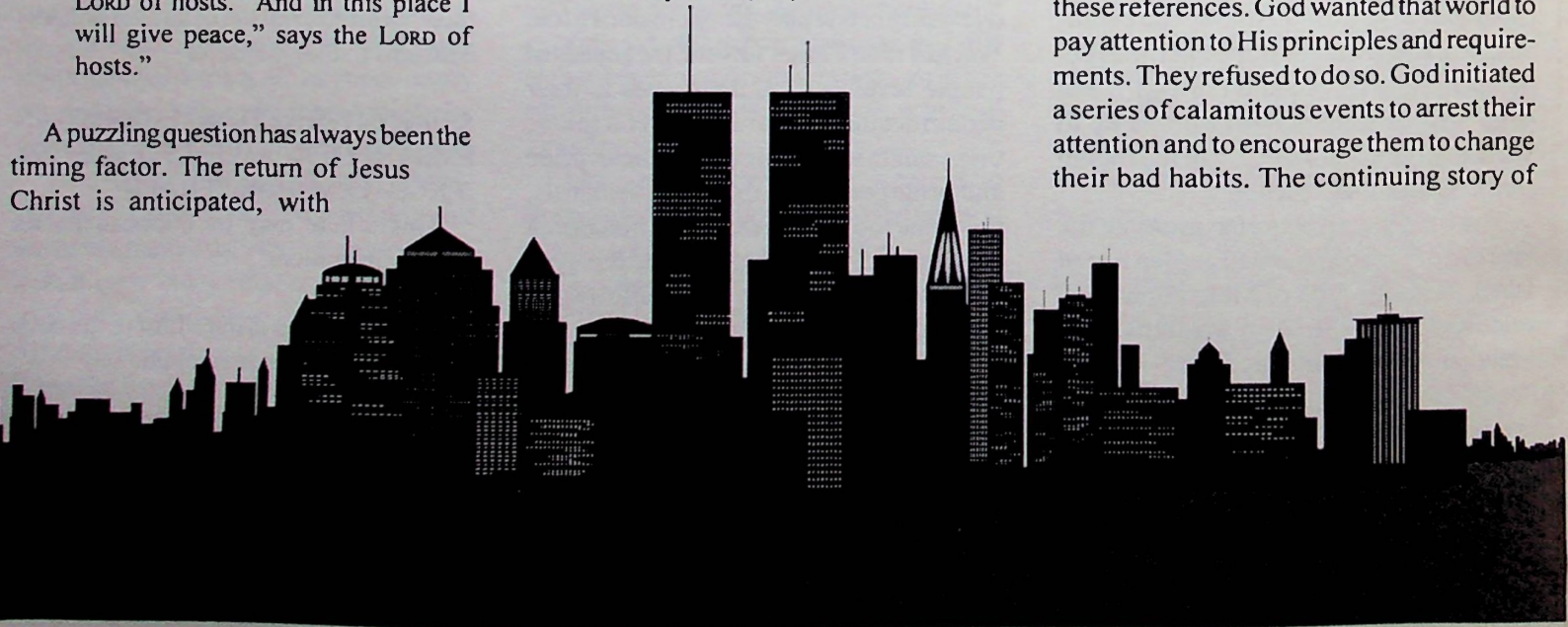
good scriptural reason, to be triggered at a time of international crisis in the Middle East. These events will certainly be world shaking. They will be followed by world shattering changes, within which all things will be utterly changed. But how much of this psychologically confronting activity takes place before the return of Christ? We simply do not know. Could the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers in New York be part of God's shaking of which the Bible speaks? Yes, it certainly could.

All through history God has endeavored to correct mass human bad behavior and, when people did not respond, He has disciplined them with catastrophes. The Revelation gives some clear examples. Both in the Christian church and in the Roman empire, humanity descended into corruption, violence and depravity. God caused many historical calamities to occur: "Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake" (8:5).

There follows a symbolic description of unprecedented vandalism, piracy, invasion and collapse of civil administration which ended the Roman empire and inflicted captivity, plague and famine on European civilization. God's comment on these shakings of the earth are in Revelation 9:20-21:

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The divine purpose, cause and effect of a series of calamities which befell Europe both immediately before and after the fall of the Roman empire and the apostasy of the Christian church, is clearly defined in these references. God wanted that world to pay attention to His principles and requirements. They refused to do so. God initiated a series of calamitous events to arrest their attention and to encourage them to change their bad habits. The continuing story of



The Revelation is more of the same until the future time when God will remove all evil in Christ's reign on the earth.

One can easily draw the same lessons from events in our day.

God's Life and Death Struggle in the Middle East

God has a life and death struggle on His hands in the Holy Land. It is crystal clear from thousands of years of Biblical prophecies that a reborn Israel, restored to the lands of the Jews' ancient fathers, is an outstanding fulfillment of God's purpose and promises in the twentieth century. In dozens of places the Bible outlines God's purpose in eventually restoring the Jews to Israel, after a long period of punishment and discipline in countries to the north, south, east and west. One chapter, Ezekiel 36, summarizes God's motives and intentions in restoring Israel to the Holy Land. World War I freed the land of Palestine from Turkey and the Holocaust of World War II drove the Jews back to the freed land. All the world has seen the evidence, yet seems unwilling to accept the principle. From time to time God makes the world sit up and take notice. Any perceptive person will connect the New York/Washington calamities with events in the Middle East.

The world in general cannot plead ignorance. They have seen miraculous Israeli victories in four desert wars. The growth of the state of Israel is unstoppable. But, just like the citizens in the Roman empire, the world refuses to see God's hand in His chosen people (chosen for good or ill!). Consequently they refuse to give unbridled support for

Israel's battle against their (and God's) enemies. So, as in the days of Europe's careless living, God is drawing attention to His purpose and principles.

The extremists of the Muslim world see the U.S. as "the Satan" because of American support for Israel. There can be little doubt that this connection with the Jewish state was the root cause of the terror attacks on New York and Washington. Taking The Revelation as a guide it can be said that God intends the world to make the Middle East connection. He wants the world to realize that the extremist Muslim world is on the wrong track, especially in their hatred of Israel.

For thus says the LORD of hosts: He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.

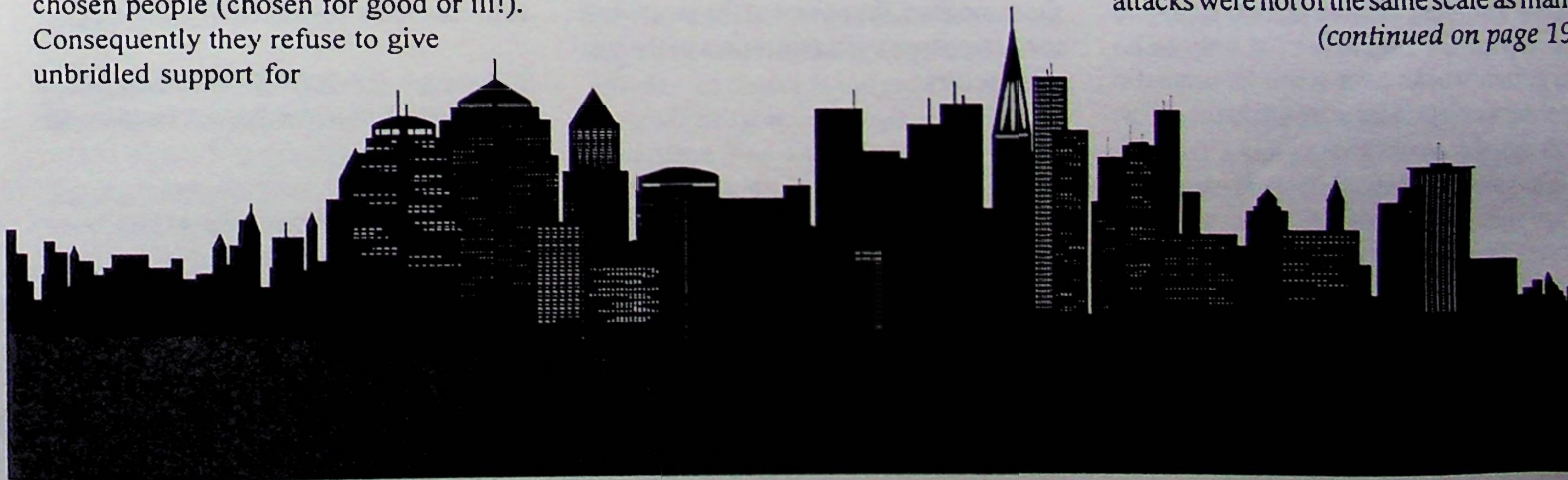
Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, says the LORD. Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to

you. And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation! (Zech. 2:8-13).

But we are confident that the world won't take proper notice. There's a catch. The Arabs have the major oil supplies. The world will always take the personal benefit option rather than divine principle. That is why we can be sure that the world is in for more big shocks. As The Revelation noted, "And they did not repent . . .", in this case of their rejection of God's plan with Israel. Was this U.S. catastrophe a random act or was it part of a Bible prophecy development? A clue is in Isaiah 63:1-6 where Jesus, having come from his defeat of the Palestinians, says "I looked and there was none to help." At this stage Israel will have had no helpers, no America. The prophetic implication is that America will have eventually withdrawn support of Israel. Why? Because of persistent pressure from Muslim nations. We can expect more incidents against the U.S. which will almost end her support for Israel. America will become acutely aware that she has a 56% dependency on imported oil supplies.

The destruction of the towers, the threats to American security and the shocks to the financial world shook the foundations of the civilized world. Life will never be quite the same again. Viewed from a distance the death and destruction of the aircraft crash attacks were not of the same scale as man

(continued on page 19)



Responding to Terror: Christians and a Just Response

BY CHARLES COLSON

This weekend my wife was in the drugstore. The pharmacist was the first to confront her. "This is obviously the end times," he intoned. "Things are going to get much worse, and then the Lord will come. Tell Mr. Colson to keep an eye on the king of Spain, Juan Carlos."

I don't know what Juan Carlos has to do with it. The only thing I know about him is that he read *Born Again* and loved it. But I guess he's a candidate for the anti-Christ.

I might dismiss the pharmacist's response, except that in one hour of shopping Patty was confronted by two other customers who told her that the end is near. "It's finally come! This is it! Get ready for the Lord's return!"

If this is how Christians are thinking about the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, it confirms my worst fears.

During the Gulf War, the world was concerned about the proper use of military power. Christians in the past have been vitally concerned with this issue and have advanced the just war doctrine, which has shaped the understanding of Western society. During the Gulf War, Christians in America said nothing, choosing instead to speculate about the End Times. One book about prophesy and the Gulf War shot to the top of the best seller list only to be forgotten weeks later when its dramatic speculations proved utterly false.

Meanwhile we left questions of power, justice, and international relations to secular thinkers and in the process gave the impression that we don't know and don't care. It was a bad witness and must not happen again.

Make no mistake, Jesus is going to return. Obviously, I believe that. But like C.S. Lewis, I refuse to speculate as to

Jesus is going to return.

Obviously, I believe that.

But like C.S. Lewis,

I refuse to speculate

as to when.

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when. Rather than speculate, I want to concentrate on the great and unique contribution Christians can make in this hour.

Christians need to focus attention on the issues surrounding just war. The President must respond to the terrorist attacks forcefully and quickly. The Bible teaches that the government has the power of the sword to preserve order and do justice. At the same time, the power of the sword has to be tempered by the restraints of the just war doctrine.

Beginning with St. Augustine some 1600 years ago, Christians have thought and written about the appropriate use of military force. Today we need to be the ones who insist that the response to the terrorist attacks be proportionate, that it doesn't create a greater evil, and that civilians are not targeted. I have been watching the television and I have yet to hear the question of just war raised. If we don't bring these issues into public discourse, no one will.

Now, don't get me wrong. Of course, as Christians, we are a community of eschatological hope. We live in the constant expectation of Jesus' return. That will be the most glorious day in all of human history. But it's our hope. And though we may talk about it amongst ourselves, this is not the time to inject it into secular discourse. People will simply dismiss us as a fringe group.

The fact is that this country is hurting and grieving. It is perplexed, frustrated, and confused about what needs to be done next. This is the time that we can come alongside and offer compassion, mercy, understanding, and good instead of evil. And we can contribute to the public debate that will inform our nation's actions in a way that reflects God's standards of justice. □

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Biblical Truths Relating to Pain Help for Young People (and Not So Young)

FROM SADDLEBACK CHURCH HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

Considering what happened on September 11th, we figured the tragedy is on most of our minds. So we wanted to put together some thoughts to answer the questions that rattle around in the aftermath of something like this, like: Where was God? Didn't He know it was going to happen? If He did, why couldn't God have stopped this from happening? Is He *mean*, that He likes to watch stuff like this happen? Or is He *good*, but just not strong enough to stop it from happening?

We want you to know that these are great questions.

Sooner or later everyone is faced with life's difficult questions. Many are very similar to these, and the answers are all tied together.

Other similar questions are:

If God is good and perfect, then why is there evil in the world?

If God is love, then why does He make people die?

If God knew Adam and Eve were going to sin, then why did He create them?

If God made Adam and Eve perfect, then why did they sin?

The answers to the questions are found within God's Word. The central issue here is God's love. Yes, He knows exactly what is going to happen and when. And yes He is good, and He also has the power to stop it. But God is also love. And His love for us means — here is the crazy part — that He has given you and I the ability to choose. We can choose God's way, or we can reject Him and live however we please. Each

choice has consequences. In Littleton, the consequences were tragic. For Christians, the consequences hold an eternity of joy. It's simple, but it's still very difficult to understand.

Here are a few things to consider as you work to discover some answers for your questions:

1. God's Complete Knowledge.

God does have complete knowledge. He sees the present, He sees the future, and He even sees our thoughts. To say anything less is to limit God, and deny what the Bible says about Him.

*People make decisions;
we have the ability
to choose freely.*

God made us like this.

.

2. Defining Good.

God is good. Beyond this, God determines what is good and what is bad. An object or action cannot be examined by itself to discover its goodness or badness. It must be compared to a set of standards or values. An object is judged bad or good according to some external authority. For Christians, that authority (ought to) rest only upon God.

Without God, people make up their own authorities; usually based upon feelings, opinions, and experiences. This leads to all sorts of problems.

For example, let's talk about murder. Why is the act of taking another life bad?

Because God says it's wrong. He is the ultimate authority, and His standard never changes.

Others will look to other authorities like civil law, social theory or opinion. The only authority that is absolute is God's authority. Everything else leads to inconsistency and confusion. Which authority should be followed? The one everyone votes for? Why? Why does the majority rule? You see, God's authority is greater than the majority. Hitler was in the majority in Nazi Germany. Does that make what he did right? Not at all! God's standards are the only standards that count!

3. Free Will.

People make decisions; we have the ability to choose freely. God made us like this. He did it because He wanted to love us, and He wanted us to love Him back. If He wanted us to love Him, but never gave us a choice, that wouldn't be love at all: it would be slavery. If God didn't give us free will we wouldn't even be people: we would be robots. This is the key to understanding this whole thing. God's love means we choose Him, or we reject Him. For a choice to be real, it must carry consequences. Without consequences, a choice is illusionary.

4. Foreknowledge and Choice.

God's complete foreknowledge does not mean our steps have been determined. When your parents had you as their child they foreknew you would grow up and one day break their rules. Of course their foreknowledge is not perfect like God's. But the main point is that your parents don't

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force you to break their rules, just because they know you will. And God doesn't force anybody to break His rules. The choice is ours. God simply knows what we are going to choose, because He is God.

5. Love, Choice, and Consequence.

In order to fully understand crazy actions, we have to look back at the beginning. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. It was good and without the effects of sin. God created everything perfect, without sin, in love. God's love for Adam and Eve meant that they had the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience. Without love, Adam and Eve would have had no choice and thus been robots without a will of their own. (Catch this: without choice, God is inconsistent for having given them a command and then making them break that command.)

Now the choice wouldn't have been a real choice if it was without consequence. The choice that God presented them with was this: Obey God, and live forever in bliss with all of your needs being met, or disobey God and live a hard life away from the presence of God. Adam and Eve chose to live apart from God. It was humanity's first sin. The consequences of the first sin were devastating.

God never wanted Adam and Eve to disobey Him. But God also loved them so He presented them with a choice. Remember that God determines what is good and thus His love required choice, and that choice carried consequences. God did not create sin. He created choice. He knew that this was a risk. But God decided that love was worth the risk.

6. The Consequences of Sin.

God was clear when He commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the one tree. He said that disobedience would mean death apart from His presence. That is exactly what happened. But it didn't just affect them.

God created Adam and Eve in His own perfect image. But they passed on a broken image to their children, and ultimately to the entire human race (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:12-19). Once sin entered the world people were condemned to live painful,

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The very nature of living
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imperfect lives. The very nature of living against God's way is destructive. Of Adam and Eve's first two children, one was murdered and the other was the murderer.

Sin is like a poison which infects and ruins every shred of our being, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We exchange the truth of life for a lie, our vision clouds over, we run from God, our emotions become tainted, and our best judgments are poor.

This is where Jesus enters the picture! God solves this whole human mess by sending His Son. Paul recognized this truth,

and it caused him to write, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:23-24).

7. Conclusions.

God did not want sin to enter the world, but He allowed it to happen. The reason for this is that He created us in love with choices that held consequences. People are responsible for their own decisions, and all people sin. Jesus Christ is the answer. He takes away your sins and my sins. And ultimately, the entire world will be returned to its original, pre-sin state. Ultimately, all the wrongs will be righted. Ultimately, the World Trade Centers of the world will be healed.

God did not put bad people on Earth, He created perfect people who chose to fall from grace. Because Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world, it is easy to see that God does not make people die. When people die the second death it is because they have chosen to reject God, and the salvation that He offers.

For "[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2:4.

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16.

God is good, and He loves You! If this has only made you more confused (which is entirely possible, but thoroughly unfortunate), then please pull one of us aside, or call us this week, because we would love to talk to you. We love you, and we pray for you everyday. □

(Submitted by Pastor Seth Ross)

A Lament for an Unhealed Wound

BY PASTOR JEFFREY FLETCHER, HAPPYWOODS, LA

O my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me.

Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?" "Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their worthless foreign idols?"

"The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved."

Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.
(Jer. 8:18 – 9:1)

God you are our comforter in times of sorrow.

We your people are grieving.
God, we need your comfort.

We have seen great devastation in our nation. We've seen death. We've seen destruction. We've heard stories of terror from those who knew they were about to die.

God, we need your comfort.

Our nation is at war. Troops are being prepared to go to battle.

We fear for our sons and daughters. Our hearts are faint within us, O God.

How much grief can we take?

When will the terror be over? What is the next threat to our nation?

God, we thought that we were invincible. We thought that our lands were safe.

But they are not safe.

God, we need your comfort.

Listen to our cries, O Lord!

Where are you, Father? Have you abandoned us?

Where were you at 8:50 on the morning of September 11?

Did you leave New York City? Did you abandon Arlington, Virginia?

Have you once and for all turned your back on this nation?

Have you written off your people from your list of friends?

What have we done to provoke such anger from you?

Did it start when we told our children that they weren't allowed to pray to you in school anymore? Did that make you angry?

Was it when we as a nation said that it was O.K. to begin murdering unborn babies by the millions? Did that make you angry?

Was it when we began promoting "free love" and "open marriages?" When we began abandoning our marriage vows and became "liberated"? Did your wrath against us become inflamed?

Was it when we began to say that behaviors which you forbid should be tolerated as "alternative lifestyles?" Did that make you want to punish us?

Was it because of the ways we use up far more than our share of the world's natural resources to fuel our lifestyles? Did you become angry at our improper stewardship and decide to teach us a lesson?

Have we created worthless idols? Have we worshipped the work of our hands more than we worship our creator? Did that make you jealous, God? Did you decide that it was time to teach us a lesson?

Lord, why are you angry at us?

Lord, as a nation we were given so many blessings; wonderful land and natural resources, freedom to practice our faith without persecution, wealth. You provided us with an environment where we could grow and flourish, to become the envy of all nations.

We are a nation of churches — a religious nation — and still we are not saved!!

Lord, as we look around at our countrymen who have suffered and are suffering, we are crushed! We feel the crushing weight of loss and despair.

We are sad as each day passes and no more survivors are found.

We are horrified at the thought of thousands of our brothers and sisters buried beneath the rubble.

Many of us are troubled. We have sleepless nights remembering those images.

The news pundits remind us of what other calamities may take place.

We're told that this is probably not the end, that in fact it may only be the beginning.

We hear speculations of what other horrors may face our nation . . .

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A Lament for an Unhealed Wound (continued from page 15)

Chemical weapons . . . biological weapons . . . nuclear weapons . . .

Will it be gas, plague or fire that takes more of our citizens?

Where, when and how will they strike?

We mourn; we are gripped by the horror!!

O God, if our eyes were springs of water there would be no end to the tears.

If we had an endless supply of tears we would cry forever at our losses, fears and shattered hopes and dreams.

Lord, we can't escape from those images of horror.

Wherever we look — in newspapers, magazines, television, computer — everywhere there are those images. Reminders of death and destruction, the threat of war.

And when we close our eyes the images are still there, in our minds; in our nightmares!!

Lord Help Us!!!

Lord, is there no Comfort for your people?

Lord, is there no medicine for our souls?

Lord, is there no doctor who can prescribe a cure for us?

Lord, is there no place where we can turn for healing, for rest, for peace?

Lord, is there no one who will come to us and dress our wounds?

Is there no one to rub healing salve on our open, festering sores?

Is there no one to bandage our broken hearts?

Lord, in ancient times there was a place called Gilead.

It was a place rich in medicinal herbs and spices.

A place where you grew naturally, from the earth, things that would bring healing to your people.

God, is there nothing in your healing Gilead to provide us with comfort?

Is there no balm to soothe our wounds?

Is there nothing to heal our fears?

Is there nothing to heal our anger and rage?

Is there nothing to heal our anxiety?

Is there nothing to heal our depression?

Is there nothing to heal our despair?

The desire for revenge can be a temporary analgesic, but it doesn't last.

Hatred and retaliation have never been very healing.

We wave our flags of national solidarity and patriotism. But deep down we know that nationalistic fervor won't be a cure for what ails our souls.

Lord, when Jesus walked the earth . . . he healed people.

They came to him with their diseases and he touched them.

Jesus put mud and spittle on the eyes of a blind man and he could see.

The woman touched the hem of Jesus' robe and her bleeding ceased.

Jesus invited himself to Zaccheus' house and the greedy tax man became a giving servant.

Jesus spoke to a demon-possessed man and the man was restored to a right mind.

Jesus healed them. Will he heal us?

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no balm for America? Is there no balm for us?

Where do we go for our healing?

Lord, we already know the answer. It's just that sometimes we forget.

Sometimes we put too much trust in ourselves, in mortals, and we forget to put our trust in you.

We forget that we can't ever heal ourselves — real healing only comes from you.

Sometimes we are stubborn and strong willed. We're like a child who wants to do something himself and keeps on trying and won't give up until he hurts himself badly and ends up in a puddle of tears begging for help.

Lord, we are finally in that puddle of tears and we need your help.

God, our world needs your help.

Our nation needs your help.

Our church needs your help.

We need your help.

Father, I need your help.

We need the Christ; the one by whose stripes we are healed.

We need shalom, the perfect peace that only the risen Christ can give.

Father, we believe that you do have a cure for us.

We know that, yes, there is a balm in Gilead.

We come to you humbly, begging for your help.

Lord, hear us. Grant us your mercy. Grant us your peace. □

Malawi / Mozambique 2001

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON, PELZER, SC

For the fifth time a Church of God Abrahamic Faith mission team has proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things about our Lord Messiah in Malawi and Mozambique, Africa.

This teaching was done at six different churches and two conferences during the 17 day trip, July 26 through August 11. We spoke to several hundred people, including 17 pastors in Malawi and 19 in Mozambique. Some others were too far away to attend. There are at present 40 Churches of God AF in Mozambique and 24 in Malawi, for a total of 64 churches. In 1994 there were 20 churches total.

Team members were: Dr. Joe Martin, Dean of Atlanta Bible College, his wife Rebekah Martin, nurse, head cook, spark-plug — team leaders; Jim Mattison — U.S. coordinator of the African work; Pastor Jon Welch, Pastor David Riley; and two Atlanta Bible College students, Melissa Turney and Rachel Weaver. This was a good team. Each member's talents meshed together wonderfully, and the Spirit of God was present the whole trip.

Some of the main pastors we worked with were Margaret Sakala — coordinator of the African work; Fabiano Bango and Beswick Chaka — the overseers of the Mozambique churches; Goodson Mijeri, Rabson Namaona, Daud Chiwaya, Maxwell Henderson, Neva Sande, Wilson Nakhozo, Marizan Mkwete, Laston Mapwasera, and Simon Kadula.

The three valuable translators from English to Chichewa were Margaret Sakala, Daud Chiwaya, and Maxwell Henderson.

At present 11 churches own the land they meet on: headquarters church at Milonde, Nansadi, Kyenyez, Mwitwa, Muloza, Namtombozi, Mapando, Muwawa Bwabwa, Mpala, Namalogolo, and Khanyizera. Buying land to build churches on, replacing old and weather-damaged church buildings, and helping them some on building new church buildings is an ongoing project in our part in the African work.

Missions has been able to help build six churches this past year and put metal roofs on them, at an average cost of around \$250 per church, excluding the price of the land, which runs from \$25 to \$75 each. The people make bricks in a form (they can make 2,000 in a day), then stack them in such a way as to fire them and harden them. They prepare the site and carry the bricks to an expert mason (he gets about \$18.75 U.S. to lay the whole building). They also carry the metal sheets to the building site, whether walking with them on their heads or using bicycles. Sometimes they take them as many as 25 miles from the main road where the bus unloads the sheets. They sing all the way home because they are so happy they are going to have a leak-proof church, and because of the love the Americans have for them. The roof carpenter gets about \$12.85 for putting on the roof. Metal roofs are very important to this work because they reduce the need to continually erect new buildings. The heavy seasonal rains have come through the thatch roofs of many churches and eroded the bricks. In the end the building falls. To have a place for the church to meet is very important in Africa, as it is in this country.

Some of our people met under a tree after their building was destroyed. They became so discouraged at not having a leader or building that we no longer have churches in the southern Bangula region (the growth in the central part has more than balanced that falling away). So the metal roofs are a tremendous blessing.

Another ongoing major project is supplying pastors with major Bible teachings, which Margaret Sakala translates into Chichewa. At present there are around 65 major Bible teachings in the pastors' hands. On this trip I left six with Margaret to translate. Some of these studies are entitled God's Kingdom, Jesus the Messiah, We Must Be Born Again, God's Great Plan for the World and Mankind, Jesus' Second Coming, Signs of the End of the Age, Duties of Husbands and Wives, Forgiving, Faith, Baptism, and Prayer. Anthony Buzzard continues to be a great help in teaching the pastors.

On this trip 183 Chichewa Bibles were given out to selected members who can read. Seven leather-backed Bibles were given to seven pastors. About three hundred pairs of magnifying eye glasses were given, and we have many more, so glasses are not needed at present.

Another major project is the huge tract ministry that has started, with over 12,000 printed so far. We left an order with our reliable printer in Blantyre for another 10,000. Sarah Buzzard is invaluable in this work. She puts the studies into tract form so all the printer has to do is photograph the original and print.

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Services there last from two to three hours each, two or three times a day, with joyful singing for 45 minutes, prayers, and generally three sermons. African prayers allow each person to pray his own private prayer at the same time. Everything is done decently and in order.

There were 10 baptisms at Milonde at the end of the meetings, with more to follow later in Mozambique. Four of those baptized were pastors from other groups who have accepted the Abrahamic Faith.

Five churches are to be built this year. Seven other groups have new buildings with metal roofs. Eleven churches own the land their building is on. New churches are continually being started. In 1999 the Thyolo district had one church. Last year there were two. This year there are six. Margaret Sakala has started another new church in the neighboring village of Mpala. They are now making brick for a new church building there.

Last winter, Sr. Jeanne Smith (wife of Pastor E. Richard Smith) asked me how much it costs to build a church in Africa. I told her it was around \$250. She said her children's Sunday School class at the Bethel Church of God (Alan Cain, pastor) wanted to make it a project to build a church in

Africa. This summer, before our trip, I was invited over to Bethel and a picture was taken of this class of children giving me a check for \$262 to help build an African church building. I gave this picture to Margaret Sakala with a check. I asked her to send me a picture of the new building, which I will give to this Sunday School class. Three others heard of this and also gave money to help build an African church. How God supplies the needs of His work!

God raises up preachers as new churches form, as 2 Timothy 2:2 advises: "The things which you have heard . . . these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." This is exactly how preachers are raised up in this work. They hear the word of the Kingdom and the work of Christ and then teach others. Soon bricks are made and fired, and a new church building is built. (None of these pastors has a salary.) As we said, in 1994 there were 20 churches and today there are 64. We in America can learn much from the simple life and zeal of our African brothers and sisters.

These people live a happy and contented optimistic life based on their faith in God. They live close to nature. They live out of their gardens. It is easy for them to see God

in His creation (this is a very beautiful part of the world). They love TRUTH and have developed confidence in us as truth-teachers. They are very dedicated to preaching in love the truths of God's coming Kingdom and Christ's part in our salvation. Baptisms take place regularly.

Communion is conducted every Easter at Milonde. We are encouraging the pastors to have communion in each church, since many live too far away to come to headquarters church. But their customs are different from ours and we do not try to change their culture unless it goes against Bible teaching.

During our stay at Margaret's house we were deeply saddened at the death of her elder brother, Austin Chaima. We attended the funeral the next day. We expressed our deep sympathy, bought the coffin, and helped every way we could.

Once again the Word of God was preached, God and Christ were glorified, and the people encouraged. Thank you all for your prayers and help to make the trip possible. God is working among them, preparing many for His coming Kingdom. We are so thankful to have a part in this work. Please keep praying for these pastors and this work. □

What Can I Do?

Pray . . .

- For victims of the terrorist act and their families
- For continued rescue and restoration efforts
- For our country's leadership- that God would give them wisdom
- For God's peace and justice to come in His timing
- For God's will to be done on earth

Give . . .

- Blood (American Red Cross, 1-800-448-3543)
- Money or time (there are many organizations that are in need of both volunteers and financial support)

Share . . .

- Your testimony with those around you!
- Invite your friends to church
- Now more than ever people are in need of hope. Jesus Christ is that hope! Be bold in your faith!

(Submitted by Pastor Seth Ross)

world disasters. A hundred times more lives were lost in Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo. Africa is a constant nightmare. The loss of property and lives in floods, earthquakes and natural disasters is many times more than in New York and Washington. But the dramatic effect of the sheer audacity, the unique violence, the violation of the ordered and sophisticated city, is what shocked the world. It drove home the message that when suicidal terror is present, there is no ultimate defense. It can happen to anyone, anywhere. A society which has operated on known dangers, and has taken acceptable precautions, is confronted with terror which cannot be anticipated and which can strike at any unknown moment. Life is uncertain, not secure, not predictable. A whole financial world can crash at any time. The well off can become poor overnight, the poor become hungry tomorrow.

The day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.

The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. (Joel 3:14-16.)

Think of the range of methods God can use at any time. Uncontrollable plague when antibiotics are useless. Food contaminated by rampant mad cow disease, foot and mouth disease, badly modified genetics. Weather out of control by global warming. Earthquakes. Volcanoes. If the words of biblical end time calamities are to be taken seriously, there is no end of methods available to God. We need to be aware of the possibilities and to note the signs as they become more observable. The New York/

Washington catastrophies should not be ignored.

Yet there is hope and a good news end to the story.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed,

And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah.

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:1-5). □

Gospel Publicity League Bulletin, September 16, 2001.

The Beginning of the Last Days?

BY PASTOR STEVE TAYLOR, REX, GA

The scenes and events of Tuesday, September 11 are indelibly etched in our minds. It is a day which none of us will ever forget.

We can scarcely comprehend the level of human depravity evidenced by those who were the architects of this sinister attack, and yet such actions should not surprise those of us living in these times who believe in the authority of the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 reminds us that, "in the last days difficult times will come. For

men will be... malicious... brutal, haters of good, treacherous..."

None of us have ever witnessed such malicious, brutal, treacherous acts as we witnessed on September 11, and we pray that we never will again. And yet the student of Scripture realizes that worse events are likely on the horizon of this present age.

As a people who believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the earth and the literal fulfillment of all Bible

prophecy, we view these recent events as "the beginning of birth pangs" of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 24:8). It is our belief that the end of this present age will be marked by great cataclysmic events such as we have recently witnessed. But we look beyond the present crisis and the crises to come to an Age characterized by world peace and perfection. This has always been, and continues to be, the great emphasis and message of this organization. □

Another Day That Will Live In Infamy (continued from page 6)

rehearsal for the big one – the invasion of Israel as described in many Bible passages. Since we are a strong right arm to Israel, we are a natural target. The terrorists could have struck Germany or France or Britain or any number of other nations, but no, we were the perfect symbol of their defiance against Israel and her strongest ally. Curiously, New York has the largest population of Jews of any city in the world. They are stereotyped as the money managers of the world (and hated for it by many). We cannot be sure if either has anything to do with the symbols that were attacked.

Now, to read a significant text that describes what is happening before our eyes every day in the Mideast.

Psalm 83

Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against

thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. *Selah*

Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.

Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the

mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

This is why God acts at the end of this age: to prove to tyrants — who have maligned God’s chosen for millennia — that “God is the most high over all the earth.” All the world will know that truth and, I think, soon.

In light of these times, I would strongly encourage you to carefully consider your decision about following Christ, the One whom God set forth for each of us to find salvation on the Great and Notable Day of the Lord. □

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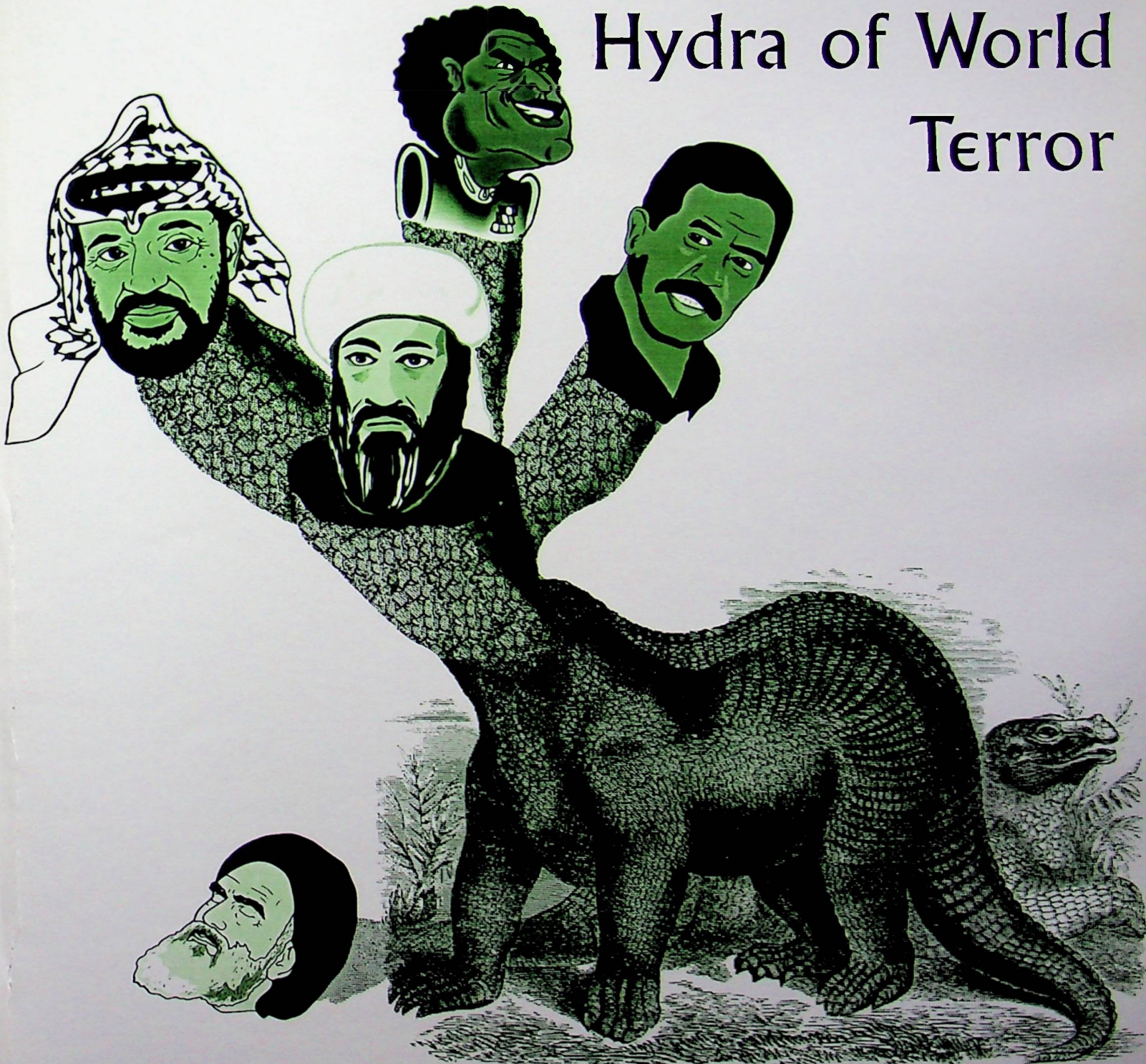
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The Restitution Herald

Volume 91, Number 2

December, 2001; January, 2002

The Many-headed Hydra of World Terror



A MESSAGE

from the Editor . . .



Life in the Time of the Hydra

It's a scary time to be an American. It's an exciting time to be a Christian. It's a scary time to be an American because our nation is at war. We've deployed our military into Afghanistan. We now have a special office of Homeland Security because we know that our nation is not invincible to terrorism. It seems that every few days we are told by our government to be alert, there are credible threats of terrorism being planned. As of this writing, Osama bin Laden is still on the loose. But what happens if and when he is captured or killed? Will it be like the heads of the Hydra in Greek mythology — cut off one head and several more spring up in its place? Will we next go after Saddam Hussein and Iraq? It is a scary time to be an American.

But it's an exciting time to be a Christian. Jesus told us not to be alarmed when we hear about wars and rumors of wars. It's a good thing, too. According to the magazine *Personnel Journal*, "Since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world

has been at peace less than eight percent of the time!" In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3,540 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. In that time more than 8,000 peace treaties were made, and broken. In spite of wars and terrorism why do I think it's an exciting time to be a Christian? Because, no matter how terrifying things might be from a human perspective, from a divine perspective this is all a part of God's divine program. Man does not have the last word when it comes to war and peace, God does! As humans we have proven ourselves incapable of creating anything resembling true peace — that's the bad news. The Good News is, God has provided us with the Prince of Peace, the Messiah. When Christ comes, he will bring true and lasting peace. When Christ comes, "the wolf will dwell with the lamb." When Christ comes again, all of Abraham's Children will be at peace — Isaac and Ishmael will once and for all lay down their armaments and will love one another as true brothers. When Christ

comes, those who are children of Abraham by virtue of their faith in Messiah will fully inherit the earth that Jesus promised to the meek.

In the meantime, Christians are forced to discern the events of the world and what our response is to be to those events. We are forced to question what our support or participation should be in the conflict. This has always been a difficult question for God's children to wrestle with and in this issue you will see how some answer that question for themselves. May this challenge you to reflect deeply on the words of Scripture and your response to them.

God Bless you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jeffrey Fletcher".

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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911 and Us

BY PASTOR JAMES MATTISON

Several have asked, "Do the 911 events have some prophetic significance? This is my answer.

Daniel 2 and 7 give an outline of the history of four great world empires starting in Daniel's day and ending with Jesus coming and establishing God's Kingdom over earth, a period of more or less 2600 years.

The first three are identified: Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The fourth was to come out of one of the four divisions of Alexander the Great's Grecian empire, namely the Seleucus division (Dan. 8:9). Today this is Syria and Iraq. My understanding from this is that the fourth empire was the Arabian Empire, which stretched over a vast territory from north Africa and Spain to China, and lasted hundreds of years. It included all the territory the first three empires controlled. But Revelation shows a pause in that last empire when it looked like it died out — only to come back to life again, to be in existence once again in the end when Christ comes, even to fight against Christ who will be the world's King.

I think we are seeing the birth pains of the revival of the Arabian Empire, led by evil men who want to control the world. All through the Old Testament it was the Jews, sons of Isaac (to whom God gave the promises) against the Arabs, sons of Ishmael and

Esau. All are sons of Abraham. Both groups claim the land of Israel. God gave it to Israel. There are also two religions involved, one true, the other a man-made one: Judaism and Islam. The Koran (Muslim Bible) says that infidels must be killed.

I think we are seeing the birth pains of the revival of the Arabian Empire, led by evil men who want to control the world.

.....

Everyone who is not a Muslim is an infidel. If they die in killing them, they think they will have great rewards. So, dying for their cause is preferred to living.

I think that this has begun. It is evident that Antichrist will come out of Iraq, where Babylon and Nineveh were. Daniel mentions a ten-nation confederacy. I believe this ten-nation group will be Arabs. The confederacy will gain such power that they

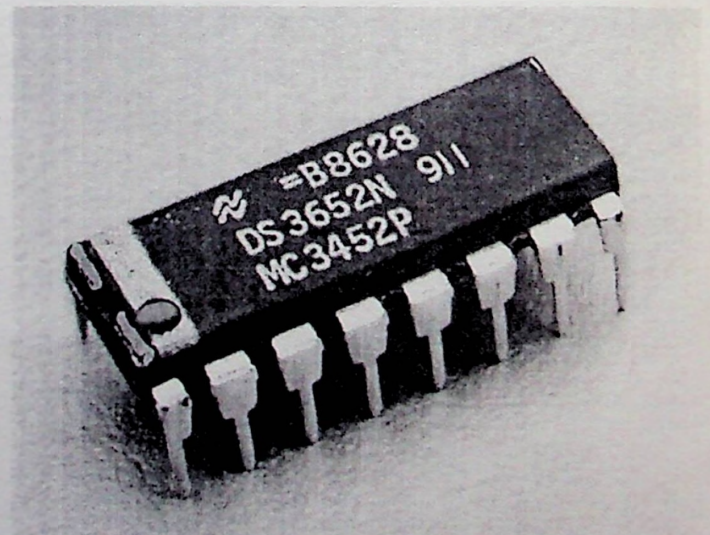
can force every person on earth to receive a mark in forehead or hand. This may possibly be an implanted chip of information about that person.

The Arab League was begun in 1945 and a few members were added to it later. The member nations have two things in common: their hatred of the Jews and their Muslim religion.

After these ten arise, another shall rise after them and overpower three of the ten. This eleventh will be destroyed by the Messiah at His second coming.

God has written all this for us so we may be aware and hold tighter to Him as these evil days come. Many saints will be killed. But those who stand for God and Christ shall live forever.

Daniel says, "The wise shall understand." They are the ones who put their whole trust in God and live by faith. □



War and Peace

BY DAVID JOHNSON

"America is at war," our president Bush declared after the twin towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed by terrorists. The President went on to say that he would not rest until terrorism is rooted out and destroyed. After considering the evidence gathered by the FBI and CIA, the President's immediate target was Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda terrorist network, centered in Afghanistan. Bombing commenced on October 9. This raises questions: Why is there evil? Is our nation justified in waging war on Afghanistan and terrorism? Please follow as I attempt to answer these challenging questions.

We often recite the Lord's prayer, which includes the line "Deliver us from evil," (Matt. 6:13) (some translations say *the evil one*). I have always considered this to mean evil persons and/or agents of government. However, with the tragic disaster of the World Trade Center, and much thought and study of terrorism, I am convinced it means something entirely different. The Lord expressly told Adam that he was forbidden to eat of the tree of good and evil — doing so meant death (Gen. 2:16-17b, "thou shall not eat of it"). This was the Edenic covenant (3:6-7a), their eyes were opened; all of a sudden they realized both good and evil! Thus man's inherent capacity for evil was released, however so was his ability to realize and perform good. From Adam and Eve come all of earth's families that ever lived. Since Adam sinned before Eve conceived all of the human family has been cursed with Adam's sin. Cain murdering Abel (chapter 4) proves the point that evil

was turned loose. After the great flood a new covenant was given to Noah with many provisions, most notably in Genesis 9:5, 6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Man is to be held accountable for his actions. Thus we have the principle of government established to curb man's capacity for evil. Capital Punishment is also established here, as part of human government. Just consider the variety of laws in our society that protect life and property from harm. Considering that in the U.S. we are an open society com-

Can President Bush totally eliminate terrorism? No! Because each of us have the inherent capacity to do evil.

posed of every nationality, religion and ethnic group known on the planet, can President Bush totally eliminate terrorism? No! Because each of us (all people on the planet including Americans) have the inherent capacity to do evil. What is evil? It is a crime against fellow man, a government institution, or a business unit.

With this viewpoint in mind it is then justifiable to consent to the American wars against Hitler, the Kaiser of Germany, Japan, and any action by our government against evil including the terrorist bin

Laden. All of which conforms with Romans 13:1-4.

For he [ruler or government] is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bearest not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (v. 4).

"The most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomever he will" (Dan. 4:25a).

When Adam sinned and then knew evil, human government became necessary to curb man's newfound capacity for evil. Thus God authorized government to protect its citizens from themselves, i.e. a body of civil laws. Notice that in verse four government is referred to as a minister of God to execute wrath upon him that does evil. It is very clear that our President and our American government acted correctly toward the evil of terrorism, i.e. bin Laden and al Qaeda.

But there is another side to it. Wars, without exception, get out of control — great profiteering is a given. Men as young as age 18, who do not think of the consequences, are the cannon fodder. Good leadership is not always used.

Our founding fathers incorporated into the Constitution the legal right of draftable individuals in time of war or peace to be Conscientious Objectors. This was done to accommodate the traditional peace churches, i.e. Brethren, Quakers, Mennonites, etc. I am mindful of the Vietnam War

(continued on page 6)

—a tragedy for all Americans (perhaps a great error was made when the U.S. got involved in a civil war, thus departing from the principle of confronting evil) when tens of thousands of young men fled to Canada or became Conscientious Objectors. Please consider these objections: war is not always right and justifiable; thus the Christian for conscience's sake must have the legal right to serve his country in another capacity.

In James Jones' *From Here to Eternity*, a WWII story of the enormous military staging in Hawaii, the author states that when a man puts on a uniform he becomes "uniformly bad." His point was that in the military it is difficult for an individual to maintain high morals. President Eisenhower said, "War is Hell and a lot of innocent people get killed." Perhaps you have read of the Vietnam experience of Nebraska's Senator Bob Kerrey. He was a war hero. After 32 years the story emerges of his leading a squadron that killed a large number of women, children and other civilians. Now that the event has come to public view it will probably destroy his Senate career.

It is a fact that units of government have the right to pass laws authorizing Capital Punishment, providing it is established by representative government and follows a judicial due process. In the early period of American history it was widely used. In recent times many states have outlawed it. Why? Studies indicate that murder is a passion of uncontrolled emotion and Capital Punishment is not a deterrent. Therefore, the tendency for Capital Punishment in the U.S. is receding. It is most notable that the nation of Israel, which has more terrorist incidents than any other nation, does not utilize Capital Punishment. Most European nations do not allow Capital Punishment, and they reacted in outrage at Timothy McVey's execution, calling the practice barbaric.

The U.S. government went 38 years without executing a prisoner, from 1962 to 2000. That ended in 2001 when they ended Timothy McVey's life for the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing. Suffice it to say, I suspect his followers look at McVey as a martyr for righting a wrong of Waco and Ruby Ridge.

I have read Stephen King's *The Green Mile* and John Grisham's *The Chamber*, and have followed several case histories of

*The follower of Christ is
guided by Paul's lan-
guage to non-violent-
care, and to feed your
enemy if he is hungry
(Rom. 12:9-21).*

.
persons on death row. The prolonged extensive legal maneuvering of the process becomes dehumanizing. Yes, I cannot disagree that state and federal government have this right, though it can be abrogated by the people's choices in the voting booth. The point is correct that Capital Punishment is Biblical and government is authorized by God. And we Christians are, according to Paul in Romans 13, bound to obey it.

We select Christians are called out of the world to be Christ's bride. When a decision is made to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38-39) a special bond is created by our Maker through the gift of the Holy Spirit. *This gift is for life.* Paul states in Romans 12:1 that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. This is our reasonable service considering our short mortal lives versus Eternity. In verse 2 Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world. Since the world is

generally opposed to God we cannot revel in its lusts and serve God at the same time. The follower of Christ is guided by Paul's language to non-violent-care, and to feed your enemy if he is hungry (Rom. 12:9-21). We are to overcome evil with good (vs. 21).

Paul continues his discourse on the philosophy of Christian living in the thirteenth chapter of Romans. All his statements point to obedience to our laws: love of our fellow man, neighbors and a whole list of "thou shalt not's." Including verse 9 "Thou shalt not kill."

In short the dedicated Christian led of the Holy Spirit must be non-violent, an example of honor and integrity, driven by the teaching of scripture especially by the words of Paul and Jesus Christ.

In my view Genesis 9:6 is correct for all time. Inasmuch as Adam ate of the Tree of Good and Evil man's innate capacity for evil was turned loose. Therefore man had to be held accountable, thus the origin of human government.

The next step in the revelation was Moses and the Ten Commandments. God reverses Himself (Ex. 20:13) — "Thou shalt not kill." A vast amount of discourse on the subject of law follows. A nation, Israel, was formed and its mission was to teach all nations about God. It failed!

Next comes Jesus who, saying he came to fulfill the Law, took the Ten Commandments and reduced them to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39).

My point is that with each revelation came a different dispensation. With each program comes additional instruction from the Lord.

In conclusion, I believe that it is *forbidden* for a Christian living by the Holy Spirit to execute, of and by him/herself Capital Punishment. That function is reserved for governments chosen by God. □

Speech of Prime Minister Sharon

Following is the speech Prime Minister Sharon gave on Israeli television December 3, 2001 following his return from Washington and the Israeli Air Force missile strike on PLO chief Yasser Arafat's helicopter hangars in Gaza City, which came in response to weekend suicide bomb attacks in Israel:

Citizens of Israel,

Firstly, on my behalf and on behalf of the Government of Israel, I wish to send my condolences to the families of those murdered, and wish a speedy recovery to the many wounded who remain hospitalized around the country.

I returned today from the United States after a conversation with President George Bush. The President asked me to convey to the people of Israel his deep sorrow and sincere condolences. The President told me that the United States is a true friend and partner of the State of Israel. In times of peace, just as today in our fight against terror, the United States and Israel stand together!

Citizens of Israel,

We have fought many wars — and we have won them all. We have defeated our enemies — and we have made peace. We have held the sword — and made the wilderness and desert bloom. We have built cities, developed industry and cultivated agriculture — we have transformed the State of Israel into an example and symbol for many other countries in the world.

We continue this enterprise every day, we will not cease — never!

A war has been forced upon us. A war of terror. A war that claims innocent victims daily. A war of terror being conducted

systematically, in an organized fashion and with methodical direction.

If you ask what the aim of this war is — I will tell you. The aim of this war of terror, the aim of the terrorists, their aids and dispatchers, the aim of those who enable them to perpetrate their acts quietly without disturbance, is to expel us from here. Their aim is to bring us to total despair, a loss of hope, and a loss of the national vision which leads us — “A free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem.”

Citizens of Israel — this will not happen!

There is no nation in the world that would have demonstrated such maturity and stamina, I am proud to be part of this nation. I am aware of the fact we also face difficulties in other spheres of our lives; here too, we demonstrate our integrity and strength.

They have already understood that they will not succeed. They have already understood that our nation is stronger and that our spirit of resistance is firmer than they ever could have imagined. Therefore, they continue to slaughter children, youth, men and women, citizens of Israel and other nations — human beings — just for the sake of killing, just to murder.

I tell you from here, from Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the State of Israel — united Jerusalem. I tell you this, you and all those listening today around the whole world — the blood of those who will rise up to kill us will be on their hands.

Just as the United States is conducting its war against international terror, using all its might against terror, so will we too. With all the strength, determination and

resources we have used until today, and with resources at our disposal.

Do not believe false prophecies and do not be misled by promises of immediate results. This struggle is not an easy one, this struggle will not be short. But we will be victorious.

Israel does not start wars. This war of terror, as in the past, has been forced upon us. We know who has forced it upon us. We know who is guilty. We know who is responsible.

Arafat is responsible for everything that happens here. Arafat has made his strategic choices: a strategy of terrorism, in choosing to try and win political accomplishments through murder and in choosing to allow the ruthless killing of innocent civilians, Arafat has chosen the path of terrorism.

For a long time the world has not seen Arafat for what he is, but recently there has been a significant shift. There are signs of greater understanding for our position — everyone is discovering the real Arafat.

Arafat is the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East. We have seen this in the past, are seeing it in the present, and will unfortunately probably continue to see this in the future. But, Arafat will not fool this government. This time, Arafat will not succeed in fooling us.

The Palestinian people must know: They are the primary victims of the current situation brought about by Arafat.

I tell you now: we will pursue those responsible, the perpetrators of terrorism and the supporters. We will pursue them until we catch them, and they will pay the price.

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On the Current Conflict in Israel

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is a worldwide Christian ministry headquartered in Jerusalem, where we have been daily witnesses for more than twenty years to the ups or downs of the Arab-Israeli conflict and international efforts to bring it to a peaceful resolution. We have a proven track record of reaching out in sincere Christian love to all the peoples of the Holy Land, Jews and Arabs alike, and consider ourselves to be an informed and concerned observer to this dispute.

We are convinced that successive Israeli governments have made genuine efforts to achieve peace with their Palestinian Arab neighbors, but cannot say the same regarding the Palestinian leadership under PLO chief Yasser Arafat. Last year, both before and after the launching of the violent Palestinian intifada, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak staked his entire political career on the hope that Arafat would accept his unprecedented offer of generous and risk-filled concessions on the most sensitive issues in this long struggle. Instead, the Palestinian Authority responded by unleashing radical Islamic and nationalist militias in a purported "war of liberation" to end the very "occupation" Israel

had just demonstrated it was willing to terminate peacefully.

Over the past year, there has been enormous loss and suffering on both sides of this conflict. As Christians, we are members of a faith bound to reconciling men to God and to each other, and we pray every single day for peace in this region. But we also are bound to truth, and thus have no choice but to lay the blame for the current suffering of Israelis and Palestinians squarely at the feet of Arafat and his corrupt and callous regime.

The PA has made areas under its control a training base and safe haven for terrorists, no less than the Taliban's sheltering of the al-Qaida network in Afghanistan. Peace in this region is a certain impossibility until this Palestinian web of terror has been eradicated. Arafat has refused to dismantle this terrorist infrastructure, despite his signed obligations to do so. Rather, he has armed and incited these militant elements, many under his direct command, for the purpose of inflicting casualties that are deliberately intended to pry even more concessions out of Israel.

Israel, on the other hand, has acted with patience and restraint for the past 15 months. But the recent death of some 33

innocent civilians and wounding of nearly 300 others in a grisly week of terrorism has made the situation intolerable. As a democratic state, Israel has the right and duty to defend its citizens.

It is important to note that the current wave of Palestinian violence came after US President George W. Bush took the unprecedented step of publicly endorsing the "vision of a state of Palestine" and an end to the "occupation." He also dispatched a trusted American military figure, retired General Anthony Zinni, to the region to oversee implementation of a ceasefire. These measures were meant to provide Arafat the incentives he said were necessary to take actions to quell the intifada. Yet it had the opposite effect, as Palestinian violence escalated to its worst in recent memory.

Now, the Bush Administration is no longer asking Israel to act with restraint. The reason is clear. The US Government has come to the realization that Arafat has fooled the world for far too long and must be held accountable for the disaster he has brought upon his own people. □

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Lord's Harvest International Trip to Haiti (continued from page 6)

Today, immediately upon my return, I convened an emergency meeting with all the heads of security establishment. In a few minutes, the Government will assemble for a special meeting, and will make decisions on the expansion of the treatment of terrorism.

This is not the place to discuss these avenues. I am certain that the decisions we must take today require a special assemblage of the entire Government.

The Government I head is a National Unity Government. We are now in a time of emergency, and in such times a National

Unity Government, a Government which represents the entire public in Israel, is of supreme importance.

United we will face all the challenges before us. □

Source: Information Division, Israel Foreign Ministry

Who Weeps for Hagar's Children?

BY ELWOOD MCQUAID

And she went, and sat down apart from him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat apart from him, and lifted up her voice, and wept (Gen. 21:16).

The woman was, of course, Hagar. The child was Ishmael. Hagar was the handmaid of Sarah, Abraham's wife. We often speak of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. For Christians and Jewish people, the affinity for this family is well understood. The Bible makes it emphatically clear that the covenant God established to bring blessing to the entire world was to pass from Abraham to Isaac, then on to his posterity, the Jewish people:

And God said, Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him (Gen. 17:19).

Thus we Christians have scrupulously followed the history of the descendants of Abraham and Isaac with fidelity and unbridled fondness because it was through their seed that the Lord moved toward us in grace and mercy.

For Jewish people, the covenant brought scores of irrevocable promises — promises of a land, a people, a King, and ultimately a Kingdom that will encompass the earth with an era of millennial bliss that has never been experienced on this planet.

And so, during the long pilgrimage of Isaac's seed across the centuries, true believers have gloried in the Jewish people's

triumphs, marveling at the precision of prophetic fulfillment and divine preservation. And when Israel anguished in the caldron of suffering, we wept as Rachel wept for her children millennia ago.

At the same time, particularly when such trauma now grips the Middle East, we must wonder, Who weeps for Hagar's children? The 21st chapter of the book of Genesis is extremely enlightening because, for all that we witness in God's aligning the future course of world history with the heirs of Isaac, there is another story. It is one that unveils a magnificent portrait of a caring God who extends grace and mercy in the midst of trial and encodes the history of another people.

It begins, as is so often the case, with well-meaning individuals trying to assist the Lord by moving His program along when He didn't seem to be proceeding at a pace quite to their liking. Hagar seemed, to Sarah, to be the answer to her own barrenness and Abraham's need of an heir. The result of Abraham's union with Hagar was Ishmael ("God will hear"). After Isaac came on the scene, however, there was rivalry between the boys; and Hagar and her son received their eviction notice:

Wherefore she [Sarah] said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac (21:10).

With no more than a container of water and a portion of bread, Hagar was sent into the wilderness. Seeing their supply of water exhausted and believing Ishmael was

going to perish, she sat, as we found her, weeping for her son.

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation (21:17, 18).

Ishmael was given a name with promise ("God will hear"); that promise was fulfilled when God heard the boy's cry. The Lord's response was to provide a well of water, a place of shelter, and a divine pledge: Ishmael would live, and God would make him a great nation. As surely as God has kept the promises He made to Isaac, He also has been faithful to keep His promise to Ishmael.

Ishmael's heirs, however, were placed on a different course than those of Isaac. Ishmael's was not the promise of the land, a King, and a Kingdom, but of a nation that "shall not be numbered for multitude" (16:10) and of a progeny consisting of "twelve princes" (17:20). Accordingly, Ishmael's descendants became Bedouin tribal people, recognized today as the Arab nations. Unfortunately, as the promises endured, so did the animosity between the brothers' seeds. As we witness every day, the hostilities seem to multiply in intensity.

A Parting of the Ways

In A.D. 610 a camel driver named Muhammad secretly began to preach a new
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religion in Mecca in Arabia. His god was the astral tribal god of the Bedouin Arabs — Allah. What became his holy book, the *Quran*, proclaimed the superiority of the Islamic faith and declared Judaism and Christianity “infidel” religions. Although it recognized the Jews as “the people of the Book,” Islam always made them subservient to the Muslim religion. The *Quran* endorsed conquest by the sword, and soon the new religion swept across the Arab world and far beyond in a war designed to subjugate the “infidels.”

Thus Judaism, Christianity, and Islam truly took very different courses. The result was centuries of bloodshed and hostility that stand as some of the darkest periods in the history of the world.

Although the Arabs never designated Jerusalem as a seat of Muslim authority or laid claim to an Arab state in what came to be known as Palestine, the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 sent shock waves throughout the Arab world. The Jews were back in their ancestral land, creating an intolerable situation for Muslims, who had claimed the area for Allah and Islam. For Muslims the world over, the answer was *annihilate Israel*. Their obsession became to drive the Jews into the sea. It sounded like a simple proposition. After all, these were the emaciated children of the Holocaust, hardly formidable opponents. Certainly the work could be accomplished in rather short order. However, it was not to be.

What Arab and Muslim leaders did not count on was that these were, as Islam had acknowledged, the people of the Book. And the destiny of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel had been etched millennia ago by the finger of God on a divine plan far removed from the schema laid out in the *Quran* and preached in the mosques of the Arab world. The Jewish people survived and prospered in the land God had promised them.

Weeping for Hagar's Children

With the rise of radical Muslim groups, particularly the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), came a reign of terror seldom witnessed among civilized countries in the modern world. Their mission was to kill the Jews (particularly innocent civilians), wipe Israel off the face of the earth, and create an authoritarian Islamic ministate led by the craggy career terrorist Yasser Arafat.

But this self-proclaimed savior of the hapless Palestinian people has proven himself less than a compassionate chieftain. Corruption under his leadership in what is now the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been documented beyond question. And his passionate protestations of burning concern for his people have been exposed as utter hypocrisy. Arafat's terror campaign, which has turned into all-out war against Israel, has brought nothing but suffering, death, and privation to the Palestinian people.

Today Palestinians, particularly Christians, are leaving PA-governed areas in droves. A recent report in *The Jerusalem Post* confirms that Palestinians are fleeing for their lives. Requests for Palestinian visas were up 51 percent for the first six months of this year, compared to 35 percent for the same period a year ago. The little town of Bethlehem, an Arab-Christian community until Arafat took over, is now Muslim. Another prime example of this situation is the Christian-Arab village of Beit Jalla, which has become a post for Arafat's terrorists to fire into the Jewish neighborhood of Gilo. An Arab Christian from Beit Jalla, who is leaving the region with his family, said more than 30 percent of Beit Jalla's Christians have fled their homes since Palestinian gunmen have repeatedly entered the village to fire on Gilo.

But what of those left behind? Since Israelis have been targeting known terrorists, Arafat's people have initiated a reign of terror against Palestinian Arabs marked

as “collaborators.” Exactly what does this mean?

It is an old story with Arafat and his cohorts. For the past 20 years, Palestinians *suspected of considering* selling land to Israelis have been summarily executed, some in the most gruesome ways on the streets of Palestinian towns. Unfortunately, the Western media have ignored this reality as well as the fact that today Palestinian Arabs are being rounded up and killed as *suspected* “collaborators.”

After Israel recently targeted two Hamas terrorists — men who had killed and maimed hundreds of innocent civilians and who were planning more such attacks — Arafat's forces rounded up scores of people and, after 10-minute trials with no opportunity of appeal, began executing them. Furthermore, roving bands of Arafat's Fatah henchmen began killing anyone they suspected of collaboration. Of course, none of these facts were found worthy of international news coverage.

As believers, we have a mandate to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and stand with the Jewish people. And so we do. But let us not forget that Hagar's children suffer too. And as we weep for Rachel's children, let us remember our obligation to pray for and reach out to Hagar's children.

We cannot help but remember the words of Genesis. When speaking of the basic nature of Ishmael and his children, the Bible says,

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren (16:12).

That prophecy is the legacy of the sons of Ishmael. Who should weep for them the most? The answer is obvious: believers — who care for the souls of men. □

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Freedom: The Other Side of the Kill Zone

BY COLONEL JEFF O'LEARY

In the aftermath of the horrific attacks on our nation, this story told by Air Force Colonel Jeff O'Leary in his book *Taking the High Ground: Military Stories of Faith and Patriotism* reminds Americans of the tremendous value of freedom. Col. O'Leary, an Air Force officer who is stationed at the Pentagon, was safely out of the office when the hijacked airliner crashed into an area of the Pentagon that he frequents.

I recently spent a week in Berlin on military business. As I traveled past the famous Brandenburg gate, I realized I crossed in a moment what had separated millions for almost thirty years. Here American and East German tanks faced off in 1961. Here President Kennedy stood and declared:

Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us. . . . Freedom is indivisible and when one man is enslaved, all are not free.

Across from my East Berlin hotel was the plaza on Unter den Linden where the Nazis burned thousands of books in the early 1930s. A bit further was the building that housed the headquarters of the East German Stasi secret police. Another short walk away stood what was Gestapo Headquarters during Hitler's rule. But what drew me most was the flashpoint between east and west, between democracy and communism, between freedom and chains — Checkpoint Charlie.

Still remaining at the checkpoint was a control tower where East German border guards had kept watch. On either side of the checkpoint were several buildings whose windows were bricked over to prevent escapes. For me, having spent many years on B-52 alert, walking the Soviet Sector was a surreal experience. I had spent half a lifetime ensuring both the safety of Americans and an idea we believed in. We call it freedom.

Jesus understood the human need to be free. He spoke to a subjugated Jewish people under Roman rule when he promised, "When the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." There is a thirst for freedom in the human spirit that is rarely appreciated until it is taken away.

As conditions deteriorated in the East after WWII, more than three million East Germans fled to the West. The Soviet answer to this massive bleeding was to build a wall. Within a period of one month, eighteen million Germans lost the freedom to leave their borders.

During the first week of the east/west standoff, barbed wire was strung across fifteen miles of the border. A famous picture was snapped as a five-year-old child stood at the fence with his hands outspread-seeking and hoping to be free. A youthful looking East German guard compassionately opens the wire for the child to climb through to freedom. The child gained his freedom while the guard, who was observed, was arrested and taken away.

Within one year, more than one hundred observation towers were built. Nearly every East German house within two hundred yards of the border was torn down and the

occupants forced to move. Until the buildings were torn down, a stream of freedom seekers jumped from the windows into sheets held by West Germans below. Young babies were thrown from the windows.

As the barbed wire was replaced by a strong wall, escape attempts became more dangerous and sometimes more violent. Trucks full of people crashed at high speed into the wall. Some managed to run to freedom while snipers in observation towers killed many others. Those who were caught were taken to trial and given lengthy prison sentences.

After five years, fortifications increased to 230 guard towers. Weapons trained to fire automatically at moving targets protected kill zones for hundreds of yards. Land mines were placed throughout the zone. Tank traps were spread side by side for dozens of miles. Still the people came.

Tunnels were built across the shortest distances between east and west. Cavities were carved in automobiles, trucks, electrical generators, and furniture to hide people hoping to find freedom. One family of eight managed to build a hot air balloon and escape. Others built small sail planes, hang-gliders, and even a small, submerged submarine to escape to freedom. Even border guards experienced this thirst for freedom. Over twenty-eight years, more than two thousand dropped their weapons and ran to freedom.

Tragedies were regular fare for those shot in the no-man's zone. Caught between East and West, they bled to death under both the passionless and pained eyes of frozen watchers. And occasionally, guards

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A Light In the Darkness

AS TOLD TO JEFF O'LEARY

Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being — Ps. 146:1-2, KJV.

As the new century begins, my experience in the early 1940s seems long ago indeed. War has a way of coming upon you without warning, and the consequences are terrible. These consequences are not only for those who actively participate, but also gravely affect those caught in the crossfire. It seems to disproportionately afflict the innocent — those who have no interest, involvement, or arguments with those at war. I'd have to say I was put in such a situation during the early days of World War II.

I'd been serving a very primitive people as a missionary priest on the southern island of Mindanao in 1941 to establish and sustain an agricultural school that would benefit the very poor on that small island.

It was then that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the Philippines one early December morning. In the general confusion that followed the declaration of war, people rushed from village to village seeking a safe haven.

We heard terrible stories about what the Japanese soldiers were doing and how they treated their enemies and innocent women. Taking the advice of the United States Army, we resettled in Northern Mindanao. The army believed this would be the safest place. Soon after settling there, we were stunned to learn that General Wainwright was going to surrender to the Japanese. As civilians, we were advised to do the same. By then it was May, 1942, and we were truly terrified.

It never occurred to me that God's plan for my life would result in my being imprisoned. Yet, that is what happened as the Japanese seized the island. I became their prisoner for the next three years.

I was taken captive along with 250 other American and British citizens. The city of Davaou, along the southern coast of Mindanao, became a prisoner of war concentration camp. It's hard to imagine, but we were taken to a former Philippine night club, called (of all names) The Happy Life Blues. This building, just outside the city of Davaou, served as our place of internment. We were kept there for more than eighteen months until December of 1943.

While imprisoned, we were forced to endure many inhuman indignities. Degradation and base humiliation, along with starvation, were our constant companions. There are many stories I could tell of those years. Yet, one event that occurred near Christmas stands out most vividly.

It was 1943 and just two days before Christmas. We had suffered a lot and thought we'd received an early Christmas gift when the guards told us we were going to be moved. It seems the Japanese commander decided we would be relocated to the Santa Thomas prison camp in Manila. A few of us were jubilant, little realizing that we were being taken to a starvation camp already housing over four thousand prisoners. Our joy turned to desolation.

On Christmas Eve we were put in the hold of a Japanese troop ship. We were told we would be kept there for ten days during the journey to Manila. It was winter, the cargo hold was black, and we were packed together. Before our guards closed the hatch to the cargo hold, they left us with

this news, "Since there are American submarines in these waters, you will probably be torpedoed." And with that, they slammed the hatch closed and locked it with a resounding clap.

It was black inside that floating tomb and we felt the blackness of despair creep into our hearts. We were left with our own thoughts and fears. Labored breathing and one or two muffled sobs were the only sounds we heard. The message that seemed to come from that dark, wet coffin was that we were alone and forsaken.

Then, ever so softly, out of the bleakness and blackness of the night, a lady's beautiful voice began to sing. Softly and timidly, she sang, "Silent Night, Holy Night." The breathing around me became less labored. The sobs ceased. All listened to the sweet, soft voice, and our eyes filled with tears. Our hearts filled with a quiet hope. As she continued her sweet song of praise, all of us, one by one, joined our voices to hers.

We sang of the wonder of Christ's birth from full hearts in desperate circumstances. That night we offered our thoughts and prayers to the Christ Child. We praised Him, not from the padded pews of a stained glass cathedral, but from the black hole of a Japanese troop ship. As we sang, the terror we felt inside fled from us. It could no longer remain there because the presence of Christ had come — just as He had come almost 2,000 years before.

Excerpted from Taking the High Ground by Jeff O'Leary, Victor. Used by permission of Cook Communications Ministries, 2001.

Is God On Vacation, Or What?

BY KARI WEST

My soul is downcast within me . . . I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning?" Psalm 42:6, 9 NIV

"Life in the Lord is combat," says Jon Drury, a pastor in Castro Valley, California. This is especially true when we are ambushed by loss. As loss puts faith to the test and our minds put God on the spot, the battle intensifies. Major skirmishes are fought on the spiritual front of grief.

Bewildered by the silence of a God who seems not to hear our prayers, we wonder how to pray. Maybe we are unable to focus on Scripture at the very time we are besieged with an onslaught of questions. Our tender hearts can be easily impaled by others' glib responses — "Be glad it's over. It was for the best." "If you had only had more faith. You need to pray more."

If you feel under attack and are spiritually shaken, it does not mean that something is wrong with you or your faith — or that God is absent or uncaring. Loss hurts, whether you believe in God or not. Faith

has never been an insurance policy against loss, and it never will be. It is not a hedge around heartbreak, a quick fix for pain, or a detour through grief. While faith can act like a shock absorber during grief and provide you with an eternal perspective as you struggle to make sense of your life, it does not offer immunity from sorrow or absolution from questioning what you believe.

Divorce put my faith to the test. I could not understand why the God who hates divorce had not restored my marriage. With hindsight, I now see my unanswered prayers were part of a larger plan. God was drawing me to Himself and positioning me to handle the impact of my former husband's infidelity before that truth came to light. But during those dark, disappointing days, as I grieved the loss of my marriage and struggled to believe God still had plans for my life, there were occasions I thought God was vacationing in the Holy Land.

Be encouraged in your time of grief that it is common to struggle to believe. It is not necessarily that your faith is too little or too weak. Like the little boy who stood in a room full of manure and knew there was

a pony in there somewhere, you stand in faith each time you dare to hope and trust in what you cannot see. Your unanswered prayers do not mean God is deaf to your cries. Because you can't sense His presence or understand what He is up to does not mean He has forgotten or abandoned you. As you will see, our God is a God who keeps His promises.

Prayer Pause: God, my faith is shaken. How do I continue to believe in a loving, caring heavenly Father when You allow Your children to suffer unspeakable loss, shattering disappointment, and excruciating pain? All I want is my life back in order. Is that too much to ask? Sometimes I think You are mad at me, because You feel so far away. Yet I sense behind Your seeming absence and veil of silence that You are nearer than I realize. Guide me with Your grace as I struggle to believe.

Kari West, co-author of When He Leaves, is a spirited gardener. She lives in California. Excerpt from Dare to Trust, Dare to Hope Again, Kari West, © 2001, Cook Communications Ministries. Used by permission.

Freedom: The Other Side of the Kill Zone (continued from page 11)

would rush into the zone of death, risking themselves to save one.

No description can explain the terror and thirst for freedom. At best, I can evoke what memories remain.

I had a chance to bring a piece of the wall home with me. I thought about it but couldn't do it. Too much misery was in that wall. Too many families divided, too

many deaths, and too many fellow believers were wounded and killed by that wall.

I left Berlin with a sacred appreciation of the heritage of freedom I'd been given. I also left with a deeper knowledge of the cost Christ paid to take down the wall that separated me from God. The road to freedom has always been through killing zones, from Calvary to Checkpoint Charlie. The

price of freedom, then and now, has always been too costly. The currency has always been blood.

Colonel O'Leary has served for more than 20 years in the USAF. This is one of many stories in Taking the High Ground Military Stories of Faith and Patriotism (Victor, © 2001). Used by permission of Cook Communications Ministries.

Video Madness

BY JON KOI McCOMBS

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. (1 Cor. 9:24, 25).

Paul may have penned these words over nineteen hundred years ago, but they are a source of encouragement to me in 2001.

Promises of financial security certainly are tempting for someone living on Social Security Income, but they also block my view of the imperishable prize that Paul illustrates so clearly. My personal care assistant, Herb proposed a partnership in a franchise of Video Plus. The principle of providing a place for people to rent movies could not have been easier to grasp, which was made simple by Herb's friend. He owned the original store in west Phoenix and thought it would be good to start a store in the east valley. It was fundamental to have a convenient location, meaning a well-used shopping center. Videos were farthest from my mind, but it was simple for me to get sucked in by the promises of a supposedly lucrative business opportunity. It seemed easy enough — people would just rent movies, and the money would flow in!

Paul's words are encouragement to keep striving towards my goal, but I sometimes interpret them to mean that I am supposed to be strong enough to obtain the prize by myself, or that being a Christian immunizes me from temptations. Christ's priceless blood is not a vaccine against temptation. If it were, James would have no need

to write, "Blessed is he who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him" (1:12). I learned how powerful temptation can be, and how fast the race can come to a screeching halt. Because there is no vaccine against sin, Paul demonstrates God's power through the use of armor that He has provided to protect us from the enemy (Eph. 6:10-15). There was a battle raging, throughout the time I was attempting to stake my claim in videos.

Since God allows me to be tempted, it seems easy to take it a step further and claim that He enticed me with the prospect of owning a video store. I could say that God placed an idea in my head just to prove that I couldn't do anything without Him. I could, but I would be wrong, because James writes,

Let no one when he is tempted, say, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil; nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (1:13, 14).

Since I can't blame God, and since it is too difficult to see that I could ever be so dumb as to get in over my head, Herb seemed the culprit. After all, he saw what he could gain out of the situation. It seemed clear that he would not suggest an idea that he could not profit from; therefore, I could say that it was all Herb's fault. The last line of James 1:14 fills this thinking with gaping holes. My sin is nobody's responsibility except my own.

Once I decided that Herb's ideas were worth pursuing, things started to spiral out of control. One by one, I began rejecting God's principles. First, I had no means to financially back a store of any kind without a small-business loan. Although I didn't see the total picture, I didn't like the loan idea because it seemed risky to have debt hanging over a new business. In the video business, loans are necessary because videos have to be purchased, buildings have to be leased, and displays have to be built. I was all too aware of the warning "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Second, I did not have any credit to secure the loan. My Dad appeared to be the logical person to ask because he owned a business. I hated to ask him to help with funding a video store because I didn't think I had enough information for him to make a decision. Herb thought we were ready and I became caught up in the sheer possibility of owning my own store, or at least, being a partner. On Dad's request, we scrambled to assemble a proposal, which I had never done before, and luckily, he never saw.

God cares for every aspect of life. Being physically handicapped for my entire life has taught me to rely on others to fulfill virtually all my needs. In a way, this puts me at a disadvantage because I cannot get things done when I would like. At the same time, when it comes to God's will, not being able to act quickly is a huge blessing. I have the possibility to see Isaiah's message that "those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" in action (Is. 40:31). He has blessed me with a great friend in Greg, who happens to be
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The Story of the Silver Refiner

SUBMITTED BY JANICE JONES, MORROW, GA

There was a group of women in a Bible study on the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three, they came across verse three which says: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

That week this woman called up a silver smith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silver smith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one

needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest to burn away all the impurities. The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot — then she thought again about the verse, that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silver smith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silver smith how he knew when the silver was fully refined. He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy — when I see my image in it."

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:16-18). □



Video Madness (continued from page 14)

my pastor. He constantly points me back to the Lord by telling me to find my strength only in Him, even when I don't like it. Greg tried to bring me back to using the wisdom which Proverbs mentions (2:10-22). But I turned a deaf ear to God's instruction. I needed to heed the wisdom of Proverbs (15:31-33) and see that Greg was only delivering the message that he felt God had for me in this situation. I wasn't interested in God's message because I was sure that Herb and I were the only people who had the "big picture," and that everyone else was focused on making sure that our plans failed. I asked Greg to convince my grandparents that I could succeed in managing

my own business. Instead, he tried to convince me that I was being impractical. He attempted to show me that there were too many video stores already for this idea to be successful.

Through Herb, though, I was provided with an apparent way to avoid the wait on God. In the first place, the issue wasn't giving Herb the position of God in my life, or that they could somehow have equality. Instead, I rejected the restrictions that I perceived God to be placing on my life, and that Herb was apparently helping me to master. In doing so, I shut God out of my life because Herb convinced me that, with his help, I didn't need anyone else.

Looking back on my planning for the store, I can see that I was beginning to be driven by greed. Paul discusses the issue of greed in 1 Timothy 6:8-10. This scripture is the ultimate example of where I would have been if I had stuck with our plans. I believe that I could have gotten sucked into making money my whole life. It seems that one could easily be corrupted because of the association with the sins of the world.

So the reason that my dreams don't come true must be because my dreams are not in line with God's will. I believe that God really knows what is best for me. It is only when I seek God that I will succeed in reaching His desires for me. □

The Great Apostasy:

A Study of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

BY WILLIAM M. WACHTEL

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Apostle Paul foretells by inspiration the coming of what he calls *the* apostasy (verse 3). The definite article is used with the Greek word *apostasia* as though the apostle refers to some specific apostasy already known to his readers. He confirms their knowledge of this by saying, in verse 5, "Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?" He hadn't simply mentioned this matter to them once, but rather had discussed it with them several times while he was in Thessalonica. Now in his absence he was writing to give them needed instruction to help them avoid deception, disillusionment and fear.

In his first letter to them, Paul had mentioned Christ's second coming, the *parousia*, several times (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). He taught them that at Christ's return the believers who had fallen asleep would be raised from the dead (4:13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23). Apparently, the Thessalonians had afterwards heard a report or prophecy, or even had received a spurious letter as if from Paul, to the effect that the Day of the Lord had already arrived (verse 2). This unsettling news must have suggested that they had somehow missed out on the coming of the Lord, their transformation to be made like Him, and their being caught up to meet Him in the air at His descent from heaven!

It was to dispel such fears that Paul declared that the Lord had not yet come, and to prove the truth of this he pointed out that certain events must happen first — events yet future to the Thessalonians but already secretly in preparation (verse 7).

The first of these events would be *the* apostasy, apparently the falling away of a considerable number of believers from the true faith taught by Jesus and His apostles. Jesus Himself had used the verb on which the noun *apostasy* is based, in Luke 8:13, in the Parable of the Sower. He speaks of those who "believe for a while, but in the time of testing they *fall away*." Paul was to warn the elders of the church at Ephesus that some, even from among their own number, would later "arise and distort the

*Apostasy can be covert:
one continues to profess
the faith but abandons
its essential content and
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practice quite different
from the original.*

truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Paul was later to use the same verb that Jesus had used, in his first letter to Timothy: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will *abandon* the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (4:1). Paul himself was accused by the Jews of apostasy from Judaism (Acts 21:21), and the writer of Hebrews warns his readers against having an unbelieving heart, with the danger of their apostasy from Christ and their return to Judaism (3:12).

Apostasy, therefore, is clearly a forsaking of the faith that one has earlier professed. This apostasy can be overt, in that one declares publicly that he has given up the faith he once believed. An example of this kind can be seen in a professing Christian who decides to reject Christianity in favor of some other religion or even to become an atheist or agnostic. He is then an "apostate" from Christianity. Apostasy can also be covert: one continues to profess the faith outwardly but in fact abandons its essential content and substitutes a faith and practice quite different from the original. The fact that Paul uses the word "secret" in verse 7 suggests that he means the latter kind of apostasy. This kind is obviously far more dangerous than the other, because of the deception and intrigue that may be involved in its practice and propagation!

Paul's mention of the "man of sin" (KJV) or "man of lawlessness" (NIV) in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 seems to be linked to the immediately preceding mention of *the* apostasy, as though this person's rise is the *direct result* of that apostasy. It suggests that this person comes to be the leader or major representative of the apostasy, when as a body those who have become apostate choose or recognize him in that role. If, for example, sometime after Paul's day a considerable number of professing Christians came to believe and practice a faith that had enough error in it to be called "the apostasy," and if this group had a leader who embodied and promoted those errors and connived to introduce even further errors, such a leader would

indeed be a *man of sin or man of lawlessness!* This, in fact, was exactly what happened — beginning secretly and slowly even as Paul was writing, but gathering speed by the end of the first century, when the Apostles John, Peter, and Jude warned of what was happening in the church (1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11; 3 John 9, 10; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 3:1-5, 17; Jude 3-19). After the apostles had all died, there was no authoritative voice for truth that could stop the rush into false religion and ungodly leadership that ultimately overtook the majority of those within the professing church.

Church historians document the vast changes in Christianity that took place in the second, third, and fourth centuries. An early change that Paul warned about in Colossians 2:8 was the entrance of Greek philosophy into the thinking and doctrinal discussions of the Christians. This philosophy, with its subtle distinctions and abstract terminology, was radically different from the Hebrews' concrete world view enshrined in the Scriptures. The huge influx of Gentiles into the church brought with it a corresponding Gentile, and particularly Greek, approach to religious matters — with the customs and traditions of those people having their inevitable effect on the church. One of the clearest evidences of the polytheistic Gentile influence on the church was the rise of images, statues, icons and relics of Christ and Mary and the saints and the veneration accorded to them — a practice totally at variance with the Jewish and apostolic church's hatred of idolatry in all its forms!

Another momentous change was the rise of the so-called "monarchical bishops" and their claim to regional rather than purely local authority. In the New Testament, the term "bishop" (Greek *episkopos*, overseer) denotes one who is also called "elder" or "pastor" (shepherd). These three terms all referred to the *same individuals*

within a local congregation. Each congregation had a body of elders or pastors who exercised *together* the direction and guidance of that local body of Christians. These men, also described as overseers, or "bishops," had no preeminence over one another in authority and responsibility. Historians have shown that gradually the more assertive or talented among this number gained authority over the others and eventually came to be viewed as being more than simply local pastor-elders. The office or title of "bishop" came now to be applied only to those who were overseers over *several or many* local congregations and

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pastors. The region over which they exercised authority was called their "bishopric" or, later, diocese. All of this opened the way for the development of a highly organized church hierarchy — so foreign to the character and arrangements for leadership in the early church — and led finally to the exaltation of the man who held the office of bishop in the Roman empire's capital city, Rome itself! This man would soon become the "bishop" over the entire church and would be called *the pope*, "father of fathers." These developments established a totally authoritarian leadership within the church, contrary to Peter's warning (1 Peter 5:1-4). They led to the popes ultimately claiming absolute authority over all Christians, over all earthly rulers and

governments, finally even to the point of claiming *infallibility* in their official pronouncements on doctrine and morals! A person with any sense of history should be able to see how immense were the changes that beset Christianity and which prove that the majority of professing Christians — officially "Christendom" by this time — had come to fulfill the prophecy of *the apostasy!*

Other changes also contributed to this fulfillment. One was the exaltation of celibacy — the unmarried state — as a "Christian" ideal, with the rise of the monastic movement and with the establishment of a celibate priesthood, as foretold by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:3. Originally, the bishops were required to be married and successfully to have reared children, so as to be qualified "to take care of the church of God" (1 Tim. 4:1-7). Now, so far from being *required* to be married, they were *forbidden* to be married, along with all the priests under them! Even the rise of a special class of priests was an integral part of the apostasy, for the apostolic church possessed no priesthood but that of Christ Himself as High Priest and that of His people *as an entire body of believers* to be a "royal priesthood" under Him (Heb. 5:5-10; 1 Peter 2:1-10).

With the rise of a special priestly class within the church came also the rise of sacramental religion, mediated through the priests. Salvation, then, and men's being declared just on the basis of faith in Christ was replaced by all manner of ceremonies and pious works: masses, penances, pilgrimages, indulgences, and reliance on the intercession of Mary and the saints. The few references in the Bible to Mary, the mother of Jesus, were made to bear an immense superstructure by means of tradition and legend, leading to her virtual worship and to a central place for her in Catholic theology and devotional practice. The apostate church abandoned a straightforward manner of interpreting Scripture.

(continued on page 18)

in favor of what is called *allegorism*, whereby the inspired text could be understood to say almost anything the interpreter could read into it. This opened the way for all kinds of faulty interpretations and novel doctrines, all contributing to a further decline from the truth and a deeper descent into apostasy!

When Emperor Constantine lent his support to “Christianity” in the early fourth century, Pope Silvester was willing to join hands with this worldly ruler and his government and to lay the foundation for a union of church and state—a union which was to become the curse of Europe and Latin America for many succeeding centuries! Along with this union came the sanctifying of war and military service (which Christ and His apostles had specifically forbidden and in which the earliest followers of Christ refused to participate—a stand that is documented in the writings of the early “church fathers”). Along with this sanctification of violence came eventually the hideous doctrine that the church could and should persecute and even execute “heretics”—a doctrine that was used to justify the horrible, truly barbarous treatment of dissenters and suspected dissenters during the infamous Inquisition. It also could justify the church’s massacre of 50,000 Protestants in France on St. Bartholomew’s Day, in 1572, as well as innumerable other such atrocities throughout the centuries, wherever Rome was in power—and all of this “in the name of Christ”! In His name, also, the church sent its “soldiers” to fight the Crusades in the Holy Land, killing people by the thousands in order to establish or to retain its rulership there. Some of the popes *personally* led armies into battle, the most famous of these being Pope Julius II (reigned 1503-1513), who fancied himself a great military general. Contrast this man, who claimed to be Christ’s vicar on earth, with the real Christ, the “Prince of Peace,” who with His dying words forgave His enemies!

Edward Gibbon’s famous work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, documents the gradual loss of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ and His establishing the Kingdom of God on earth at His coming. This hope, so precious to the early Christians and to all serious Bible believers today, fell into almost total obscurity when the church became apostate and began to consider herself the Kingdom of God already established—now that she had achieved massive political, economic, and military dominance in the world.

How the “Man of Sin” Arose

Paul had reminded the Thessalonians that they knew what it was that was keeping the Man of Sin from being revealed (v. 6). He not only used the neuter “what” in verse 6, but also the masculine “who” in verse 7. Some power then in existence, embodied in some individual, was preventing and would continue to prevent the rise of the Man of Sin until it or he were no longer present on the scene. Much debate has raged over Paul’s reference to this mysterious power. Whatever and whoever it was, Paul’s readers knew its identity. But why did Paul seem reticent to mention that identity here? Could there be a danger in doing so? A popular recent theory suggests that it was and is the Holy Spirit that is keeping the Man of Sin from being revealed. When the Holy Spirit is “taken away at the rapture of the church”—so the theory goes—then this Wicked One will appear. But there seems to be no good reason for Paul not to mention the Holy Spirit if this is what he meant!

A possible solution can be found in considering Daniel’s famous interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2). The image that the king saw in his dream was made up of various metals—the head of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay mixed. Daniel interprets the image to refer to four great

empires, beginning with Babylonia and Nebuchadnezzar himself. Babylonia was later conquered by Medo-Persia, which in turn came to its end at the hand of Alexander the Great and the Greek empire. The Greek empire was absorbed and replaced at last by the Roman empire—the longest lasting of all four.

A distinctive feature of this fourth empire is that it was interpreted by Daniel as having *two stages*. The first, pictured in the iron legs, would exercise total control (2:40). The second or final stage of this empire, symbolized by the feet of iron and clay mixed, would be a divided kingdom or have a divided rulership. Yet, there would still be in this mixture “some of the strength of iron” (2:41-43). This fourth empire, in its two stages, would finally be replaced by the Kingdom that God will set up on this earth some day (2:35, 44, 45). It seems clear from the details of the image and Daniel’s inspired interpretation that the fourth empire was to prolong its existence by means of this second stage until the end of the present age of man’s rule. This end would mark the beginning of the age or time period when Christ will rule the entire world (Matt. 25:31 ff.).

Daniel, in fact, was given a preview of history as it actually occurred long after his lifetime! The Roman empire, in its total dominance over every aspect of life, was well symbolized by *iron*! The emperors ruled with an iron hand, and during their heyday no one could escape from their clutch. Paul himself lived during the first stage of the Roman empire and knew that the emperors had the power of life or death over their subjects. He took advantage of this fact when he appealed to Caesar, the emperor, for a fair trial when he knew that the Jewish leaders were determined to have him executed. The Roman emperors continued to have this power within their domains until the first stage of the empire came to its end and the last emperor, Romulus Augustulus, lost his throne, A.D.

476. The Germanic tribes divided the empire among themselves and set the stage for the second phase of the Roman empire.

The power vacuum in Europe that resulted from the disappearance of the emperors could not last indefinitely. There was still one institution in Rome that was determined to revive the empire under its own leadership, despite the division now existing because of the rival tribes that were to become the foundation of the several nations of Europe. That institution was, of course, the church, by now apostate. One of the chief titles of the emperors — Pontifex Maximus, Supreme Pontiff — was taken over by the leader of that institution, the pope. The popes claimed and exercised, as had the emperors before them, the authority and right to crown and to depose the rulers under them. This now became the new stage of Rome, and is called in history “the Holy Roman Empire.” The masterminds in charge of this final stage of Rome never gave up their claim to have the right to rule the world, and their successors and present representatives are still busily at work seeking to impose that rule once more, after several centuries of challenge from various sources — political as well as religious.

To return to our theme of how the Man of Sin arose and why Paul did not identify what was holding back his rise, we may see that it was precisely the existence and presence of the emperors that made impossible the rise of the papacy and its “Holy Roman Empire” along with the present-day manifestation of Rome in the revival of Catholic power throughout the world—the final stage of the fourth empire! If Paul had named the empire of his day and the emperor as that which had to be “taken out of the way” before the Man of Sin could arise, this could have been used against him and the Christians to charge them with treason or sedition. Paul and the Thessalonian believers knew from Daniel that the current “iron-leg stage” of Rome

had to come to an end, but there was no need to declare that in public writings, such as letters read openly to the church. Rather, there was real danger in doing so!

After the accusation brought against Paul at Thessalonica (Acts 17:6ff.) any allusion to the imperial power had best be as vague as possible lest the letter fall into the wrong hands (F. F. Bruce, in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1060).

The Blasphemies of the Man of Sin

In verse 4 Paul describes the arrogance and blasphemous pretensions of the Man of Sin. “He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is

The pope was declared to be infallible (incapable of error) when he pronounces on matters of faith and morals. This places him above the Scriptures themselves.

...
worshiped . . . proclaiming himself to be God.” We may ask ourselves whether the popes have fulfilled this prophecy. A simple look at their claims and demands for adulation and power down through the centuries will verify that they have indeed fulfilled it to the letter! Not only have they insisted that they are above all earthly rulers and governments, but they have demanded absolute allegiance and obedience from their subjects. They claim to have the keys of heaven and hell and the power to decide who is worthy to enter either destination. Their theologians have repeatedly called them “God on earth” and rendered them a worship that can only be rightfully given to

God. As recently as 1894, Pope Leo XIII declared in an official encyclical, “We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.” These claims of the papacy and the practices that go along with such claims can be found reiterated over and over again in the historical records. The church has not made a secret of who and what the pope is supposed to be and to represent! The culminating blasphemy was spoken and made an official dogma in 1870, when the pope was declared to be *infallible* (incapable of error) when he pronounces on matters of faith and morals. This places him above the Scriptures themselves, and he then becomes the final authority and arbiter in all religious matters.

Furthermore, the Man of Sin “sets himself up in God’s temple.” Literally translated, he “takes his seat” in the temple of God. The “temple of God” in all of Paul’s other letters is *always figurative*, referring either to the body of an individual believer or to the church as a whole. In those letters the term *never* refers to the literal building in Jerusalem. This would support the view that he is saying that the Man of Sin sets himself up as leader of the church—he usurps a leadership that does not belong to him! It is significant that the pope calls his office or rule the “Holy See.” In this case, the word “see” comes from the Latin word *sedes*, “seat.” The Greek equivalent is *kathedra*, from which we get the word “cathedral”—the church in which is located the seat or throne of a Catholic bishop. Also suggestive is the fact that the pope is supposed to be infallible when he pronounces on a doctrine *ex cathedra*, that is, from the seat of his authority!

The pope is a temporal ruler as well as a religious or spiritual ruler. He rules his own sovereign territory which is independent of Italy — the Vatican City. Before 1870 he ruled the whole city of Rome and the so-called Papal States, a large area in
(continued on page 20)

The Great Apostasy (continued from page 19)

central Italy. The nations of the world sent and continue to send their ambassadors to him, just as they do to any other government or political ruler. All this time he claims to be the "Vicar of Christ," the representative of the One whose Kingdom was *not* "of this world" (John 18:36). The word *vicar* is from the Latin *vicarius*, meaning one who serves as substitute or agent for another. The same root is seen in our word "vicarious" — in the stead of. It is also the root of our word *vice*, as in vice-president — the man who stands in the stead of the president in case of the latter's death or disability. The Greek preposition that expresses the same idea is the word *anti*, as in Matthew 2:22, where Archelaus becomes king *anti*, in place of, his father Herod. This means that the Greek manner

of expressing "Vicar of Christ" is *Antichrist!* The pope, by his own claim to be *Vicar of Christ*, shows himself to be in fact an Antichrist. A simple reading of First and Second John will reveal the nature of any who can be called "Antichrists." History shows that the popes have amply demonstrated by their claims, and often by their morals, that they fulfill the role!

The Man of Sin will continue in his role of usurping Christ's position and authority until the return of Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus will overthrow him "with the breath of his mouth and destroy [him] by the splendor of his coming" (verse 8). Meanwhile, this leader's claims and power are upheld by Satan himself, through counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of deception and evil (verses 9, 10). The true church, made up of those who

love Christ and righteousness and who have been saved by His grace, continues to be hated, despised and persecuted by the apostate church and its papal leadership. The popes continue to seek the power, prestige, adulation, and wealth of this world; and it is demanded that their followers continue to offer these things to them along with their total obedience. By contrast, all who love, believe and obey the Word of God must recognize what the apostate church is and how the papacy fulfills the prophecy of the Man of Sin. This recognition will fortify and prepare the true church to withstand the deceptions and the persecutions that are still a part of the agenda of Satan's false church! God's people must never let themselves be beguiled by the soothing, but lying, words of the Man of Sin and his servants! □

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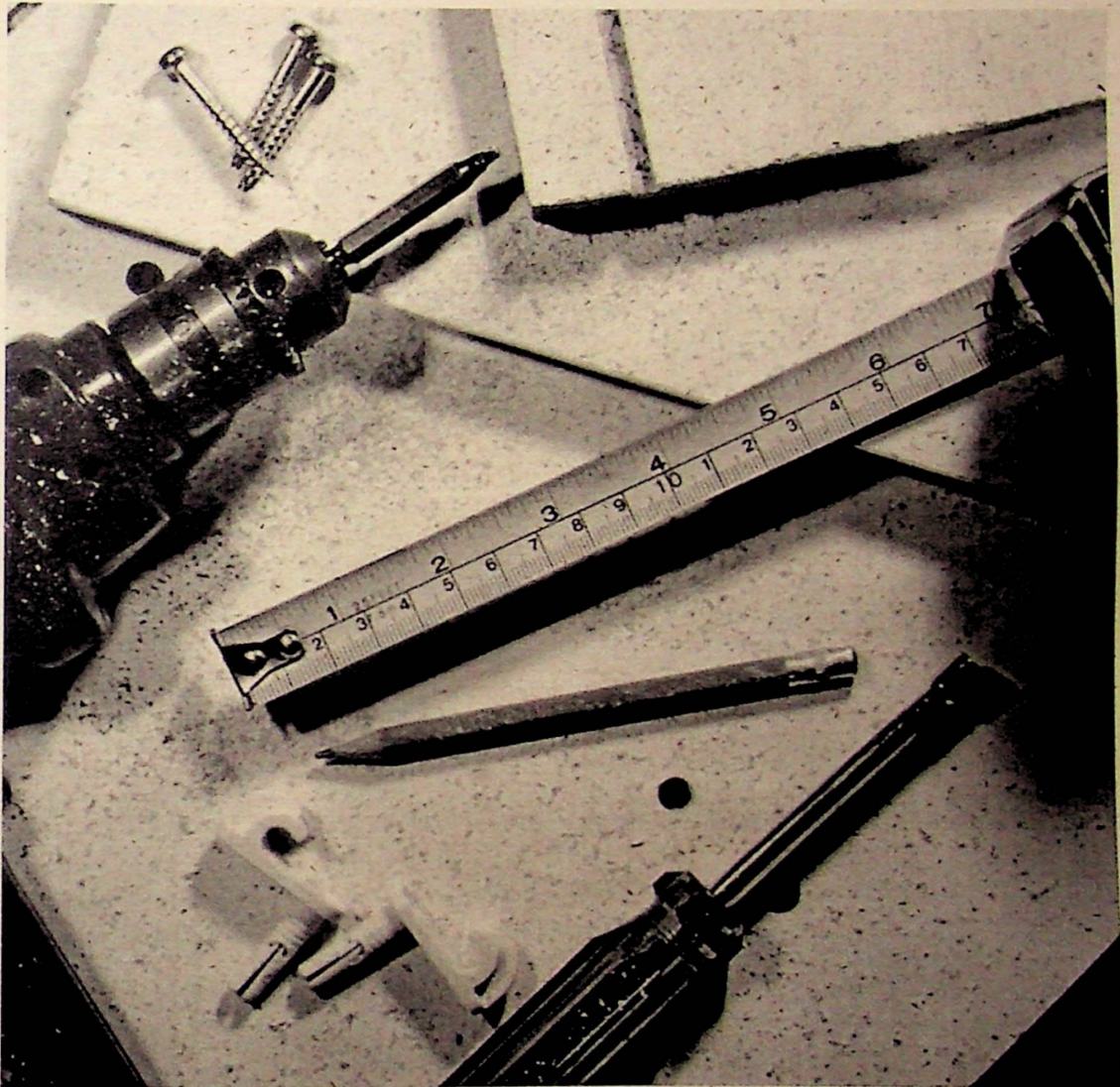
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We are God's Workmanship,
Heirs According to the Promise Made to Abraham,
Created in Christ Jesus to Walk in Good Works,
Created to Walk in Faith Perfected by Our Service.
(Paul to the Ephesians and the Galatians, with James)



Of the Abrahamic Faith

The church where I serve as pastor is one of those old-fashioned Church of God congregations that still carries the descriptive title “of the Abrahamic Faith” on its sign. I know that this is not very trendy. The current trend is to name or rename churches with more contemporary, seeker-friendly names, which is fine. Paul spoke of becoming “all things to all men that by all possible means [he] might save some.” We certainly don’t want to create obstacles that would keep people from coming to faith in God. However the title “of the Abrahamic Faith” need not be seen as necessarily an obstacle to communicating faith. For those congregations which still proudly (or in some instances hesitantly) bear “of the Abrahamic Faith” in their names that phrase can be a means of helping others come to a greater understanding of the faith.

In Genesis we are told that God initiated a conversation with a man named Abram (later to be called Abraham). God told Abram that He wanted to make of him a great nation. He wanted to give him the gift of land. He wanted to bless him, and He wanted him to be a blessing to others. In fact all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through Abram. What a tremendous offer God gave to Abram. Wouldn’t it

be wonderful if we could be the recipients of such a wonderful promise? We can! Galatians 3 tells us that if we have been baptized into faith in Jesus Christ we become descendants of Abraham; we become heirs to all that God promised to Abraham.

God promised Abraham that he would inherit the earth. If we are Abraham’s heirs, that means we will co-inherit the earth with Abraham. This is a guarantee to all who possess the faith of Abraham.

People living in the 21st century seem to long for riches. The television airways are filled with programs offering the possibility of becoming instantly rich. “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”? It would seem that nearly everyone does. It seems like whenever I wait in line inside a convenience store I am behind some who want to get rich quick through the various lotteries. I’ve seen poor folks who looked like they hadn’t eaten for days buy \$20 worth of Lotto Jackpot tickets, hoping and praying to become instant millionaires. Within the Church world one of the latest fads is *The Prayer of Jabez*, based on an obscure Old Testament prayer for God’s blessing.

People want a blessing. God wants to bless us. God wants to give us far more than earthly riches, God wants to make us His

children. God wants to give us the earth. Do we believe that? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham believed God and he put his faith into action. Abraham left the known comforts of home and hearth and went to an unknown place. That’s Abrahamic Faith. Abraham was willing to risk losing what he had for the sake of a promise from God. Are we willing to take that same risk?

In a world where everyone wants to be blessed, in a world where books about obscure prayers for blessing become bestsellers, in a world where people are willing to gamble away their last \$20 in the hopes of riches that will soon pass away; we have a tremendous message to offer. God made a promise to Abram. He has extended that promise to us through Abraham’s seed, Jesus Christ. Through Christ we can receive the blessings of Abraham, and we can share those blessings with others.

That is Abrahamic Faith. Let us shout it from the housetops — it’s a message our world desperately needs to hear.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Fletcher".

Jeff Fletcher, Editor

And they came to the place
which God had told him of;
and Abraham built the altar there,
and laid the wood in order,
and bound Isaac his son,
and laid him on the altar.

Genesis 22:9



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- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

4 The Last Days
by David L. Johnson

7 Armageddon — the Battle of the Lord God Almighty
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The Last Days

BY DAVID L. JOHNSON

The twelve disciples, having followed the Master during three years, intimately asked many questions in regard to His teaching. Matthew 24:3 records one such occasion. They asked Jesus, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

These words were written by my dad (A. Roy Johnson) and published May 3, 1949 in *THE RESTITUTION HERALD*. Dad went on to say that it was a live question *then*, and how much more so *now* as we approach the end of the age. I much revere my father. Dad was a deep lifetime Bible student who pioneered the study and interpretation of prophecy in the early twentieth century.

The study of prophecy was in its infancy then; it has since become a widely studied and publicized medium. Perhaps you who read this have continued your own study of prophecy considering Dad's published work, or you may have read Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series. Needless to say, some of the authors' work is correct; some is not. For instance, the Seventh Day Adventists believe that the Millennium will be in heaven, not on Earth. Tim LaHaye is an immortal soulist. The point is that each of us must study to come to a correct understanding of prophecy.

I will briefly address where we now are in terms of the fulfillment of the signs our Savior gave us as to the Last Days of this age.

Each of us has a very short life relative to God's time-watch. Dad believed that a

World War III must come before the Man of Sin could unite the independent nations of the world into a one-world government. Dad had lived through two world wars as an adult, so it is easy to see why he believed that a devastating conflict would cause the world economy to collapse. In the economic climate which followed such a collapse a world leader (Man of Sin) could offer hope, peace, and prosperity at the precise time necessary to bring about the worldwide coalition. His concept was right, but his theory about World War III is not probable. He was concerned with Daniel 11:15-19, but it is probable that this prophecy was fulfilled by a series of conflicts between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms (Egypt and Syria) which concluded with Antiochus the Great conquering Israel (on this point see Tim LaHaye's *Prophecy Study Bible*, footnote on page 916).

Consider this: Alan Greenspan and the Federal Reserve Board cut the prime lending rate 11 times in 2001, and put massive amounts of liquidity into the monetary system (new money). Yet this did not turn the economy around from the recession which economists say we are in (or possibly a depression). The question is: why did they take such extreme measures? The answer is that the world economy is so integrated with the U.S. (by far the largest economy, the lone economic super power, the largest concentration of wealth and of consumers, corporations and industries) that if it goes into deep economic recession a worldwide recession (and possibly a depression) will follow. For the first time in the modern era the three largest economies—the U.S., Germany and Japan—are

in recession at the same time. Previous recessions always had the benefit of unaffected strong economies elsewhere to help pull the nations in economic slump out again. Greenspan's greatest fear is that if an economic collapse (depression) should occur no amount of lowered interest rates or economic stimulus would prime the economy and result in recovery. *Thus a veritable Dark Age of economic failure would come.* Trade with the U.S. is key for the rest of the free world to sustain its economic health. Even Russia under President Putin wishes to tie the U.S. economy to its own.

Easy credit has plunged the U.S. and its partners into massive uncontrolled leveraged debt, a situation that stands like a house of cards poised to fall apart. Recently the multi-billion dollar energy company Enron went broke and collapsed in the largest corporate failure (bankruptcy) in U.S. history. Argentina also has gone bankrupt. The incident of the World Trade Center terrorism caused not only tragic loss of lives, but the shock damaged our economy causing massive layoffs. Huge losses came from airport shutdowns, plus an enormous loss on the stock markets. Since March, 2000, when the stock market started its decline, the total equity loss is viewed by experts as exceeding five trillion dollars. That is an amount roughly equal to the debt of the U.S. federal government.

With the high price of weaponry and high tech equipment, satellites, smart bombs, pilotless reconnaissance planes, super spying technology, etc., a modern era worldwide war would be too expensive.

For technical and cost reasons it is not possible to mass huge armies and launch an attack on an independent state which would envelop all in a worldwide conflict. Dad's theory of a third world war leading to the Man of Sin doesn't seem plausible.

There is a probable scenario to create the global despair and ensuing political climate the Man of Sin uses to achieve global unification. Read on.

The prophet Daniel relayed the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). Daniel describes a great image of a man who has a head of gold, meaning Babylon; chest of silver, Media-Persia; a waist and buttocks of brass, Greece; and finally legs of iron, Rome. The two legs signify that Rome would break in two halves. The metal gets harder as we pass from the head down to the feet, signifying that Rome would be the Jews' greatest oppressor: destroying the temple in AD 70, and forcing all Jews to leave Israel in the Diaspora.

Daniel goes on to describe the statue's ten toes, made of miry clay and iron. Rome was not defeated militarily. The empire failed because of internal rot. It lasted for nearly 1000 years and was the last worldwide empire (Dan. 2:41-43).

Miry clay and iron do not mix. What Daniel was prophesying was that the nations that followed Rome's demise would be in conflict with one another. So we have had wars and rumors of wars just as Jesus prophesied (Matt. 24:6). Daniel also said that all of the nations would be crushed by the great Stone and ground to bits and blown to the wind (Dan. 2:44). "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms," i.e. governments. We don't know whom Daniel's ten toes represent. However we do know that no nation since Rome has become an empire with worldwide rule: therefore all nations after Rome are either made of iron or miry clay. None have become worldwide empires. There have been pretenders, such as Spain, Britain, France, Germany, and more recently Com-

munist Russia. So Daniel was prophesying that many nations would follow Rome, but none would achieve world domination and they all would wage war and not get along. Daniel describes the entire period of gentile domination up to the great Stone, who is Jesus and who smashes all nations at His coming (Dan. 2:34-35).

The U.S. is a nation made of iron. It dominates the rest of the world in all aspects: science, technology, military and economy. Its people have the highest standard of living today. It also takes much of its culture, language, militarism and habits from ancient Rome — including our form of elected government, with a Congress / Senate balancing a President / Caesar, etc. Most of all we Americans do just as the Romans did in that our main business is making money (see Will Durant's book, *Caesar and Christ*).

The U.S. has played a critical role in the development of the greatest signpost for these last days by supporting Israel since it was born in 1948. President Bush recently stated that America is Israel's best friend. Israel's regathering was prophesied by Amos: "I will plant them in their land and they shall not be pulled up out of their land" (9:15; a promise of permanence). The Lord reaffirmed that promise through Ezekiel (34:13).

At the end of this age there are many signs. "As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man" (see Luke 17:26-30). "There shall be great deception" — false Christ, false doctrinal teaching — is it not so (Matt. 24:4, 5)?

We do not know the total count of wars over the last 2000 years (Matt. 24:6, 7). However, historians estimate that in the twentieth century alone more than 30,000,000 servicemen died in war, plus uncounted millions of civilians. Yet a much greater trouble lies ahead called the "Great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:21).

"There shall be famines, earthquakes, and pestilence in diverse places" (Matt. 24:7). Famine and droughts have occurred widely: seven and a half million are starv-

ing in Afghanistan. Major droughts and famine have occurred in England, Ireland, Sweden, Greece, and Europe in general; China, Russia, America (in the 1930s), India (in the 1950s), and Africa — untold tens of millions have died from famine. This list is not inclusive. As far as pestilence or plagues, the Black Death killed one third of the world's population in the 1300s. The Great Flu of 1915 killed 20 million people — one percent of the world's population at the time. Heart disease and cancer are major plagues in the U.S. today. Some African countries have lost up to half of their populations to AIDS. As for earthquakes, one in China killed 830,000 in 1550. On October 17, 1737 an earthquake in Calcutta, India killed 300,000. One on December 16, 1920 in Kansu China killed 180,000. Another on September 1, 1923 in Tokyo claimed 140,000. The list goes on and on.

The greatest earthquake is yet to come, as prophesied in Revelation 16:18: "an earthquake such as not since man was on Earth." How about when Jesus comes and the Mount of Olives splits?

Never before was there such an effort to preach the Gospel and translate the Bible for use in all nations as in the twentieth century (Matt. 24:14).

With all these general signs we must continue to remember the most specific sign — the regathering of Israel in 1948 (Luke 21:24).

We must acknowledge and remember at all times that God is in control. In Daniel 4:32 Nebuchadnezzar is told that he will eat grass until he understands that *the Most High God rules in the Kingdom of men and appoints over it whomever He chooses*.

Our Most High God convinces me that America is a nation made of iron, and that it has been brought to its present set of economic circumstances for part of our Maker's grand plan.

Dr. Martin Weiss states that in 2001 167 of America's major corporations failed. Over 10,000 companies of all types
(continued on page 9)

My Word Shall Stand!!

BY PASTOR FRANCIS E. BURNETT

Much has been discussed and written since September 11, 2001 about the devastating events that happened that day in the U.S. Truly they were very unexpected, because most American citizens believed our nation to be nearly untouchable. Since that day, many have asked such questions as: What can be done? Why should this happen to a people who were at peace? Where was God, and why did He let such things take place? It is certain that God, the Creator of the Universe, had very little, if anything, to do with that disaster taking place. The incident happened because of man's anger, bitterness and hatred over many things.

It should be stressed that much worse is coming upon the earth in the future, and it will be from the might and power of the God in heaven. We read, "Don't spend all your time thinking about eating or drinking or worrying about life. If you do, the final day will suddenly catch you like a trap. That day will surprise everyone on the earth. Watch out and keep praying that you can escape all that is going to happen and that the Son of Man will be pleased with you" (Luke 21:34-36, Contemporary English Version). YES! Such a day is coming to this earth in the future. TRUE! No one knows the day or the hour.

However, let us now consider the facts. The God of Heaven, whose name is Jehovah, is in control. He is King over all the earth. He began with Nebuchadnezzar to give the government into the hands of Gentiles. Until that time God had been King working through leaders of Israel. God owns the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. We read, "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's

thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deut. 10:14). Again, we read, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

The answer to why most people cannot understand what is going on is that they have not read the Bible, and they have not studied the words of the prophets. Therefore there is little understanding of what the future holds. Paul expressed it well in these words: "What the world thinks is worthless, useless, and nothing at all is what God had used to destroy what the world thinks is important" (1 Cor. 1:28, CEV).

God has a definite and well-defined plan for the future of the earth as well as the heavens. One important item is that in the future, the earth is to be filled with God's glory. The world has not known that glory since the time of the Garden of Eden. When, after the testimony of the 12 spies, God through Moses was declaring the punishment to pass on the people, he said "And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD" (Num. 14:20, 21). God's plan for the earth is explained in the following words: "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:7, 8).

God's plan for the ages is revealed in the words of Peter in 2 Peter 3:1-8. In that section we find mention of the "age" before the flood, the "age" that is now, the one in which we are living, and the "age" to come when the new heavens and the new

earth will come into existence. Isaiah described some of the conditions in that time to be, the new age, in this way: "In the future the mountain with the LORD's temple will be the highest of all. It will reach above the hills; every nation will rush to it. Many people will come and say, let's go to the mountain of the LORD God of Jacob and worship in his temple" (Isa. 2:2, 3, CEV).

Why should anyone be so confident that the future depends on what the Bible states? One should ask, where else could one find words that are so dependable? It is much like what the apostles once asked Jesus, "To whom else should we go?" Looking to Isaiah again, he reveals why the words of the Lord God are dependable: "I alone am God! There are no other gods; no one is like me. Think about what happened many years ago. From the very beginning, I told what would happen long before it took place" (Isa. 46:9, 10, CEV).

God is in control of the world and all that is in it. He is in control of the nations. In the words of the Psalmist: "Why do the nations plot, and why do their people make useless plans? The kings of this earth have all joined together to turn against the LORD and his chosen one. They say, 'Let's cut the ropes and set ourselves free!' In heaven the LORD shall laugh as he sits on his throne, making fun of the nations" (Psalm 2:1-4, CEV). This is the same God who told Isaiah of the "son to be born, the child to be given," and in that same declaration also said "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (see Isa. 9:6, 7). Do not forget. God is in control. To Him the nations are a "drop in the bucket." Put your complete faith in God, whose name is Jehovah. □

Armageddon — the Battle of the Lord God Almighty

BY PASTOR FRANCIS E. BURNETT

The title of this article is taken from the book of Revelation, where we read, "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:14, 16). Jeremiah gives a vivid explanation of this time yet to come in his writings. We should insert at this point that Armageddon means the "hill of Meggido." This was an important area of Israel since the time of Solomon and even earlier. We read, "My voice will be heard everywhere on earth, accusing nations of their crimes and sentencing the guilty to death. The LORD All-Powerful says, 'you can see disaster spreading from far across the earth, from nation to nation like a horrible storm.' When it strikes, I will kill so many people that their bodies will cover the ground like manure. No one will be left to bury them or to mourn" (Jer. 25:31-33, CEV).

There are those who might question that the God in heaven has that much authority or that He, a loving God, would even consider bringing devastation to the earth and its inhabitants. However, there are two things that are extremely important to God. One is the fact that the people of Israel are His. He called them to be His special people. He named them His first born, His beloved, the apple of His eye. No other people of the earth have had such recognition. The second is that God is against all sin. His decree from the beginning of the Creation was to destroy sin and sinners so that the earth can be filled with His glory.

When God told Abraham about the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah he said: "You surely would not let [any righteous inhabitants] be killed when you destroy the evil ones. You are the judge of all the earth, and you will do what is right" (Gen. 18:25, CEV). It is evident that God has spoken, and that His Word will be completed as spoken. "That's how it is with my words. They don't return to me without doing everything I sent them to do" (Isa. 55:11, CEV).

"When I punish the
nations of the earth,
they will see the
brightness of my glory."

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

This time, yet to come in the history of the world, is called the Day of the Lord. "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty . . . Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:6, 9). Further, we read, "And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible . . . Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (Isa. 13:11, 13).

Two important chapters of the Bible that have been discussed for years by Bible

students are Ezekiel 38 and 39. Let's notice some thoughts out of them. God was speaking to "Gog, that wicked ruler of the kingdoms of Meshech and Tubal in the land of Magog . . . So keep your troops prepared to fight, because in a few years, I will command you to invade Israel, a country that was ruined by war . . . The Israelites now live in peace in the mountains of their own land. But you and your army will attack them like a fierce thunderstorm and surround them like a cloud . . . I know that you have an evil plan to take advantage of Israel . . . you will lead your powerful army from your kingdom in the north. You will attack my people like a storm-cloud that covers their land. I will let you invade my country Israel, so that every nation on earth will know that I, the LORD, am holy" (Ezek. 38:2, 7-10, 16, CEV).

The destruction of Israel's enemies is described in Ezekiel 39. "They will burn these weapons instead of sticks or chopping down trees. That's how the Israelites will take revenge on those who robbed and abused them. I, the LORD, have spoken. After Gog has been destroyed, I will bury him and his army in Israel, a Travelers' Valley, east of the Dead Sea. That graveyard will be so large that it will block the way of anyone who tries to walk through the valley, which will then be known as 'The Valley of God's Army.' The Israelites will spend seven months burying dead bodies and cleaning up their land . . . When I punish the nations of the earth, they will see the brightness of my glory. The people of Israel will know from then on that I am the LORD their God" (Ezek. 39:10-12, 21, 22, CEV).

(continued on page 9)

God's Fury and Vengeance: The Earth Will Be Attacked

BY PASTOR FRANCIS E. BURNETT

After the devastation that took place in New York and Washington, D.C., people asked "What is going on? Will this lead to the end of time?" An area pastor from a different group asked me in a meeting on that very day, September 11, 2001, if I thought this was the beginning of the "end" and if we would soon see the Man of Sin revealed. My answer to those questions was that I understood all of this as a part of the "signs of the times" which Jesus told of, which are recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. *But* I suggested that the future holds a much worse situation, when the God of Heaven brings forth His "fury" and "vengeance." As is said elsewhere, God has predetermined that the earth will be cleansed of sin and sinners. Otherwise God's "glory" cannot and will not be forthcoming.

Hebrews gives us a reference to that vengeance. "For we know [God] hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Heb. 10:30). God also said to the prophet Ezekiel, "it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the LORD God, that my fury shall come up in my face" (Ezek. 38:18). From the prophet Isaiah, "the earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth . . . Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in Mount

Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Isa. 24:19-21, 23). Again from Isaiah, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come . . . therefore my own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth" (Isa. 63:3-6).

We also read, "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:6, 7).

Much of the "fury" and "vengeance" of God is revealed to us in the book of Revelation. "The angel filled the incense container with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth. Thunder roared, lightning flashed, and the earth shook. . . . When the first angel blew his trumpet, hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down on the earth. A third of the earth, a third of the trees, and a third of all green plants were burned. When the second angel blew his trumpet, something like a great fiery mountain was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned to blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. When the third angel blew his trumpet, a great star fell from heaven. It was burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on a third of

the springs of water . . . When the fourth angel blew his trumpet, a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck. They each lost a third of their light. So during a third of the day there was no light, and a third of the night was also without light" (Rev. 8:5, 7-10, 12, CEV).

"As soon as the seventh angel emptied his bowl into the air, a loud voice from the throne in the temple shouted, 'It's done.' There were flashes of lightning, roars of thunder, and the worst earthquake in all history . . . Every island ran away, and the mountains disappeared. Hailstones, weighing about a hundred pounds each, fell from the sky on people. Finally the people cursed God, because the hail was so terrible" (Rev. 16:17, 18, 20, 21, CEV).

Is it any wonder that there is an account in Revelation 6 of fear among the great leaders of the earth?! "The kings of the earth, its famous people, and its military people hid in caves or behind rocks on the mountains. They hid there together with the rich and the powerful and with all the slaves and free people. Then they shouted to the mountains, 'Fall on us! Hide us from the one who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb. That terrible day has come! God and the Lamb will show their anger, and who can face it?'" (Rev. 6:15-17, CEV).

Believers in Jesus Christ, those who are really dedicated to following Him and believing what He taught, are to be found faithfully serving Him and in peace. "My friends, while you are waiting, you should make certain that the Lord find you pure, spotless, and living at peace. Don't forget that the Lord is patient because he wants people to be saved" (2 Peter 3:14, 15 CEV).□

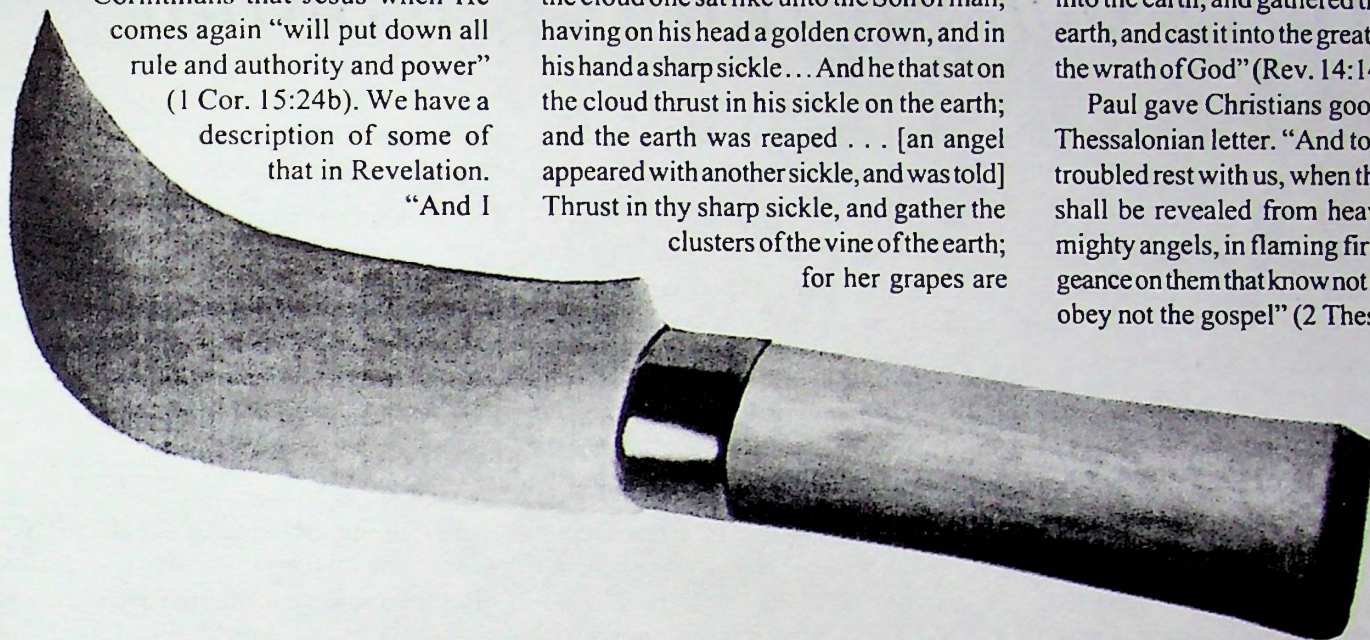
Armageddon — the Battle of the Lord God Almighty (continued from page 7)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Jesus when He comes again “will put down all rule and authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24b). We have a description of some of that in Revelation. “And I

looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle . . . And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped . . . [an angel appeared with another sickle, and was told] Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are

fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:14, 16, 18, 19).

Paul gave Christians good advice in a Thessalonian letter. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). □



The Last Days (continued from page 5)

and sizes failed in the first financial quarter of 2001. He expects that number to double in 2002. Such companies as Ford, Xerox, General Electric and Motorola have such huge debts that if their total hard assets were sold they would be unable to pay off their debts even exclusive of paying their stockholders. Dr. Weiss believes that the American economy cannot overcome the five trillion dollar loss in the stock market's recent tech wreck except over an extended period of time and with much collateral damage. Japan has been in an economic funk for over ten years. Their interbank interest rate is 0%, and still Japan does not recover. In America we are at 1.75%.

The American people have been led to accept an ever-increasing inroad to our sovereignty since the 1950s and the Korean War carried out under the leadership of the United Nations. On January 2, 2002 the Euro went into use in twelve countries of the Common Market. Not long ago it was incomprehensible to think the French

or Germans would give up their currencies, the Franc and the Mark. Global unification trends continue and are very strong.

Should the American economy continue to unravel and go into a deep depression then the balance of the world's nations certainly will follow. Thus the stage is set for the rise of the Antichrist. *Needless to say, each of us is well advised to get our house in order for the Lord's return! The signs show the need for urgency. This study is based on my understanding of how the pieces fit. I refuse to speculate about when it will happen because no one knows when this may happen save the Almighty.*

Here is the Antichrist's pedigree; only one person in history fits all of these factors. There have been many prototypes for this person, but there is only one Antichrist.

1. He will rise to power in the last days (Dan. 8:19-23).

2. He will not come onto the world scene until after the rapture (2 Thess. 2:3-8).
3. He will rule the entire world (Rev. 13:7).
4. He will rule by international consent (Rev. 17:12-13).
5. He will rule by deception (Dan. 8:24-25).
6. He will be very intelligent and persuasive (Dan. 7:20).
7. He will control the global economy (Rev. 13:16-17).
8. The False Prophet will assist him (Rev. 13:11-18).
9. He will make and break a peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:26-27).
10. He will claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).

There are many other passages that refer to Antichrist. It is clear that he will rule over the last vestige of the Gentile world, or the end of the Age of Grace.

This is something for our Church family to think about. □

God's Word: A Two-Edged Sword

BY MARVIN J. ROSENTHAL

Moses, the servant of the Lord, had a pedigreed education. He was raised as a son in the palace of the pharaoh of Egypt. Egypt was the most powerful nation of that day and possessed the most advanced civilization. The Bible notes that Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22). Since Moses was familiar with Egyptian thought, it would be more than reasonable to assume that, having been trained in Egypt, he would propagate Egyptian beliefs. Students are normally propagators of the teaching of the instructors and institution which trained them.

- It is amazing, therefore, that although Egyptian *cosmogony* taught that the earth came from an egg, Moses declared, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).
- And, although Egyptian *astronomy* taught the earth gave light to the sun, Moses declared, "And God made two great lights; the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth" (Gen. 1:16, 17).
- And, notwithstanding that Egyptian *anthropology* said man came from worms along the Nile, Moses declared, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

- Moses knew what the Egyptian scholars did not know, not because he was a scientist ahead of his time, but because the Egyptian world-view was based upon the flawed reasoning of man, and his was based upon direct revelation from God.
- The Hindus said that the earth rested upon a turtle which, in turn, rested upon the back of an elephant — that's quaint.
- The Greeks, whose philosophy is often studied and admired, said the earth was held upon the shoulders of the giant Atlas — that's noble.
- And the Egyptians thought the earth sat upon five great pillars — that's architecturally stimulating.
- In amazing and marked contrast the earliest written book of the Bible declares, "He [God] . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Job knew what it would take other men thousands of years to find out — not because he was a great thinker, but because GOD REVEALED IT TO HIM.

Isaiah was way ahead of his time in his understanding of *geography*. He wrote of the One who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40:22), two thousand years before Columbus reached the shores of America and demonstrated that the world was round. Isaiah was sure of his facts because GOD REVEALED IT TO HIM.

In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews knew nineteen hundred years ago

what scientists have only come to realize within the last one hundred years — namely, that the physical, tangible, visible universe in which we live and breathe and have our being is composed of things invisible to the eye. The writer put it this way: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear [which are visible]" (Heb. 11:3). This is fundamental in understanding the molecular, atomic nature of the universe. The apostle Paul told the church at Colosse that through Christ "all things consist" (Col. 1:17), or "are held together." But, how did a theologian understand the significance of the atom two thousand years ago — unless GOD REVEALED IT TO HIM?

Peter was a popular preacher of his day. By divine enablement he looked down the corridor of time to view the end of human history. He clearly saw the total purging of the earth through what many believe to be a nuclear explosion. But let Peter speak for himself. He wrote, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

Scientists confirm that this is an accurate description of a nuclear explosion. As Moses explained the origin of the earth and heavens, Peter foretold its destruction. He knew because GOD REVEALED IT TO HIM.

In simplest terms, *revelation* is the disclosing of truth to man which could not

have been known apart from divine enablement — things about God, the origin of the universe, sin, life after death, and the end of the age.

Moses, Job, Isaiah, Peter, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul and other biblical authors shared truths revealed to them directly from God.

Inspiration, on the other hand, is the superintending of God's Word through men who were under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit so that they penned exactly what God wanted them to say. Part of the Bible came through direct revelation, but all of the Bible is God-inspired and therefore authoritative, infallible, and inerrant.

The apostle Peter described the process of inspiration this way, "... holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). And Paul wrote to Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [mature], thoroughly [completely] furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is the map and compass for life's journey. It is a book — a divine volume — a gift to man of infinite, unsurpassable worth. If followed, it gives purpose and meaning and leads to eternal life. If rejected, men relegate themselves to complete darkness. Thinking they are wise, they are actually blind — always searching and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.

When we consider the Bible, THERE IS THE WONDER OF ITS FORMATION. Most books are written within the span of a single lifetime. The Bible was written over a period of more than sixteen hundred years, from Moses to the apostle John (1500 B.C. to A.D. 100). Its human authors varied in lifestyle, education, and geographic location. With few exceptions, they never knew one another and, in some cases, had never read the others' writings. And

yet, amazingly, their writing all fits together — with continuity, theme and purpose, and without contradiction.

When we consider the Bible, THERE IS THE WONDER OF ITS NATIONALISM. God, in the prerogative of divine sovereignty, chose the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give this unsurpassable treasure to the world. The Bible, from a human perspective, is a Jewish book. Slice it anywhere between Genesis and Revelation and you will read of a Jewish land, a Jewish people, a Jewish culture, and a promised Jewish Deliverer. The Bible studied out of this context is incomprehensible. The Jews were the depository of God's Word.

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When we consider the Bible, THERE IS THE WONDER OF ITS LANGUAGE. The book of beginnings (Genesis) sets forth with amazing directness the origin of earth, of man, of sin, of death, and of potential redemption. At the other end of the spectrum, the book of unveilings (Revelation) with stark candor and graphic imagery tells how it is all going to end. And, in between are mountain peaks like the unexcelled style and grandeur of the book of Isaiah, whose author walked with kings; and the impregnable logic of Romans, which proclaims in bold letters that a holy God can redeem unholy men without becoming tainted by man's sin — and all the while

answering Socrates' statement, "If deity can forgive sin, I don't know how."

And, who among men can do justice in describing the one hundred and fifty Jewish hymns called, in the Bible, the Psalms. The discouraged, the defeated, the down-trodden, the confused, the fearful, the lonely — men and women without number — have drawn its truth to their bosom in the darkness of night to see the dawn of a new day.

When we consider the Bible, THERE IS THE WONDER OF ITS APPEAL. The young man will find within its pages a call to holiness and a direction for living. The old man will find comfort, understanding, and confidence in dying. The rich and the poor, the educated and the barbarian, the king and the subject — all have been magnetically drawn to this most amazing volume. Its appeal is timeless because it answers the questions: 1) "Why was I born?" 2) "Why am I living?" and 3) "Is there life and hope beyond the grave?"

When we consider the Bible, we find that THIS WONDERFUL BOOK IS ETERNAL. Jesus Himself repeatedly stated that fact. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33). The psalmist noted, "for ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). And, the prophet spoke of this eternity of God's word when he wrote, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8).

The importance of the eternity of God's Word cannot be overemphasized. At wedding ceremonies men and women pledge to "love and cherish till death do us part." But, more than fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce. Businessmen enter into agreements, often only to break their word when the agreement is no longer profitable. Nations enter into treaties with one another, but with the passing of time — with changing circumstances — when the treaty is no longer beneficial, the treaty is often broken. How refreshing it is to read

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often broken. How refreshing it is to realize that, unlike sinful humanity, "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Num. 23:19), and that His Word is eternal.

When we consider the Bible, we find that THIS WONDERFUL BOOK IS TRUE. It would be of little worth to have a word from God that is eternal, if that word was not also true. Listen as the Son of God lifts His voice to His Father in His high-priestly prayer. He prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). "Sanctify" literally means to "set apart." Jesus is asking His Father to set apart those whom He has redeemed through the truth of the Word. It would be futile to have an eternal word from God which is not true — or a true word which is not eternal. Eternality and truth must be wed to one another if God's Word is to be profitable. Note how beautifully the psalmist united these principles. He wrote, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Ps. 119:160).

When we consider the Bible, we find that THIS WONDERFUL BOOK IS LIVING AND POWERFUL. The author of the most evangelistic book of the Old Testament is helpful once again. He wrote, concerning God's Word to man, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews said, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12).

There were a number of different kinds of swords in the ancient world. One had a sharp point and was designed for piercing. A second was light, had a sharp blade on one side, and was designed for cutting. A third had a sharp blade, was heavy, and designed for slashing the opponent's armor. This sword was cumbersome and had to be wielded with two hands. A fourth sword was invented which was lightweight

and sharp on both sides of the cutting blade. This sword revolutionized ancient warfare. It would be akin to a tennis player whose racket was only capable of hitting a forehand, and then a new racket was developed that could hit both a forehand and a backhand. It is to this fourth sword that the writer to the Hebrews is referring. He said that God's Word is a "two-edged sword" — it has the capability of cutting to the innermost recesses of a man's heart.

John Newton experienced the "aliveness" and power of that "two-edged sword." As a youngster he ran away from home and

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went to sea. Eventually, he became a ship's captain. In time he became involved in the slave trade and all kinds of illegal debauchery. Newton slid to the depths of despair and was contemplating suicide. In the darkest hour of his life he remembered the Word of God, which he had heard on his mother's knee as a youngster, and he was gloriously saved. John Newton became one of the church's greatest preachers and prolific hymn writers.

Among his many classic hymns, one stands out like the mighty cedars of Lebanon. He wrote of his own life this way, "Amazing grace — how sweet the sound — that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost

but now am found — was blind but now I see." He had experienced firsthand that eternally true Word of God which is alive and powerful and able to transform a condemned, vile sinner into a child of God.

How utterly tragic that mankind should disdain so great a treasure as the Word of the infinite God. The Bible is ignored, ridiculed, or rejected by the great mass of unregenerate humanity, and little more than a dust collector for a large segment of those who would call themselves religious or even "Christian," but know nothing of God's grace in their lives. In liberal pulpits around the world the Bible is often nothing more than a springboard for a discourse that begins and ends with the clergyman's personal views. And all the while people are crying out, "Is there a word from the Lord?"

On one occasion, when asked if he defended God's Word, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, often called the prince of preachers, responded, "Yes, the way I would defend a lion. I just open the cage and let it out."

- God's Word is eternal.
- God's Word is true.
- God's Word is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It need only be pulled from the scabbard and used by a courageous band of believers. Its hot, flashing blade will do its work.

The primary need of the true church in the world today is not more money, new programs, accommodation to what the world wants, or slick Madison Avenue promotion — but rather, lives regenerated by exposure to the eternally true and gloriously alive Word of God breathed upon by the Holy Spirit of God. □

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Life After Life

BY MARY DAHL

A well-meaning Lutheran friend of mine sent me a card for All Saints Day. It stated that she and her congregation were praying for my brother and mother, who had recently died. How ironic that Martin Luther, who railed against the church for praying for the dead, has followers who embrace the same practice. Who are they praying to and for what purpose? Can praying for a dead person save them? Where is that dead person? In the grave or in heaven? If they are in heaven, why would they need prayer? If in hell, will prayer alter their state? What does the Bible say about these things?

Nowhere in scripture is immortality of the soul mentioned. In fact, it is well known that belief in the immortality of the soul originated from pagan religion, and came into the church in the ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato. Yet modern Christianity is firmly entrenched in this doctrine. In this article we will look at some of the history behind this belief. We will also contrast this doctrine with Scriptures related to afterlife.

As stated previously, the idea of a soul's immortality has its roots in Greek paganism. The Greeks considered the body to be lower than the mind. They rejected belief in a bodily resurrection and taught that the soul departed the body, crossed the river Styx and lived in the land of shades. Hundreds of years before the time of Christ Greek philosophy took up the pagan image of a soul surviving its body.

The strongest force working in favor of a belief in natural immortality has been the dominant influence of Platonism in

the earlier stages of the development of Christian doctrine (*The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 545).

Many early Christians had grown up believing Greek ideas, especially about immortality, so these became incorporated into religious doctrine. This concept first appeared in church literature late in the second century in the writings of Athenagoras of Alexandria. Tertullian was another who strongly advocated the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Augustine wrote a book giving sixteen reasons for the immortality of the soul—however he wrote this book *before* he converted to Christianity. This Greek belief seemed to determine the course of thinking within the church on the question of immortality from that time on.

In contrast to the above doctrine is what is today referred to as “conditional immortality,” that is, that no one will live forever unless Jesus Christ one day gives him/her everlasting life. This doctrine, even though it is consistent with Scripture, virtually disappeared between the fourth and sixteenth centuries (for history on this you can consult Leroy Froom's *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*). Conditional immortality resurfaced during the time of the Reformation. Martin Luther stated:

I permit the pope to make articles of faith for himself and his faithful such as . . . the soul is immortal, with all those monstrous opinions to be found in the Roman dunghill of decretals (Froom, p. 73, 74).

Luther, Tyndale and others declared that the dead would stay dead until their resurrection by Christ. John Calvin, however, maintained the immortality of the soul. Calvin put the Protestant stamp of approval on the traditional belief, and his influence is still seen today. Protestantism failed to reject the belief that at death souls passed at once to heaven or hell. Resurrection became almost an afterthought.

Let us now consider what the Bible says about afterlife. Old Testament verses such as Daniel 12:2, Job 19:25-27, and Psalm 49:15 made it clear that eternal life would only come by way of resurrection from the grave. The Jews of that time did not believe in immortality of the soul or a separation of the soul from the body at death. Both the soul and the body will be resurrected from the grave or gravedom (the state of being dead).

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goes (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10).

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

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"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time I wait, till my change come" (Job 14:14).

"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:25).

"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me" (Psalm 49:15).

"Who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion" (Psalm 103:4).

The Hebrew word translated in Psalm 49 as "receive" is *laqach*, which means to take away. God through Christ will take away the dead from the grave.

There are two different words in Hebrew which are related to grave. *Queber* is a literal grave in the ground. *Sheol* is the Hebrew counterpart to the Greek word *hades*. It is a fictitious place which exists only as a concept, not a location. *Sheol* is the figurative state or "dwelling place" of the dead. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment. Both *sheol* and *hades* have been translated as the English word "hell" associated with the Greek idea of an underworld where the dead live in continual torment.

The Greek word *gehenna*, which has also been translated as hell, signifies the "valley of Hinnom" which was the city dump outside of Jerusalem. Garbage was thrown into *gehenna* to be burned up. Jesus taught that those who were not saved would be burned up and destroyed. No one listening to Jesus believed that someone was going to burn forever and not be destroyed. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), not eternal torment.

The most damaging consequence of the doctrine of immortal souls is that it nullifies the need for the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. If immediately upon death we go to heaven why would we then need to be resurrected from the grave? And why would Christ

need to return to judge the living and the dead? In the assumed system each person must already be judged at death to determine the soul's destination: heaven or hell. It is not logical or scriptural.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [judgment]" (John 5:28-29).

If you believe that a better existence awaits you on the "other side" you may not be as motivated to continue to serve God, persevere and enjoy this life.



Many other verses speak about future resurrection, including 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 4:16, 17; Titus 2:13; and 2 Timothy 4:8.

Another harm that this belief inflicts is the perception that death is not necessarily a bad thing. Why would it be if you are immediately in paradise with God? But "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:20). Can it be any clearer? Death is a believer's enemy. Yes, we will all eventually die. But for a Christian death is only a temporary state. That is why the epistles often refer to the state of death as "sleep." However, if you believe that a better existence awaits you on the "other side" you may not be as motivated to continue to serve God, persevere and enjoy this life. Why not give up and leave for a better place? Many Christians refer to death

as "being called home." Will you fight death if you see it as a friend or as an enemy?

Finally, the belief that the dead are actually alive somewhere allows one to come under the influence of spiritualists, those who claim to communicate with the dead, as well as New Age and Eastern religions, sorcery and witchcraft. All of these have their source in the father of lies, the devil, who invented the classic lie on this subject long ago: "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4).

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of attaining eternal life. It is when Jesus Christ returns to this earth that resurrection and judgment will occur. No one but Jesus Christ has ever been raised to eternal life. All the rest of those who have died are now dead and have no awareness or consciousness. Sound, Scripture-based doctrine regarding afterlife emphasizes the return of Christ which we as Christians "anxiously await." This is the hope that the apostle Paul wrote about. □

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Pneuma – Spirit

BY PETSY RUDACILLE

Part 1: Use and Usage of *pneuma*
 “The doctrine of the Holy Spirit still suffers neglect among us” — that quote is from *The Expository Times* for May, 1903. It is just as true today as it was a century ago.

People pontificate opinions as to what they think is true about the Holy Spirit, but rarely do they put forth systematic effort in searching the Scriptures to understand the use and usage of the Greek word *pneuma*. E.W. Bullinger did this, and identified and studied the context for every occurrence of the word. He compiled his studies for the edification of English-speaking people in his book *The Giver and His Gifts* (Kregel, 1979). He suggests that all students should ask what the word *pneuma* refers to each time it is used.

Pneuma, the Greek word for spirit, occurs about 385 times in the Greek Testament. (Six major translators agreed to omit nine of these and added three others.)

	Rendered	Times
	Spirit	133
	spirit	153
	spiritual	1
	ghost	2
	life	1
	wind	1
Genitive case:	spiritually	1
With <i>hagion</i>		
(holy)	Holy Spirit	4
	Holy Ghost	89
Total:		385

There are nearly four thousand original Greek manuscripts. One hundred twenty-seven of these are called “uncials” because every letter is a capital. The other 3,702

manuscripts are called “cursive” because every word is written in running hand. Every translator and editor must determine by interpretation whether or not to use a capital letter for the word *pneuma*. This is important knowledge because with it we can recognize that the English Testament’s use of “Spirit” or “spirit” has to be an interpretation and not a literal translation. Use of capital letters for words such as

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 mercy seat, altar, ark, Sabbath and Priest was more common in the seventeenth century than today. The tendency of this century is to use fewer capitals. The reverse is true for *pneuma*. In the case of most nouns this makes no difference, but when a capital letter is used for spirit the meaning is changed.

One can only find the truth by examining the use and usage of each occurrence of this very important word. Use and usage are differentiated in Scripture. Use is the way it was written in the Greek. Usage is the word’s meaning.

Pneuma is used in seven different ways. It is used alone two ways; i.e. with and

without the article *to* (the). *Pneuma* is used four ways with *hagion* (holy).

1. *Pneuma hagion* (holy spirit); Matthew 1:18, and 49 other places
2. *Hagion pneuma* (spirit holy); 1 Corinthians 6:19
3. *To hagion pneuma* (spirit, the Holy); Matthew 28:19
4. *to pneuma to hagion* (the Holy, the Spirit); Matthew 12:32

Pneuma takes different meanings according to syntax. Sometimes it is used with prepositions or adverbs. It is used in combination with Divine names: *pneuma Theou*, *pneuma Christou*, etc. In the genitive case it is employed with ten other nouns which qualify the meaning; i.e. Romans 8:15, a *pneuma* of sonship. Lastly, it becomes a superlative adjective when joined by a conjunction to another noun.

In John 4:24 there is a command to worship God in spirit and in truth. Spirit becomes a superlative adjective because it is connected to truth with a conjunction. We are directed to worship God in “true spirit.” This verse is awesome! The interpreters have transcribed it well, but if you have the spiritual understanding of “spirit” all the implications of worshiping in “true spirit” are (no pun intended) spiritually inspiring. This verse is true poetry in that it says so much with so few words.

For instance: (1) Worship God in “true spirit” is a command. One factor not to be overlooked is that as a command it is a criterion for how Jesus will judge individuals at judgment day. (2) God’s Spirit when given to mankind/womankind is God’s

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Word and God's truth. We are to worship God in true "truth." The true truth will result in lives that show fruit of the spirit, as found in Galatians 5 and Ephesians 5. (3) If we know and use the Words that lead to eternal life in our worship service it means we truly love and listen to the God we claim to love and worship.

The importance of a correct interpretation of this word "spirit" cannot be over emphasized. Its misuse can prevent the discovering of truths that lead to eternal life, and can become the foundation of a false worship.

"The Holy Spirit" sometimes refers to God, the Giver. At other times it refers to operations of God's Divine Nature. Its manifestation can be auditory and visible. The dove descending and speaking is an example (Luke 3:22). Steven was filled with holy "pneuma." Steven was not filled with God's personal Divine Nature, but by God's Divine power which is an operation of God's Divine Nature. Depending on syntax the word *pneuma* may be God's nature with all its attendant powers, the operation of that power, power given to people, or different kinds of gifts that God bestows on people.

There are exceptions to almost all rules, but here are a few guidelines to follow in interpreting the words transcribed "holy spirit."

In the Greek, when the article *to* (the) is used with both *hagion* (holy) and *pneuma* (spirit), (*to pneuma to hagion*), God the Giver is most often the correct understanding. When the article *to* (the) is not used with both *hagion* and/or *pneuma* the term "Holy Spirit" is used to acknowledge God's nature with all its power, or some operation of that power.

In Acts 2:4 the apostles were filled with *pneuma hagion* by *to pneuma*. No article is used in the Greek (*pneuma hagion*) for "the Holy Ghost"; therefore, a gift of Holy Spirit is meant. *Pneuma hagion* is not the Giver but the gift that was holy. Even though *hagion* is not used with Spirit (*to pneuma*),

the article *to* (the) points out that this spirit was in fact God. This verse is an example of the rule and a breaking of the rule. It means that God gave spiritual gifts that were holy.

The apostles began to speak with other tongues or languages. This was one of several special gifts at Pentecost, some of which enabled the disciples to perform miracles. In 1 Corinthians 12 we find that these special abilities were called gifts from the spirit (also consider Heb. 2:3, 4; Matt. 7:11; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:8). Spiritual gifts from the Giver were bestowed to give the church a strong start. There is evidence that these miraculous gifts ceased after the first generation from the apostles (study Micah 3:5-7; Psalm 74:9-11; 1 Cor. 13:8-10, 13).

All spirit comes from the Giver, but not all spirit gifts are holy. All of the human creatures made by the Creator have spirit, but sometimes less is better (Matt. 5:3). One can only find the truth by examining the use and usage of each occurrence of this very important word.

Part 2: Father of Spirits

God, the Giver and the Creator, is maker of all *pneuma*. God is the father of all spirits (Eccl. 12:7; Num. 16:22; Luke 23:46; Heb. 12:9). When humans die the spirit goes out of them and back to the Creator.

There are clean and unclean spirits. There are good and evil spirits. There is spirit that is neutral and Spirit that is Holy. The one Holy Spirit that created the spirit of love created the spirit of hate. There is only one God. This one God is a spiritual being. All spirit comes from this one eternal spiritual being. There is only one supernatural power in the universe. This supernatural power is called Holy Spirit in Scripture. It describes the Divine Nature of God. It is God. All power, supernatural or otherwise, comes directly from this one God or someone to whom HE chooses to provide it (Matt. 28:18; 2 Thess. 2:9-13). All power exists because the one God who proclaimed

there is none else allows it to exist (see Isa. 45:6, 7).

The same God who made the Tree of Life made the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree was a tree of death. Adam had the freedom to eat of the Tree of Life or the tree of death. Adam chose death. King Saul was filled with a jealous spirit toward David. He opened himself to other unclean spirits (1 Sam. 16:14, 15). Saul chose to die. Today we have the same choice. We can be filled with spirit that will give eternal life or spirit that will result in death. We have freedom to be filled with spirit that is clean or spirit that is unclean. When the Lord's Day comes this will not be true (Zech. 13:2). The one and only living God bestowed upon His creatures the inalienable right of freedom. God the creator made the spirits but the creature has a choice as to what spirit will give life the most satisfaction. Mankind is under the curse of death. All humans must die at least once. To live eternally is only available for those lucky enough to hear, and then choose to heed and believe the Holy Spirit.

It should be pointed out at this juncture that spirits such as jealousy, hate, and pride are not sin when attributed to God. God cannot sin. When negative spirits, which HE does possess, are used by God they may produce evil, but they are not sin because God *is* God. Because God *is* God, HE can slay every man, woman and child in a nation yet no sin is committed. God can be jealous; it is not sin. When God hates, it is not sin. Spirit that is unclean in humans cannot be unclean in the Creator. God's use of negative spirit is always just. Man's use of negative spirit against other people is sin and evil. When humans hate iniquity or injustice that is an example of a good use of a negative spirit (Mal. 1:2, 3).

The Creator gave the Law to the Israelites to teach people how to live together. When the Law is obeyed, the actions promote good spirit (see Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 5:9-11, 17-20).

Spirit motivates action. Beings who have spirit are motivated to act as the spirit moves them. The Giver of all Gifts is the potter. People are the clay. There are some vessels only fit for destruction (Rom. 9:21-23). People moved by spirits of ignorance and darkness are vessels fit for destruction. Other people hear and are moved by Holy Spirit to actions of righteousness and truth. Scripture directs us to be filled with Spirit and to not quench Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:19). Criminal or disobedient acts are sin, not the spirit that motivates the act. Again, be careful what you do with the spirit that fills you.

On September 11, 2001, nebulous enemies attacked the United States. Suddenly, with the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon we have on the world scene today two major and opposing spirits.

America is showing spirit. Since that day a spirit of unity has joined Americans. More Americans could be found attending churches, synagogues, and mosques in the weeks following this event than had attended in decades before. The spirits of generosity, patriotism, compassion, love and other positive spirits are evident in America today (James 1:17). Freedom is the motivating spirit that ignited this new unity. Even the media has been prompted to report this as news. America and her allies wave the flag of freedom.

Freedom has made America prosperous and rich.

The USA is on the defensive for freedom. The USA did not start this war, but the USA is proud to be on the offense for the spirit of freedom. Inordinate spirit of pride, however, should prompt caution. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16, 17; Eccl. 7:8, 9; James 4:5-7).

Opposing this spirit of freedom is the spirit of authoritarian bondage.

Terrorists are trying to persuade Fundamentalist Muslims that they are fighting the Jihad, a Holy War. From their point of

view Americans hate Islam because they support Jewry. The Americans say they support Israel because they are a democracy, but ten years ago the USA supported and trained the very undemocratic men who became the Taliban. This double standard makes it hard for them to see that democracy is relevant to Americans; therefore, it must be that they hate Muslims.

Americans seem to have another double standard. America is reported as being mostly a Christian nation. Muslims see the morality of Islamic countries as vastly superior to the morality of nations that have freedom. They do not want their children to listen to CDs of western music, to watch pornography on western TV, to learn to accept and even embrace gays and lesbians, to judge one's worth by the size of a bank account, etc. More and more Muslims are moving toward this minority group to view Americans as infidels and a contamination of all that is moral. The only part of America most of them see is the side presented by Hollywood and the news media.

In opposition to the spirit of freedom in America, there is the spirit of bondage to authority.

When former Muslims who have converted to Christianity were asked why they converted an interesting observation came to light. They converted because of Jesus' message of love. They confided that there are two prevailing spirits that result from the Koran. One is the spirit of fear and terror. The other is the spirit of death. One formerly devout Muslim said, after years of praying to Allah, that he had never felt loved. In order to serve Allah one must practice submission to authority.

To be a good Muslim one must strive for total submission to the authority of Allah or leaders appointed by Allah. Women submit to the authority of men. Men bow down to the authority of power. This governmental authority comes from oppressive practices. Under this regime "might makes right."

Some countries that harbor terrorists who claim to be devout Muslims have tens of thousands of displaced, homeless people. The people are hungry. They have children who no longer smile. War and famine impoverish these beautiful lands. Completely covered widows sit on curbs with their hands out begging food for their children. Many of these people will suffer unimaginable hardships before they die of disease and hunger.

Mostly, Americans are appalled when the suffering of people is brought to their attention. We feel moved by the spirit of generosity to provide for the hungry. America, in a proud tradition, is responding with millions of dollars of relief for starving people.

To many people who do not have the same value system as America, this is not the proper response. The USA is evil and must be cleansed from the face of the earth. Submission to authority has been trained into them. If hunger is part of their life, then they are willing. They will fare better if they die trying to please Allah.

The spirit of freedom in America prompts it to action. America is praying again.

The spirit of Jihad in Islam prompts Muslims to action. Muslims have always prayed.

The spirit of hatred prompts terrorists to actions that are heinous to both these sides. In spite of the lying spirits, the spirit of hatred, death, fear and terror that grips them, they too claim to have the spirit of Allah.

Is there a right side? Is there a wrong side? Is something missing in this picture? Has the Father of Spirits taken a side in this complex war? Whose prayers will He answer? Both sides claim allegiance to God. Do you see God's hand in world events?

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly

(continued on page 18)

broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay (Daniel 2:42, 43).

In the book of Daniel we read of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31-34). In the days of the toes of the image in Daniel, there is a stone cut without hands that smites the feet and grows until it fills the whole earth. King Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream that showed him the future. The stone that fills the earth represents a kingdom that is not brought about by human endeavor — a kingdom cut without hands. It will come from the earth. It will be made up of citizens from this earth. The planning for this kingdom was done in heaven. God, the Giver of all good gifts, will interfere with man-made kingdoms and start a righteous kingdom that will ultimately fill the whole earth in the days of these nations (Matt. 16:16-18; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 10:4). It is highly probable that we are living in the time of the toes of this image.

How can we know this? Because Jesus sent the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth that will tell us all things if we have been begotten by Holy Spirit (John 16:13). Three of the end-time signs spoken by Jesus in Matthew 24 that were not feasible in the time of Jesus are now possible. The fig tree (Israel) can sprout because Israel has been a nation since the stroke of a pen in 1948 (Matt. 24:32). The fig tree could not sprout when Israel was in exile. We now know how all flesh could be destroyed from the face of the earth, with nuclear bombs and chemical warfare (Matt. 24:22). The kingdom of God is being preached in all nations due to technology and the Internet (Matt. 24:14). Time, as perceived by the Jewish calendar, places us about six thousand years from creation. If one chooses to believe that the day of rest and the Sabbath are shadows of things to come, we are very

close to the end of the sixth day (Col. 2:16, 17).

Under the blanket of the organization called United Nations the world of today has nations of iron and clay striving to form a coalition against the spirit of terror. The world has been catapulted into a World War that pits freedom versus terror and bondage.

Countries like the USA and her allies that fight for freedom are symbolized by clay. Clay is malleable. People of democracies are diverse; therefore, malleable.

The requirement for testing that the spirit is Holy is spelled out in specifics. Spirit that is true and Holy must testify of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2, 3).

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

The countries that espouse bondage and total submission to authority are like iron. King Nebuchadnezzar's reign was symbolized in the image as the head of gold, a metal. Absolute and total authority was the characterization of those world powers. Those countries that believe in dictatorships are strong like iron.

Iron and clay do not mix. Freedom and dictatorship will not mix. The coalition between freedom and bondage is a true example of an oxymoron. Both of these ideologies are against terror, but try as they will to make a united front, they will not be able to coalesce.

The question now becomes not which of these sides has the right spirit, but how can one know the truth and be on the side of the Creator?

There are many right ways according to man, but only one right way for those who

seek eternal life and immortality (Prov. 14:12; Eph. 4:5).

To be on the right side one must be born of the Father of Spirits. One day soon Jesus, the future king of all the earth, will be sent with trumpet sound and call. Those who hear His voice will live. Those who will hear are those who have been begotten of the Spirit. To be born of the Spirit to a spiritual body starts with hearing the gospel message; not just hearing that there is a kingdom of God, but hearing and understanding the entire package (1 John 5:18-20; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 Cor. 4:15).

God's Word is Spirit. God's Word is life (John 6:63). To enter into the Kingdom of God and have eternal life requires that one be born of spirit (John 3:5, 6). To be born of spirit it is essential that one hear, believe and obey the Word. Hearers are begotten by the true gospel. Believers are not to grieve the Holy Spirit because that is how one is sealed for redemption (Eph. 4:30).

It is the truth that enables Christians to obey, and to try the spirits to see whether one is just "spirited" or has been begotten by Holy Spirit.

Part 3: Testing the Spirits

When you are truly committed to being a citizen in the Kingdom of God obedience demands that the spirit that fills you be tried (1 John 4:1).

Just because spirit can be good, and promote actions that are commendable, does not mean that an individual will have eternal life (Luke 13:23-29). Some of the disciples who had gifts of miracles, faith and truth did not choose to obey and gain eternal life. Hymenaeus was one who had tasted of the heavenly gifts to be given to those who will have part in the Kingdom of God. He knew true words that would lead to eternal life, but they did not profit him because he abused his freedom. He did not continue in this spirit (1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18). He left the faith, twisted the truth, and deceived others who will also be lost (Heb. 6:4-6).

Some people depend on their heart or "gut" feelings to determine the truth (Jer. 17:9, 10). This is a choice. The Scriptures are rather clear that certain words must be known, believed and obeyed (Acts 11:14).

For those who seek eternal life and citizenship in the Kingdom of God more is required than tradition or what one wants to be true.

The true believer must test the words that give spirit against Scripture for truth, because false spirits do not lead to eternal life. The spirit that abides in you must be spirit that Jesus can confirm before the Father of Spirits (1 Cor. 1:4-8).

Because the only spirit that Jesus will be able to confirm at His coming must be true, the requirement for testing that the spirit is Holy is spelled out in specifics. Spirit that is true and Holy must testify of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2, 3).

If the spirit in any Christian does not admit that Jesus is come in the flesh, it is not Holy Spirit. Abiding in a false spirit will not result in being born again of Spirit to the Kingdom of God (see John 6:64-69; 3:34-36).

How do you test the spirits? This is not easy when most of the world is in darkness. God will send delusions to those who do not love truth (1 Kings 22:23).

Before anyone is able to try or test the spirits one must not only hear but understand the gospel message of the Kingdom of God (Gal. 3:2). The words are easy, but you must understand the words in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The truth is hidden to those who are lost (2 Cor. 4:3). What may seem simple to those who recognize that the Kingdom of God has been in the plan of God since Adam is not simple to Christians who must peel off layers and layers of deception and tradition about the Son of God. The truth is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the sophisticated world (1 Cor. 1:23).

There is only one door that leads to salvation. Jesus Christ is that door.

Holy Spirit can be tested by what is testified concerning Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Spirits that acknowledge Jesus as the promised one who will come back to earth with His saints and wrest the kingdoms from the powers that resist righteousness and true justice are the spirits that will lead to eternal life.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:1-3).

Does the spirit that moves you to a conviction acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God? That Jesus is the propitiation for human sin? That Jesus, the Christ, willingly laid down His life and died for you? That Jesus of Nazareth is the firstborn of those that slept? Do you know that to be born again into a spiritual body you must hear the gospel message of the kingdom, repent, believe and be baptized by immersion into Christ? Do you know that Jesus will be king of Israel and lead the nation of Israel to be the most powerful nation of all nations that ever existed on earth?

Any and every spirit must agree in truth concerning the coming King (Acts 20:24, 25; John 5:39; 15:26; Eph. 4:17, 18, 20-24; 1 John 4:13-15).

Has the Father of Spirits taken a side in the world confrontation of this momentous time? God sets up kingdoms and He takes them down by allowing nations to follow through on their own schemes. When nations become too vile in His sight He allows them to fall. God has given

America a wake-up call. If America would renounce evil and convert to truth God would allow her to continue. It is not His will that any should die. If America continues to perpetrate immorality and if Muslims continue to disregard their starving masses both will become weak. God can raise up terrorists from the rocks to come against both these powers. Then HE can destroy the terrorists with other nations. We do know that something will happen so that no nation will stand up for Israel (Zech. 14:2, 3). When that happens, the fig tree will sprout. This will be the generation that will not end until the Lord's return.

Today is the day to hear and accept the Spirit of God's Grace. Today is the day to believe what your spirit can comprehend but your eyes cannot see. The Great Rosh Hashanah is approaching. We are in the days of Awe. Repent. Go tell about Jesus. He is the only door to eternal life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). If God's Holy Spirit does not abide in you now, you will not hear His call. When the King's trumpet blows only those begotten of true Holy Spirit today will be born again with a spiritual body in God's tomorrow. Do not wait until the gates are shut. Use your freedom wisely. Jesus, the High Priest, must confirm your spirit to the end that you will be blameless on the Day of Judgment. Jesus will not and cannot confirm a lie before Almighty God (1 Cor. 1:7, 8). Search the Scripture to see if these things are true.

Do not fret overly about things that are about to unfold on this earth. The earth is about to enter its darkest day of history. These things must happen. Then the Lord's people (Israel) will ask for Him. The fig tree will sprout and God will send to them Jesus. Pray that you will have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Pray that you may be accounted worthy to escape some of the things about to happen (Luke 21:36).

May you abide in the Father of Spirits and He in you until that day comes. □

Promises and Identity

If you are a Christian, then you already have all this whether you accept it or know it. If not, would you like all this?

God has already paid for sin / John 3:16

All you need to do is accept it / Romans 10:9, 10

I forget the past and look ahead / Philippians 3:13

I am dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus / Romans 6:11

I am strong in the Lord and in His mighty power / Ephesians 6:10

I believe and do not doubt / Mark 5:36

I have the mind of Christ / 1 Cor 2:16

I shall not be in want; He is my shepherd / Psalm 23:1

I love my life / Matthew 22:39

I enjoy my life / Deuteronomy 6:2

I pray continually / 1 Thess 5:17

I know He always hears me / John 11:42

I humble myself; He will lift me up in due time / 1 Peter 5:6

I love all people / 1 John 3:14

I obey His Word / Joshua 1:7

I always bear fruit / Jeremiah 17:8

I am a doer of His Word / James 1:22

I am a slave to righteousness / Romans 6:18

I cast all my anxiety on Him; He cares for me / 1 Peter 5:7

I am healed by Jesus' stripes / Isaiah 53:5

I have a spirit of power, love and self-discipline / 2 Timothy 1:7

I will not fear / 1 John 4:18

I have authority to trample on the enemy / Luke 10:19

I do not feel guilty or condemned / Romans 8:1

I live by faith / 2 Cor 5:7

I live by the Spirit / Galatians 5:16

I do not speak negative things / Ephesians 4:29

I have a delightful inheritance / Psalm 16:6

I have success in everything I do / Genesis 39:3

I have a wonderful, rewarding job planned by Him / Psalm 90:17

I will not grow weary and lose heart / Hebrews 12:3

I have a Father who delights in me / Proverbs 3:12

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The location of the Dome of the Rock, and the Wailing Wall, seen from almost opposite points.





Is It 1938 Again for the Jews?

As Charles Dickens once wrote: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Once again there is conflict and bloodshed in Israel. It is sad that lives are being lost due to millennia-old hatred. Yet, as God's people, we know that, before we see the return of Israel's Messiah, and our Messiah, Jesus, there will be more bloodshed in Jerusalem. Let us continue to pray for peace.

This issue of the HERALD contains many varied attempts to understand what is happening in Israel and what impact it has on our lives and our faith. I yield the remainder of this editorial space to an article by Dennis Prager that was sent to me by the Gospel Publicity League.

God bless you as you pray for peace and search for truth.

Jeff Fletcher, Editor

This is the scariest time for Jews since the Holocaust. The Jews are being abandoned... AGAIN!

From the Jews' perspective, the world can be divided into three groups – those that hate the Jews and want them dead, those that ignore this hatred and aid the haters, and Americans.

The first group consists mostly of Muslim and Arab societies. Never Arab hatred of Israel was purely political, that time has long passed. Arab, Iranian and other Muslim literature today is as anti-Semitic as

Nazi literature was. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a bestseller in the Middle East.

Articles regularly appear there describing how Jews kill non-Jewish children to use their blood in holiday foods. Jews have been expelled from nearly every Arab country. And the deliberate killing of Jews, including Jewish children, is celebrated throughout the Muslim Middle East.

And not just Israeli Jews – remember Daniel Pearl. Also ominous for Jews (and for Christians, though most Christians do not feel vulnerable even though *they are next*) is the great number of Muslim immigrants living in Europe. There are some 32 million Muslims in Europe, and many of them are radical and, therefore, anti-Semitic. Virtually every day in the past month, Jews and synagogues were attacked by Muslims in Europe.

Because Europe fears its immense Muslim population, because of its own anti-Semitism, because it is leftist, because it is dependent on Arab oil, and because America supports Israel, Europe is the primary supporter of those who wish another Jewish Holocaust. Europe, which has been a decaying civilisation since the end of World War I, has reached a moral nadir, and once again at the Jews' expense.

The second group, the rest of the world excluding the United States, is either pro-Arab (e.g., Russia, China, South Africa) or oblivious to the Jewish state's fate (most of Asia and Latin America).

The third group consists of Americans. In America, Jews live in unprecedented equality and security, and America is Israel's defender. The reason is not only

that America is such a tolerant place. America does not merely tolerate Jews and Judaism. It honours them. And it has done so since its inception. The United States is the only country that has always defined itself as Judeo-Christian. There are Christian countries, secular countries and Muslim countries, but America is the only Judeo-Christian country.

Contrary to what Arab media constantly tell their people, American support of Jews and Israel is not due to "Jewish/Zionist influence." It is due to America's values and to its identification with Jews and Israel. Though Christians founded the United States, the Old Testament played as great a role in America's identity as did the New. Such was the identification with Israel that Thomas Jefferson suggested that the seal of the United States depict Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

As long as America remains Judeo-Christian and continues to prefer the values of the Lone Ranger to those of the United Nations, Jews will never be entirely abandoned. But given the Europeanisation of America's elite, the news media's constant moral equation of free Israel and its fascistic enemies, the increasing number of anti-Jewish, anti-Christian Muslims in America, and the continuing influence of the anti-America and anti-Israel left on academia and on liberal Christian denominations, one day the Jews and Israel may be entirely abandoned.

So here we are, just one generation after nearly every Jew in Europe was murdered, and the remnant that remains in the New
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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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On the Holiness of Jerusalem in Judaism and Islam

BY JONATHAN SILVERMAN

For 3,000 years the eternal city of Jerusalem has held the most exalted position in the Jewish religion, and been a place of unparalleled importance in Jewish life and history.

First and foremost, King Solomon built the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem between the years 965 and 928 BCE. At that time the Holy Temple was the stronghold of the Jewish religion, containing the Holy Ark and the holiest altar in the nation for bringing ritual sacrifices as offerings to God. The people of Israel would come to the Holy Temple to pray and to give thanks but especially to perform sacrifices on the three festivals of pilgrimage: Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. The actual performance of the sacrifices in the Holy Temple was reserved for the priests (*cohanim*) who were descendants of Aaron. But in the year 586 the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, destroyed the Holy Temple and carried off its implements made of precious metals, and exiled the Jews of Jerusalem to Babylon.

Although Nebuchadnezzar had laid waste to the Holy Temple, its holiness remained and it was then the Jewish exiles swore: "if I forget you Jerusalem, may I forget my right hand and may my tongue adhere to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember, if I do not hold Jerusalem above my greatest joy," and generations of Jews have kept this vow to the present day. The nation longingly remembered the holiness of Jerusalem throughout thousands of years of exile.

When Nehemiah returned from Babylon around 536 with the first group of exiles the city was rebuilt, and the Holy Temple and Jerusalem were again the principle focus of national religious life until the

destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in the year 70 CE. Following the suppression of Bar Kochva's revolt, the Roman Legions burned all of Jerusalem to ashes and in its place built a pagan city they called Aelia Capitolina, which Jews were forbidden from entering for generations.

The strong heartfelt desire every Jew has to see Jerusalem rebuilt in his lifetime and the centuries deep Jewish affection for the city King David founded are embodied in many important customs and prayers from Judaism's great sages. For example, the prayer: "And to Jerusalem, your city mercifully return, and dwell within it as you said. And build in it soon in our lifetimes, the building for eternity, and may it hold a place for King David's throne," is repeated by every praying Jew several times a day.

In brief, those are the religious fundamentals on which Jerusalem's holiness stands in the Jewish faith. The Rambam outlines it even more succinctly:

It is a tradition with all that the place in which David and Solomon built the sacrificial altar and which held the Holy Ark on its floor is the place in which Abraham built an altar and bound Isaac on it, and it is the place on which Noah built when he came out of the ark, and it is the altar on which Cain and Abel sacrificed, and on which Adam sacrificed when he was created and on which he was created. As the sages say: "He was created from his place of atonement."

In other words, as the passage from the Rambam illustrates, the reason Jerusalem

is the holiest city in Judaism is that in the 5000 year span of Jewish religious life the nation's devotion to God has intersected more with this city and more intensely than with any other.

Various factors make Jerusalem holy to Muslims at first glance, the holiness of Jerusalem in the Muslim tradition is also religious at heart, and stems from the belief that Muhammad the prophet founder of Islam rose to heaven from the site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. But it seems other factors beside religion played a role too.

After the prophet died in June 632 a series of successors, or caliphs, assumed authority as Islam's leaders. Between 661 and 750 the Umayyad Dynasty held the Caliphate and ruled from Damascus. During the time they ruled, on account of various internal and external pressures the Umayyads exerted enormous effort to elevate Jerusalem's status, perhaps even to the level of Mecca.

Daniel Pipes wrote in the *Middle East Quarterly*:

The first Umayyad ruler, Mu'awiya, chose Jerusalem as the place where he ascended to the caliphate; he and his successors engaged in a construction program — religious edifices, a palace, and roads — in the city. The Umayyads possibly had plans to make Jerusalem their political and administrative capital . . . But Jerusalem is primarily a city of faith, and, as the Israeli scholar Izhak Hasson explains, the "Umayyad regime was interested in ascribing an Islamic aura to its stronghold and center."

Toward this end (as well as to assert Islam's presence in its competition with Christianity), the Umayyad caliph built Islam's first grand structure, the Dome of the Rock, right on the spot of the Jewish Temple, in 688-91. This remarkable building is not just the first monumental sacred building of Islam but also the only one that still stands today in roughly its original form.

The next step the Umayyads took to make Jerusalem holy to Islam relates to a passage in the Quran (17:1) that describes Muhammad's Night Journey to heaven: "Glory to He who took His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the furthest mosque (al masjidi al aqsa)."

Pipes explains that when this Quranic passage was first revealed, in about 621, a place called the "Sacred Mosque" already existed in Mecca. "In contrast," he goes on, "the 'furthest mosque' was a turn of phrase, not a place. Some early Muslims understood it as metaphorical or as a place in heaven."

In other words, the line about the furthest mosque in the Quran is just a figure of speech. There is no basis for associating the furthest mosque — the Quranic location of the start of Muhammad's Night Journey — with the city of Jerusalem.

In 715, Pipes writes, the Umayyads did something very clever. To build up the prestige of their domain, they built a second mosque on the Temple Mount, and named this one the "Furthest Mosque" (i.e. al-masjidi al-aqsa)

the exact same name written in the holy Quran. And in so doing, the Umayyads forced the city of Jerusalem to assume a role in the life of the prophet Muhammad. A role which it never had. This is how the Muslim belief in the holiness of Jerusalem, which persists to this day, originated.

It's impossible to escape the conclusion, as the Palestinian historian A.L. Tibawi writes, that building an actual Al Aqsa Mosque "gave reality to the figurative name used in the Quran . . ." Moreover, Pipes points out, "it had the hugely important effect of giving Jerusalem a place in the Quran post hoc which naturally imbued the city with a higher status in Islam." Before the Umayyads' building projects Jerusalem had no status at all in Islam.

Israeli scholar Izhak Hasson says:

construction of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque, the rituals instituted by the Umayyads on the Temple Mount and the dissemination of Islamic-oriented Traditions regarding sanctity of the site, all point to the political motives which underlay the glorification of Jerusalem among the Muslims.

In other words the sanctification of Jerusalem in Islam is based on the Umayyad building program and their cleverness in bringing about a (baseless) association between the al-masjid al-aqsa mentioned

in the holy Quran and the mosque which they built on the Temple Mount and purposely named Al Aqsa, precisely so that it would assume a measure of Quranic holiness it did not have.

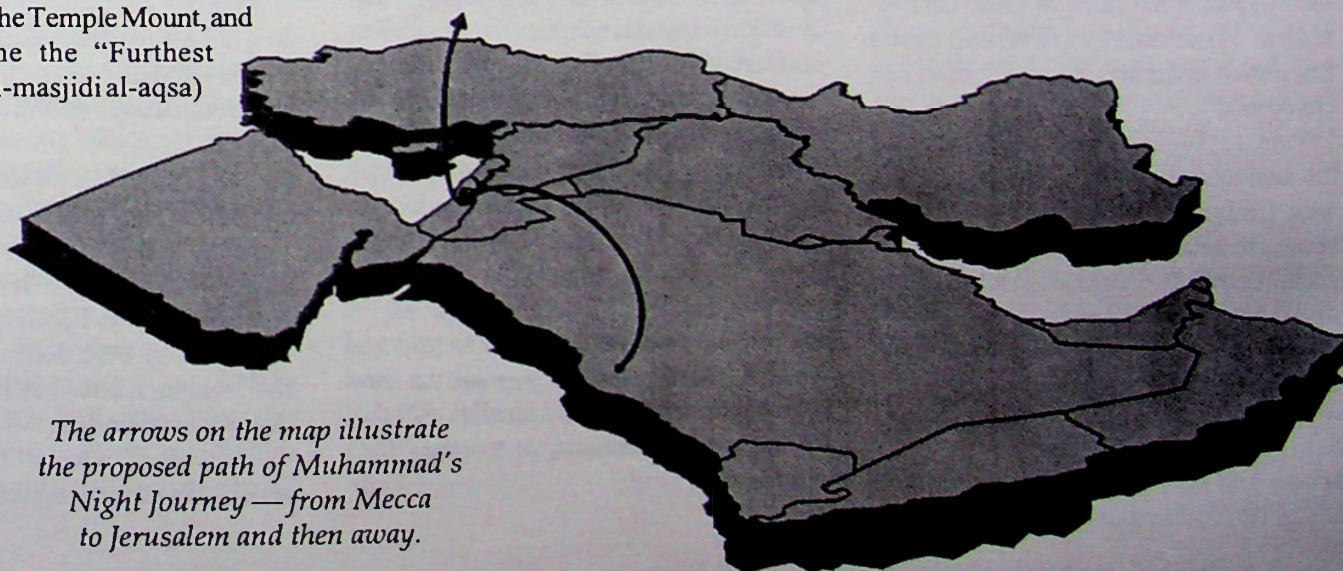
Perhaps the most convincing evidence of Islam's very loose and insignificant bond with Jerusalem is how the Muslims related to the city after the Caliphate passed from the Umayyads to the Abbasids in 750. Daniel Pipes writes:

Jerusalem fell into near-obscure. For the next three and a half centuries, books praising this city lost favor and the construction of glorious buildings not only came to an end but existing ones fell apart.

(In particular, the dome over the rock collapsed in 1016.)

These days, the never-ending cry for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital surely contains a trace of the claim that the city is holy in Islam. But essentially the historic record shows that the actions and circumstances on which the claim is based aren't very holy at all. In fact, by any standard of religious values in any society in the world, artificially imbuing a place with holiness, through wordplay and administrative sleight of hand, constitute the very opposite of holiness. □

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Some of the Past, Present and Future of Mideast Turmoil

BY O.R. ANTHON, SPRINGFIELD, LOUISIANA

The aim of this study is to stay strictly to God's plan as it is told to us by the writings of Moses and the direct words given by God to His prophets. It is to teach us His plan and also how He deals with us.

God said to Abram (Gen. 12:1)—Get out of thy country unto a land that I will shew thee.

Gen. 12:2—I will make of thee a great nation and will bless thee and curse him that curseth thee. In thee all families of the earth will be blessed.

Gen. 12:9—Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for a famine was grievous in that land. Abram had Sarah his wife say she was his sister, which created problems later for him. The result was that Pharaoh expelled him from Egypt.

Gen. 12:13—Abram, Sarah and Lot went back to between Ai and Bethel. Later Abram and Lot separated. Lot chose the flat land and Abram got the hill country. The hill country was by far the best for livestock. (This is something that few people understand unless they have had dealings with livestock in those circumstances. I know that for I have been there.) Lot settled in the area around Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen. 13:14-18—God gave Abram all the land he saw—north, south, east and west. God gave this to his seed forever. His seed is to be as the dust of the earth. This includes the children of Ishmael and Esau and the children by Keturah.

Abram built an altar in Mamre, which is also called Hebron, and lived there.

Gen. 14—Here the story is told of Lot's capture and rescue.

Gen. 15—Abram complained about not having an heir. Abram believed in God and it was counted to him for righteousness. God gave Abram a job to do which seems to have made Abram believe God, not just believe in God.

Gen. 16—Abram, Sarah and Hagar made a deal. Hagar was to have a child by Abram for Sarah. So she did. Later Sarah had a child also. A little animosity began to grow. As a result Sarah had Abram cast Hagar and Ishmael out into the wilderness.

Shortly before this the angel of the Lord came to Hagar and said to her,

Behold, you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man. His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him. He also shall dwell in the presence of his brethren.

Abram was eighty-six years old at the time of Ishmael's birth.

Gen. 17:4—God changed Abram's name to Abraham: "a father of many nations have I made thee."

Gen. 17:7—God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham, "to be a God to you and your descendants after you." (Having been to Israel and interacted with the man on the street, I was amazed how sincere the people are in their worship of God. I've seen nothing like it in the world elsewhere.)

Gen. 17:8—"Also I give to you and your descendants after you all the land which you are a stranger in, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Gen. 17:13—"He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

Gen. 17:14—"And the uncircumcised male child who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person must be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant."

Abraham pleaded with God for Ishmael to live before Him. God replied: "Yea, I have heard thee and I have blessed him to be fruitful and multiply exceedingly. Twelve nations will he beget and he will become a great nation" (Gen. 17:20, LXX).

Isaac was circumcised the following year and all Abraham's household with him.

Gen. 18—Abraham was visited by three men. In the conversation that followed, Abraham was promised a son by Sarah. Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah. God promised that he would save the city if ten righteous people were found in it.

Gen. 19—The story of Sodom and Lot. Lot, his wife and two daughters were taken by the hand and led out of the city. Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot pleaded to go to Zoar. Zoar was spared the fire and brimstone. Lot then went and lived in a cave with his daughters. They wanted to preserve seed for their father so they had him drink wine for two nights. They both conceived by their father, and their sons became the fathers of the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Gen. 21—God consoled Abraham about Ishmael and assured him that he would

also become a nation. The LXX reads, "He would have twelve nations and become a great nation." Today there are twelve nations that claim to be descendants of Abraham through Ishmael. They are all in the land which God gave to Abraham. They all became nations in the same time frame as Israel. (All this has happened in my lifetime.)

The angel of God looked out for Hagar and Ishmael. Later Hagar went to the Pharaoh of Egypt to get a wife for Ishmael.

Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days.

Gen. 26— Esau took a couple of wives of the local natives, and later also took Ishmael's daughter as a wife. This brought Ishmael's line into the family of Isaac and Jacob. The Palestinians of today mostly claim to be the descendants of the loved one (Esau).

Gen. 27— Isaac sent Esau hunting to fix him the food he liked, and was then going to bless Esau. Rebecca heard about it and

devised a plan to deceive Isaac. We all know the story and it turned out the way she planned it. Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau. When Esau came in with the meat that he had fixed for his father, Jacob had already received the blessing. Esau begged for just a little blessing from his father. Isaac finally answered Esau, being very suspect about what had happened.

Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven and by thy sword thou shalt serve thy brother. It shall come to pass when you shall have dominion that thou shalt break his yoke off thy neck.

Ezek. 47:21 to 48:35 — The present time period to me is getting close to the forty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. Over the past centuries the Palestinians have broken the yoke that Isaac talked about. Nothing says that it will be put back on them.

Prior to 1948 the Palestinians and Jews fought side by side to get the British out. (As I have seen and observed the young Jews and Palestinians are more than willing to live in each other's backyard.) The Jews made a mistake by the atrocities they carried out at that time.

Hosea 12:2-7 relates to today. "The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him." Everything that they do to the Palestinians will come back to them one hundred percent, good or bad. When the Jews think they have had enough and bring about Ezekiel 48 then they will have peace and live the rest of the Millennium in peace and contentment.

They will all be citizens of Israel on an equal status, with Zerubbabel and Joshua at the head of all that goes on. Even the Gentiles will seek them (Zech. 6:12-13). (This brings about another study, coming shortly if the good Lord says the same.) □

Streams of Worship and Sexual Purity

Today's teenagers are often called the "millennial" generation, because their high school graduation dates fall during this new millennium. God is moving in some extraordinary ways throughout the fabric of this teen culture.

Worship has become a vital part of the Christian young person's experience. It is not uncommon to find teens involved in worship gatherings of up to two hours long. The unrushed atmosphere, spent seeking and waiting on God, allows these worshipers to heartily confess their sin to God, as well as drink in a sense of His forgiveness, grace, and mercy. Joy and enthusiasm draw these young people together, paralleling Isaiah 35:10: "They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them."

The grassroots response to the True Love Waits movement is similar. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers and those in their 20s are signing a covenant, pledging themselves to sexual abstinence until marriage. Prayerfully dedicated in their church service, many go on to dedicate themselves publicly on their school campuses. Thousands of these young people, representing hundreds of thousands of signed covenants, will take a stand in their communities, boldly proclaiming to the nation their absolute resolve to stand apart in the moral desert of sexuality. These teens are choosing to pursue relationships with the opposite sex in a completely new way. Many, in fact, are "kissing dating good-bye," as a popular seminar by Joshua Harris challenges.

Why are worship and sexual purity such deep streams in the Christian youth culture? Because these are two areas in which young people deeply experience the personal touch of God. Isaiah 35:8-10 clearly identifies those who will walk on the "Way of Holiness": "The unclean will not journey on it . . . wicked fools will not go about on it. . . . But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return."

In other words, these teens have discovered that a revived life is not based on wishful thinking or emotional exuberance. Instead, an acknowledgment of their own waywardness and a decision not to live in the moral wilderness start the process. They understand that God lives "in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit" (Is. 57:15). □

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Quick Facts About Jerusalem and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

1. Nationhood and Jerusalem: Israel became a nation in 1312 B.C.E., two thousand years before the rise of Islam.
2. Arab refugees in Israel began identifying themselves as part of a Palestinian people in 1967, two decades after the establishment of the modern State of Israel.
3. Since the Jewish conquest in 1272 B.C.E, the Jews have had dominion over the land for one thousand years with a continuous presence in the land for the past 3,300 years.
4. The only Arab dominion since the conquest in 635 C.E. lasted no more than 22 years.
5. For over 3,300 years, Jerusalem has been the Jewish capital. Jerusalem has never been the capital of any Arab or Muslim entity. Even when the Jordanians occupied Jerusalem, they never sought to make it their capital, and Arab leaders did not come to visit.
6. Jerusalem is mentioned over 700 times in Tanach, the Jewish Holy Scriptures. Jerusalem is not mentioned once in the Koran.
7. King David founded the city of Jerusalem. Mohammed never came to Jerusalem.
8. Jews pray facing Jerusalem. Muslims pray with their backs toward Jerusalem.
9. Arab and Jewish Refugees: In 1948 the Arab refugees were encouraged to leave Israel by Arab leaders promising to purge the land of Jews. Sixty-eight percent left without ever seeing an Israeli soldier.
10. The Jewish refugees were forced to flee from Arab lands due to Arab brutality, persecution and pogroms.
11. The number of Arab refugees who left Israel in 1948 is estimated to be around 630,000. The number of Jewish refugees from Arab lands is estimated to be the same.
12. Arab refugees were INTENTIONALLY not absorbed or integrated into the Arab lands to which they fled, despite the vast Arab territory. Out of the 100,000,000 refugees since World War II, theirs is the only refugee group in the world that has never been absorbed or integrated into their own peoples' lands. Jewish refugees were completely absorbed into Israel, a country no larger than the state of New Jersey.
13. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Arabs are represented by eight separate nations, not including the Palestinians. There is only one Jewish nation. The Arab nations initiated all five wars and lost. Israel defended itself each time and won.
14. The P.L.O.'s Charter still calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. Israel has given the Palestinians most of the West Bank land. Autonomy under the Palestinian Authority has supplied them with weapons.
15. Under Jordanian rule, Jewish holy sites were desecrated and the Jews were denied access to places of worship. Under Israeli rule, all Muslim and Christian sites have been preserved and made accessible to people of all faiths.
16. The U.N. Record on Israel and the Arabs: Of the 175 Security Council resolutions passed before 1990, 97 were directed against Israel.
17. Of the 690 General Assembly resolutions voted on before 1990, 429 were directed against Israel.
18. The U.N was silent while 58 Jerusalem Synagogues were destroyed by the Jordanians.
19. The U.N. was silent while the Jordanians systematically desecrated the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.
20. The U.N. was silent while the Jordanians enforced an apartheid-like policy of preventing Jews from visiting the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. □

From *Whose Jerusalem?*

Christian Zionism

BY REVEREND MALCOLM HEDDING

The Christian Zionist Movement has grown in numbers and in impact in recent years. Today, thousands of Christians from all over the world are, more than ever, ready to declare their love and support for the nation of Israel. Each year they come in their multitudes to Jerusalem to join the International Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Naturally, a growing movement of this nature attracts attention and many honest enquirers are seeking an answer as to what constitutes Christian Zionism. Is it, as many claim, a political movement, or is it firmly based on the teachings of God's word? Does it have a history and, if so, who have been its leaders and supporters? In this article we shall endeavor to answer those questions and others besides.

The Foundation of Christian Zionism

Christian Zionism is firmly founded upon the teaching of God's word. It is, therefore, not a political movement, but since it has to do with a land and a particular people it may, from time to time, agree with a certain political perspective. This does not mean that it endorses a particular political philosophy or party. No, it is only prepared to endorse the Word of God and as such it may also be called "biblical Christian Zionism."

Christian Zionism seeks to declare the truth of God's word that bequeaths to the people of Israel the Land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. This promise was made by God to Abraham some four thousand years ago (Gen. 13:14-18). Moreover, the promise was reiterated time and time again and stressed that loss of domicile, because of rebellion and disobedi-

ence, would not mean loss of possession (Deut. 30:1-6). The God who exiled the Jewish People on two occasions — 586 B.C. and 70 A.D. — has always promised to bring them back and restore their fortunes (Jer. 31:10 and Is. 11:11). All this because of His promise to Abraham.

Christian Zionists seek to declare this, for here we witness the faithfulness of God, namely that He keeps His covenant and His Word, which will always be verified in the crucible of history. This is chiefly discernible in His dealing with the Jewish people. Someone described this people as "God's test tube nation wherein His Word and promise have been put to the test."

From time to time Christian Zionists have been upbraided for leaning too heavily upon the Old Testament for verification of their stand and belief. However, the biblical foundation of Christian Zionism is also found in the New Testament.

Firstly, Jesus Himself spoke of the scattering and latter-day regathering of the Jewish people (Luke 21:23, 24). Indeed, He placed their second regathering in an eschatological setting (Luke 21:28). Thus Christian Zionists simply seek to give voice to that which Jesus Himself has already said; namely, that the modern-day restoration of the State of Israel is not a political accident, or merely the result of a secular, political, Zionist movement, but rather the fulfillment of God's own Word. Moreover, it heralds the dawn of a soon-coming Messianic age. For Christian Zionists then the restoration of the State of Israel to its ancient soil is evidence that there is hope and redemption for this world. To support Israel (Gen. 12:3), comfort Israel (Is. 40:1,

2) and pray for her peace (Ps. 122:6; Is. 62:6, 7) is to work in harmony with God.

Christian Zionism is a commitment to be involved with that which God Himself is doing in the world. Above all, it is not anti-Arab for this would be evil and contrary to God's Word. No, it recognizes that as God has separate roles for those in marriage (Eph. 5:21-33), He also has a separate role for certain nations as seen in the wonderful words of Isaiah 19:23-25:

In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

So then, to recognize the role that God has given to Israel (Is. 60:1-3) does not mean that we hate or are prejudiced against the Arab peoples.

A family unit functions better when each person assumes their God-given role. When this is not true, chaos and confusion always abound. In like manner, the chaos, confusion and disharmony in the Middle East would come to an end if the nations in the area would accept the unique role that God has given to Israel. This role is to be a light of God's revelation to the world and a doorway through which He can establish His reign of peace over the world (Zech. 14:16-21).

(continued on page 10)

A False Re-interpretation

Secondly, Christian Zionists wish to re-emphasize the teaching of Paul in Romans 9-11. Neglect of these crucial passages has led to the unbiblical teaching of replacement theology. This teaching removes from the Jewish nation any national future and stresses that the Church has replaced Israel and has inherited all the blessings promised to her. The curses conveniently still apply to Israel. In Romans 11 particularly, Paul refutes this error and says just the opposite (Rom. 11:17-28).

Unfortunately the Church, being more concerned with her own interests, has failed historically to heed these clear warnings and the result has been arrogance, pride and anti-Semitism. There is a clear link between anti-Semitism and the Church over the centuries of history, and Replacement Theology has made a major contribution to this evil.

The role then that Replacement Theology has played in undermining one of the greatest acts of God in our time is great. Israel has returned home in anticipation of the birth of the Messianic Age — of Messiah's rule. The Scriptures speak everywhere of this soon-coming age and always in the context of it being preceded by a return of Israel to the Land of their forefathers (Joel 4:18-21).

The fact then that large segments of the Church have been led away by Replacement Theology from playing a meaningful part in this great process is sad, to say the least, especially in view of the fact that Scripture also warns of a great conflict surrounding Zion's return and the coming of Messiah. Great "birth pangs" will shake the Middle East as the forces of darkness attempt to frustrate the coming of the age of righteousness. Because of this, God needs "all hands on deck" in order to outrun the storm (Is. 62:6, 7). Sadly, many hands are not "on deck" because they see no significance in these events.

Christian Zionists worldwide have "seen them" and are prepared by means of prayer, comfort and practical engagement to ensure the survival and triumph of Israel. We must in no way minimize the battle in this regard. Yet, at the same time, since the cause of Christian Zionism is biblical, the battle also will be a just and rewarding one. No wonder when God called Israel into existence through Abraham, He declared that "they who bless you will be blessed and they who curse you will be cursed" (Gen. 12:3).

One of the factors that led to the birth of Replacement Theology was an historic one. This teaching was birthed at a time when Israel as a nation was in dispersion. The Land of Canaan was barren, infertile and her cities, especially Jerusalem, were mere desert outposts. The devastation was complete and it seemed beyond belief that the Land could ever again be restored to its former glory.

The impossibility of the situation led to a false re-interpretation of God's Word. Christendom has since paid the price. For God confounded her unbelief in 1948 with the restoration of the State of Israel and exposed the tragic and wicked fruits of Replacement Theology. Christian Zionists are determined to proclaim the truth of the New Testament, namely that God is not finished with Israel and that, in fact, she will yet become a "cornerstone" of His plan for the world.

Thirdly, Christian Zionists recognize with sorrow and repentance the role that many Christians have played in the persecution of the Jewish People. This is even more disturbing since all we love and enjoy as Christians came from them (Rom. 9:1-5). In the light of this awful reality they seek to be a blessing and source of comfort to Zion (Is. 40:1, 2).

The History of Christian Zionism

In a sense, Christian Zionism goes right back to the 1st century period, as there

have always been men and women who have believed and taught its tenets. Many examples of this from history could be quoted, but an article of this nature does not allow us to do it. As a definite theology, however, Christian Zionism had its beginnings among the pietistic Protestants of the 16th century and the 17th century Puritans of England. In 1587 a man named Francis Kett was burned alive for expressing his belief that the Bible prophesied a return of the Jews to their land. Moreover, in 1607, Thomas Brightman published a book in Basel called *Revelation of the Revelation*. In this book he wrote: "What, shall they return to Jerusalem again? There is nothing more certain; the prophets do everywhere confirm it." Others of the same period frequently expressed a similar belief. For instance, Isaac de la Peyrere (1594-1676), who served as the French Ambassador to Denmark, wrote a book wherein he argued for a restoration of the Jews to Israel without conversion to Christianity.

By the time of the 18th century, the Christian Zionist Movement, known then as the Restoration Movement, included many theologians, writers and politicians. Noteworthy was Thomas Newton, the Bishop of Bristol. He believed Jews would be restored to their native city and country and at the same time he condemned anti-Jewish prejudice. The movement grew with the onset of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

In the 19th century the movement continued to gather momentum and one of the outstanding personalities in this regard was Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. He noted in his diaries that the signs were right for the return of the Jews to Palestine. A certain Charles Henry Churchill, a British resident of Damascus, also became a zealous propagator of the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. In 1841 he wrote a letter to the Jewish philanthropist Moses Montefiore in which he stated:

I consider the object to be perfectly obtainable. But, two things are indispensably necessary. Firstly, that the Jews will themselves take up the matter unanimously. Secondly, that the European powers will aid them in their views.

Another popular figure in the Restoration Movement was George Gawler (1796-1869). He stated in a book in 1845 that the Jewish people were to replenish the deserted towns and fields of Palestine.

As the 19th century drew to a close, many prominent men were involved in Christian Zionism. Men like the British industrialist, Edward Cazalet (1827-1883), Lawrence Oliphant (1829-1888), a most active restorationist, and the American, William E. Blackstone. Blackstone was once dubbed the American Christian "Father of Zionism." The most interesting Christian Zionist of the period was, however, William H. Hechler (1845-1931). Hechler, Chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna, worked very closely with Theodore Herzl, considered to be the founder and father of the Jewish State. In fact, Hechler dedicated 30 years to realizing the Zionist goal of the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine. Unfortunately he died only seventeen years before this became a living reality. However, he was privileged to attend the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in August

1897, at which the foundation stone of the restored Jewish State was laid.

The 20th century saw the Zionist dream come true as a direct fulfillment of God's prophetic word. Sadly, some tragic events preceded this realization, the most terrible and evil of which was the Nazi Holocaust. Out of the ashes of six million Jews rose the restored Jewish State.

From the very beginning of the century, Christian Zionists were in the forefront of the struggle on behalf of the Jewish People. Their influence upon statesmen and men of power was great. It is no secret that this influence played a major role in producing the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which His Majesty's Government viewed "with favor the establishment of a Jewish national home" in Palestine.

Time will not permit us to talk of famous Christian Zionists such as Charles Orde Wingate, John Hayes Holmes, Professor Reinhold Niebuhr and Corrie Ten Boom who, at great personal risk during the Second World War, rescued Jews from the hands of Nazism. All these believed that scripture promised the restoration of the Jewish State in Palestine. Most of them died in hope but some, like Corrie Ten Boom, lived to see the impossible come true.

Christian Zionism has a long history. Today the movement has swelled to embrace thousands. All of them see their task

as being far from over, since the same forces that sought the destruction of Israel in decades past are still at work today. The survival and preservation of Israel is dependent upon the same kind of help and support that made her existence a reality. Christian Zionists believe that in seeking her peace they are in the long run working for the world's peace (Is. 2:1-4).

The Future of Christian Zionism

In these "last days," as Peter called them 2000 years ago, the struggle between light and darkness will intensify. Israel will be at the heart of this struggle since it is from her that God will establish His reign of righteousness over the world (Zech. 14:9). The forces of darkness will always oppose such a reign and they will do it chiefly by seeking to destroy Israel. God's triumph in and through Israel will be a final proof to the world, and indictment against it, that His word is true. Christian Zionists will have to be in the forefront of this struggle. The fact that in recent years countless thousands have been and are being added to this movement is evidence that God is preparing a spiritual army for this coming "showdown." □

Malcolm Hedding is the Executive Director of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem

Three Good Reasons to Serve Your Church

Before you say no when asked to take a job in your church, think about some reasons why you should say yes. There are at least three good reasons why every Christian ought to serve his church.

1. Your Christian life needs a service outlet. Nothing helps you to grow as a Christian like putting your faith into

practice by teaching, singing, ushering, or serving on a church committee.

2. You have a testimony to share with others. The reason why you are asked to serve is that your fellow Christians have confidence in you and your ability. Your Christian testimony will be a good influence in the lives of those whom you lead and serve.

3. Your church needs you. There is no way for our church to get its work done unless members volunteer their time to teach and lead. When you accept a place of responsibility, you help your church move forward in the name of Christ. □

What is a Jew? Thirteen Questions

BY JOHN THOMAS, M.D.

Question 1. What is a Jew?
Answer—One descended from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, and one who is their son by adoption.

Question 2. Of what is the Jew by nature an heir?

Answer—Of Palestine during his natural life, and all things related to it as constituted by the Mosaic Code. As long as the Natural Jews preserved the Constitution and Laws of Moses inviolate, so long they possessed and enjoyed their country in peace; but when they trampled these under foot, then famine, pestilence, and wars beset them, and if unreclaimed by these judgments, their country was taken from them, and they became outcasts and vagabonds among the nations.

Question 3. Is an Israelite a Jew in any other sense than a natural one?

Answer—Yes. All natural Jews are also spiritual Jews, if they walk in “the footsteps of the faith of their father Abraham”; so that from the giving of the Law by Moses until the proclamation of the Law of the Spirit of Life and Liberty by the Apostles, the Jewish nation was composed of two classes of Jews, first, the natural or native Jews, who kept not the Law in faith and hope; and secondly, the spiritual or “inward” Jews, the true seed of Abraham, who could not only trace their descent up to him as their natural ancestor, but who also imitated him in faith, hope, and obedience to the precepts of the Most High.

Question 4. Are the natural born of the Jewish nation alone Jews or Israelites?

Answer—No. A man of any other nation may become a Jew, in the same way as a man of any other nation may become an American in every particular save that of birth.

Question 5. How may a Gentile become a Jew?

Answer—By adoption.

Question 6. True. But what does that adoption consist in?

Answer—In believing the Gospel which Peter and Paul preached, and in obeying it; which is the same thing as being “born of water,” without which a man cannot enter the kingdom of God, let whosoever will affirm the contrary.

Question 7. Upon what principle, or how is a man constituted a Jew by obeying the Gospel?

Answer—Jesus of Nazareth was a natural born Jew, and by eminence styled the seed of Abraham. If a Gentile believe the gospel or promises covenanted to the fathers concerning the Christ, and obeys it by being immersed into the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, he gets into Christ, or “puts him on.” In this way he becomes Christ’s; he is “in him,” and therefore as Jesus is a Jew, the seed of Abraham, a priest, a king, a judge, the son of God, the heir of God, circumcised. etc., so the Gentiles who put him on are also styled Jews, children of promise, or seed of Abraham, priests, kings, judges, sons of God, heirs of God, circumcised, etc. “If ye be Christ’s,” says Paul, “then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” of eternal life and the inheritance made to Abraham

and the Christ 430 years before the law was given by Moses.

Question 8. Is it to be understood then that there are two Jewish nations?

Answer—Such is indeed the fact. Israel is an *imperium in imperio*, as it were, a nation within a nation, which bear a similar relation to one another that a nut doth to the shell by which it is enclosed. That which is spiritual, however, is not first; but that which is natural, and then that which is spiritual, as Paul saith concerning the animal and spiritual bodies. The animal Jewish nation is composed solely of native born Jews, while the spiritual Jewish nation is made up of all, both Jews and Gentiles, from the Fall to the Resurrection, who, under the several dispensations under which they live, believe what God says to them and do what he commands them; for it is upon a principle of faith and obedience that the sons of Adam become the sons and heirs of God.

Question 9. If the animal Jewish nation be the heirs of Palestina under a Mosaic constitution, of what is the spiritual Jewish nation the heir?

Answer—Of Palestina under a heavenly constitution, by which it is made “a heavenly and a better country.”

Question 10. What is Palestina, thus constituted, termed in the scriptures of truth?

Answer—“A new heavens and a new earth,” Isaiah 65. This constitution, which has reference to Palestina as to the nucleus or royal demesne of the new empire, remodels the social fabric of the globe. It constitutes “new heavens” or form of govern-

ment upon the earth, and a “new earth” or system of things among the population of the world.

Question 11. Who is to be the Head of this government, and who are to share with him in the glory and honor of his reign?

Answer — A king who is to come from heaven, even Jesus the Anointed of Jehovah, who is to be the Supreme Ruler upon the earth, and the fountain of all glory and honor. He is to sit upon his father David’s throne, and to hold his court in Jerusalem, where he is to reign amid his Ancients gloriously; hence it is termed the City of the Great King. The head of this government is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and is so styled because all who will share with him in the administration of the kingdom are themselves kings and lords or rulers, associate with him. He is the King Immortal, whose dominion will not be transferred to a successor. Such is the head of the government of the world, whose palace will be on Mount Zion, the ancient site of his father David’s throne.

The spiritual Jewish nation — a nation which will be born in a day — is a nation of kings and priests elect, who, as yet, have not received their royalty, but are enrolled in heaven’s scroll as the future sovereigns of the world. In Daniel, they are styled “the saints who shall possess the kingdom,” and who are now sleeping in the dust, or who, now living, instead of founding colleges in *perpetuo*, are preparing to meet today, tomorrow, or in years to come, the Founder of the Everlasting Age, the King Almighty, and the Prince of Peace. Those are they and they alone, who are to share with King Immanuel in the new heavens which Jehovah will soon create.

Question 12. Is it to be understood, then, that the spiritual Jewish nation with all settle and dwell in Palestina?

Answer — By no means. By their right to the soil of the Holy Land being established, their right to share in the dominion of the King of Israel over the globe is also demonstrated. This is a first principle which should never be lost sight of. The rights, privileges, glories, and honors of the saints are all indissolubly attached to Palestina, which is the camp of the saints, or the royal province of the Universal Empire of the Great King. God gave this country to the Christ when he promised it to Abraham and his seed. Whoever, therefore, in after ages,

Whoever could prove his right to the country also established his right to universal sovereignty.

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could prove his right to the country, also established his right to universal sovereignty. Jesus established his right, hence the necessity of his second coming that he may take possession of his inheritance and commence his reign. Hence all who are in him have a title with him to the country and all things related to it.

But it does not, therefore, follow, that they will all dwell in the country although it will be their country. Would it be reasonable to suppose this? Do the Governors, Governors-General, &c., of the British provinces all dwell in London or even in Britain? Certainly not. They are distributed

to their posts of honor, power, and glory by the supreme ruler of the empire; so also will it be with the kings and priests of Jehovah. He will establish his own Anointed in Jerusalem, who will be surrounded by a routine of immortals, who will form his court of ancients; each of the Twelve is to rule a tribe of the natural Jewish nation near the person of the King. Paul may perhaps head an extensive jurisdiction over the Gentiles, but I cannot say assuredly. These are stars of the first magnitude in the new heavens; the rest shine brilliantly in the kingdom of their Father, though the stars, or nobility, among them differ from each other in glory. They are all glorious and honorable, but not all equally so, as saith Paul. They will all have power over the nations, ruling them with a sceptre strong as iron. But while one may be chief ruler over a nation, another may rule only over two, five or ten of that nation’s cities.

Question 13. Will nations exist under this “new heavens and new earth?”

Answer — Assuredly. The nations are not to be blotted out at the return of Jesus; prophecy nowhere teaches this. It is the power of self-government which is to be taken from them, but their existence as nations will be prolonged for “a season and a time,” or a millenary of years. This is what is meant by the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdoms of Jehovah and his Anointed King. The government of the world is changed, but not its national constitution. □

From Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, August 1860.

Is It 1938 Again for the Jews? (continued from page 2)

Jersey-sized Jewish state is threatened with extinction. Even the bulk of Jewry that was not alive in 1938 feels now as if that year of appeasement of evil is being replayed. As

in 1938, the world now seems to be divided between those nations that are about to murder Jews and those that would let it happen. It is almost unbelievable. □

Dennis Prager is a nationally syndicated radio talk-show host and the author of several books.

“Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem”

BY JEFF FLETCHER

I once heard a wizened old preacher say that in order to be a really effective preacher and Bible teacher one should study with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

Now, I wouldn't want to follow that teaching in a legalistic or slavishly literal fashion, but there are times when it is extremely appropriate for all of God's people to keep equally abreast of current events and the Word of God.

As members of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, we generally take a very keen interest in what is going on in the Holy Land (or at least we should). The Bible tells us to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6). Our future is linked to the future of Israel. Our hope is tied closely to the hope of Israel. Israel's Messiah is our Messiah.

Abraham is the father of Israel.

Abraham is also the father of Ishmael and the people of Islam.

Abraham is our father.

Part of our task as God's people living on the earth is to pay attention to the signs at hand — to be awake and alert to the coming of the Lord.

We are to be attentive to world events and, by the power of God's holy spirit that is our ever present teacher and guide, attempt to discern how these events fit into the overall plan and purposes of God.

The most significant events in the history of the world are the life, teaching, death, resurrection and one day the return of Jesus Christ. Now, certainly not every one understands or believes this to be true.

When we read or listen to the news, seldom is it offered to us from a Christocentric (Christ-centered) perspective. If you read the newspaper over Easter weekend and the week that followed, you read about the conflict between the nation of Israel and the Palestinians. That was front page news and continues to be the most important news of the day. Easter was given its due, with stories safely tucked

If you read the newspaper over Easter weekend you read about the conflict between the nation of Israel and the Palestinians.

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away in the religion section of the paper, but certainly not on the front page.

Where the Church was front and center in the news was in stories of pedophile priests in the Catholic Church. Also there was the Pope's denouncement of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, which was pretty newsworthy. But as to how all of this relates to Jesus Christ, there is very little info available.

But let us follow Peter's lead and attempt to understand the events of the world through a Christocentric lens.

God made a promise to a man named Abraham, some 4000 years ago, that through

his offspring all nations of the world will be blessed. Most of the Hebrew Bible, or what we Christians call the Old Testament, tells the story of Abraham and his descendants.

God entered into a covenant with Abraham. God was to give Abraham and his descendants the Land as an everlasting possession. But the question, of course, is “which descendants?” To whom does the land belong? Abram had more than one son. First there came Ishmael, born to him by Hagar, his wife's servant. Then there came Isaac, the child born of Sarah in her old age. Isaac was the child of promise. Herein was the seed of conflict. Two women, two sons, one promise. Rivalry developed (see Gen. 21:8-18), but God informed Abraham that the promise would be extended through Isaac.

Isaac became the father of Jacob. Jacob became Israel.

Israel had 12 sons, through whom developed the 12 tribes.

One of the tribes, Judah, was promised rulership over all Israel (Gen. 49:10).

Jesse was descended from the tribe of Judah.

Jesse had seven sons; through Samuel God chose one of those sons, David, to become Israel's anointed king.

God promised that an heir of David would always reign over the Kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; read Ps. 132:11-18).

David's heirs continued to rule as kings of Judah until 586 BC when King Jehoiachin was taken into exile to Babylon.



After 70 years the people were restored to their land — but without a king to rule over them. For the next 500 years they would live in their land without an heir of David as their king. They would live at the pleasure of whichever empire happened to control the land: the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans.

The Romans allowed the people to have a “king” who was not in the line of David; in fact he wasn’t even a Jew. Herod filled a role in the Roman appeasement of the Jews, but still there was no anointed son of David to rule over them.

During Herod’s reign a baby was born in the village of Bethlehem, King David’s birthplace. This boy’s lineage could be traced back to King David. His name was Jesus.

During his lifetime many of the Jews came to believe that Jesus would be their Messiah and would save them from oppression and restore the kingdom to the Jews. They hoped he would lead a revolt against Rome that they might return to their former glory days.

This dream came to an end when Jesus was arrested and he refused to allow his followers to fight. They all abandoned him and eventually Jesus was crucified.

For most it was simply the death of another dream for the coming of Messiah and peace being restored to Jerusalem.

The nation of Israel continued to live under Roman oppression, until in 70 AD the city of Jerusalem was attacked by the Romans and the Temple was destroyed. By about 135 AD the Jews had been dispersed widely and Israel as a nation was no more.

Through their traditions, particularly those of the synagogue, the faith of the Jews continued to be passed on from generation to generation over the next nearly 2000 years. But there was no temple to

carry out their sacrifices in. There was no promised land for them to live in.

Eventually the Roman empire fell, the Ottoman empire gained control of the region, and what was once the land of Israel came under the control of the Arab people.

There were times of Crusade, when European Christians attempted to liberate from the Muslims the Holy Land, for by this time the land was considered important by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. Who would control this holy land?

The Jews became victims of the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the Russian

In 1922 the League of Nations granted Great Britain authority over Palestine for the purpose of creating a homeland for Jews.



Pogroms, and other times of persecution. They were hated most everywhere they lived. By the late nineteenth century many Jews felt that they would never be safe until they once again had their own country where they were the majority. This feeling developed into a movement known as Zionism.

In Britain, by the late nineteenth century, many influential persons supported the idea of creating a Jewish state in what was then called Palestine. They helped pave the way for the return of Jews to the land.

In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was made:

Foreign Office

November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour

In 1922 the League of Nations granted Great Britain authority over Palestine for the purpose of creating a homeland for Jews.

Following the holocaust in Europe hundreds of thousands of Jews left Europe and Russia for Palestine.

In 1945 the Arab nations organized to form the Arab League, in an attempt to block Jewish repatriation to Palestine.

In 1947 the United Nations voted to divide up Palestine into Jewish and Arab States. The Palestinians rejected this plan.

On May 14, 1948 the Jews declared themselves to be an independent nation, and war with Arab nations followed. Israel

(continued on page 16)



took control of some of the land that had previously been given to the Arab people. The Palestinians were left with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In 1964 the PLO was formed as an organized effort of Palestinians to regain their homeland.

During the Six-Day War in 1967 Israel took possession of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel drove out many Palestinians, who became refugees.

In 1968 Yassar Arafat became the head of the PLO. The Palestinian charter was written, which called for the formation of a Palestinian state. This charter also denied Israel's right to exist as a nation. It called for the exile of all Jews and their descendants who arrived in the region after 1917. Here is an excerpt from the charter:

Article 19: The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel are entirely illegal, regardless of the passage of time, because they were contrary to the will of the Palestinian people and to their natural right in their homeland, and inconsistent with the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the right to self-determination.

Article 20: The Balfour Declaration, the Mandate for Palestine, and everything that has been based upon them, are deemed null and void. Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the states to which they belong.

Article 21: The Arab Palestinian people, expressing themselves by the armed Palestinian revolution, reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine and reject all proposals aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian problem, or its internationalization.

In 1993 the Oslo Peace Accord granted limited Palestinian control in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As part of that accord, the PLO renounced its previous position of denying the right of Israel to exist.

Israel has made some concessions, i.e. trading land for peace, but the past few months have seen an increase in suicide bombings against Israelis. At the time of this writing Israel is taking military action against the Palestinians on a wide scale, and Palestinians have been using Christian churches and other sacred sites as defensive positions.

For thousands of years the people of Israel have struggled for their right to exist and to be able to live in peace in the land which they believe God promised to give them.

For 2500 years the Jewish people have waited for their Messiah, the anointed son of David, rightful heir of the Jewish throne, to rule as their king and to restore peace to Jerusalem.

Tragically, the Messiah came 2000 years ago, and they rejected him. They crucified their king.

The good news is, some believed! God raised Jesus from the dead. Some believed that Jesus fulfilled all of these promises. They understood Jesus to be not only the Messiah of the Jews, but also the savior of all men.

Jesus transcends all of the barriers, Jew and Gentile, Israeli and Palestinian. It is through Christ that all barriers between people can be transcended. I believe that

some day the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael will lay down their arms. One day, Jews and Arabs will again be brothers. Old hatreds will give way to brotherly love.

That day will come when their Messiah, our Messiah, Jesus Christ comes again.

Messiah will come! We wait for Messiah. We long for the peace of Jerusalem.

What can we do to bring this about? We can keep the faith and we can share the faith. We can persevere in the face of trials and we can begin pursuing peace in all of our relationships. We can begin with our families. We can be agents of peace in our own families and in our own neighborhoods.

The Arab-Israeli conflict started as a conflict in one man's (Abraham's) family. Let us begin, one at a time, to heal the conflicts in our families.

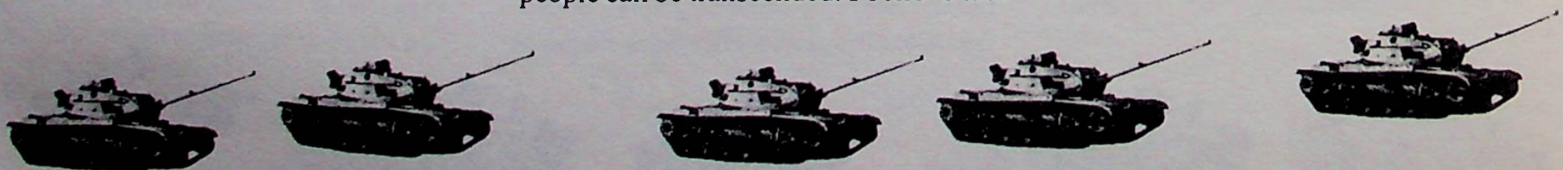
Do you feel helpless to do anything about the war in the Middle East? Start by loving your brother. Be at peace with members of your family, your church, your neighbors.

As long as Palestinians and Israelis deny the rights of each other, there will be war. Someone must be willing to sacrifice. Someone must be willing to surrender.

What are you willing to sacrifice? What are you willing to surrender?

Can we judge the Israelis or the Palestinians when we have the roots of conflict in our own families and churches? Can we take the speck out of our brother's eye when there are logs in our own eyes?

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" yes, by all means, but also work for peace in your family, your church and your community. Peace can only follow surrender. What are you willing to surrender? Christ surrendered his life and God gave him new life, resurrection life. What are you willing to surrender that God might give you resurrection life? □



Fruit or Leaves

BY PETSY RUDACILLE

Lessons in Shadows and Types

Lessons in Shadows and Types
Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover their nakedness after they disobeyed God. Jesus cursed a fig tree that had nothing but leaves. There are negative connotations to both of these Bible stories that refer to leaves of fig trees.

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? Was he frustrated because he was hungry? Was he angry because no fruit was on this tree? The time was not right for figs! Would it be just to curse a fig tree for having no fruit when it was not the season for fruit? Why was it a fig tree that Jesus cursed? Is there an allegory here?

God replaced the covering that Adam and Eve chose. Were the leaves of the fig tree simply not adequate to cover the nakedness of the original parents, or is there a lesson to be learned from this story also?

In the Bible, fruit and leaves are metaphors that teach spiritual lessons. What is the hidden meaning to these stories if they are in fact allegories?

Both of these narratives are types of judgments. Cursing the fig tree was the only miracle of judgment Jesus performed.

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. (Mark 11:13)

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And

when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! (Matt. 21:19, 20)

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. (Mark 11:20-21)

Covering for Sin

The withering of the fig tree's leaves has two elements. One, Jesus cursed the tree because it bore no fruit. Second, the leaves were not protected from judgment.

Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame with leaves. God let them know that manmade covering was not sufficient to cover the shame, so He made clothes of skin for them. This skin clothing pointed to a blood sacrifice to cover sin. Jesus cursing the fig tree adds another dimension to the Genesis type. The withering of the fig tree's leaves points to a judgment for the leaves that do not cover sin.

The lesson is that religions made up by humans are insufficient to cover sin. They are just leaves, or *manifestations of righteousness* that will perish after judgment.

The fig tree is a metaphor for Israel. Jesus was judging the nation of Israel's method of religion in an allegory by cursing the fig tree. Israel, the very nation professing to know God, was destitute of true holiness. They brought forth no fruit unto God, but they manifested a great show of leaves. The time for Israel to bear fruit was nigh. Very soon Israel was going to

reject the savior promised by all the holy prophets. Jesus was the true fruit of righteousness. In a parable Jesus was warning Israel to obey the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. They were being warned to bear righteous fruit in or out of season or be condemned.

The fig tree had a miraculous judgment. The nation of Israel has had miraculous Divine intervention and judgment since the days that Jesus walked there. Just as Israel has suffered Divine judgment, so will the Church of God be subject to Divine judgment in the age soon to come if it does not bear fruit.

There were many trees with leaves on them when Jesus walked the roads of Galilee, but only the fig tree (Israel without true repentance) was cursed! The many trees that were to give shade or shelter were not mentioned. The only tree judged was the tree that represented Israel.

Israel was to bear fruit. The church is to bear fruit!

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much
(continued on page 18)

fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:4-8)

Jesus is the covering for sin. He is the true fruit of righteousness.

Other Trees

Many trees exist whose purpose is not to bear fruit. These trees, which represent the Gentiles, are watered and cared for by the Creator and allowed to live out their time without withering. They are not dealt with miraculously. These peoples and their religions have purposes in this age, but in due time they will be cut down and thrown into the fire to be burned.

Christians Covered with Leaves

The Christian religion is full of trees that have plenty of leaves. Many of these trees do not bear the fruit of righteousness! They do not produce the spiritual fruit necessary to hear Christ's blessing, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25:23)

The following models of Christian religion bear no fruit. They are leaves that hide the branch and trunk from view. Jesus can often not be seen because of them.

1. People who have religion, but their religion is merely for show.

People who go to church and fill a pew. They never put forth effort to read and study or think about godliness at any other time in their life. What is sacred, for these people, is only the part of their lives that happens on Sundays starting at 10:00 a.m. The secular part of life is separate and has no connection with the sacred. They consider this to be acceptable and reasonable sacrifice to God.

People who follow ceremony. They have no idea what the ordinances mean. They follow the traditions set up mindlessly with no personal effort put forth to understand exactly what the ordinances mean. They baptize infants. They sprinkle

rather than baptize. With no thought for the symbolic meaning of the sacrament they partake of communion.

People who go through a performance and like parrots say their prayers. A prayer book and a ritual are used to mimic a worshipful attitude.

This kind of Christian is obsessed with tradition.

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: (Matt. 15:6-10)

For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. . . . Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:8, 9, 13)

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 2:8)

Many people live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion and are utter strangers to vital internal godliness. Their lives show leaves but no fruit.

Yet, they are not cursed in this life! They are to be prayed for, spoken to with words of truth. It may be that the Father will call them to repentance.

2. People who have opinions, but not legitimate faith.

These people violently (rather than earnestly) contend for their religion. They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well. This has gone on throughout history. Recent religious examples of violent uprisings include those in Ireland, Bosnia, Serbia and even the fundamentalists of Islam.

People who defend "the truth, the truth," but whose personal lives are immoral, rotten, or who show unholy tempers. These counterfeits malign true Christianity.

People possessing a little piece of knowledge from God who have no tolerance or love for people with other ideas or different functions in the body of Christ. The light of Christ cannot shine because they are so separated from the rest of humanity. No church can insure salvation. No "form" of doctrine can guarantee eternal life.

These have the heaviest leaf cover. They are trying to cover what cannot be covered in God's sight, yet they are not cursed. They think they already know it all, but they are allowed time to hear the complete gospel, to repent truly and sincerely. We must pray for these people. Their time is not yet, but they will be cut down if they do not show both true spirit and truth.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matt. 3:7-10)

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 7:19-21)

3. People who talk.

There are people who talk eloquently upon everything, but whose spiritual experience comes from pride in their own intellect and eloquence. There is nothing in their hearts. You can learn from them, but their words touch you like an icicle. Even if others are blessed by their words, they themselves are unblessed.

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

These people have not withered away under a curse either. They are but trees with leaves only. We can hope that God will humble their hearts so that they will follow the true Shepherd.

4. People with regrets but no repentance.

“And they went out, and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12). “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Many people hear a soul-stirring sermon in church and for a moment feel regret that they are sinners. Nevertheless, they do not have the strength of mind to give up their lifestyle. They say they are sorry, but go on in the same way. The facts of death and judgment may cause them to truly feel

remorse, but true repentance seems out of reach or comprehension. Repentance is dismay over one's standing before God that results in a change of behavior. If sorrow were repentance then few people could not be called a true penitent at some time in their lives. Regret and sorrows are mostly only leaves and not the fruit of repentance. Pray for these who suffer from drug addictions and other vices that choke out God's salvation.

5. People with resolves from which no action follows.

Some people hear the Word, and perhaps even feel the Word, but don't do the commandments. They see the right, but they allow the wrong to rule their decisions. God's holiness charms them, nevertheless the delusion of sin is too strong. Their battle with sin is hardly fought before they fall back into old ways. They try to have their cake and eat it too. Because they cannot give up sin they continue in sin, convincing themselves that everything is okay because God is loving and merciful. They put their hand to the plough, but cannot continue the good fight. They are not worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Christians who make a great show of leaves but produce no fruit need to be warned that the final end of such trees is to be burned up. They should not be lead astray by the fact that no curse falls upon them today. In due time the ax will fall.

It is God's loving kindness and mercy that allows each of us time to repent and bring forth fruit meet for repentance. When the great tomorrow comes, it will be too late to bear fruit.

Fruit Meet for Righteousness

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it

is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are re-proved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (Eph. 5:9-21)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:22-26)

Where we see leaves, we have a right to expect the fruit. When anyone joins the Church he takes upon himself a grave responsibility. Did God give us the **Book** to produce an inconsistent Christian? Did Jesus shed his blood to produce hypocrites?

Why did Jesus die? “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:14, 15).

(continued on page 20)

The leaves in Adam's and Eve's aprons were meant to conceal what could not be covered in the sight of God. Each person must study to show himself *approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Tim. 2:15).

When we are hungry, we want fruit, not leaves. When Jesus was hungry he wanted fruit. Jesus hungers for our holiness. There is in each of us a hunger. Many people try to satisfy their hunger with this world's wealth, and will not recognize that their need is Jesus. Look at what many are willing to trade for eternal life. For a little sin that gives only small pleasure or worldly gain people will deny salvation. They will lose their soul trying to gain the world, but they do not gain the world. Rather at most they gain fleeting pleasure. Truly, many are called, but few are chosen (Matt. 22:14).

[I]n the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without

natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. (2 Tim. 3:1-8)

Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, and they tried to cover their nakedness with leaves. God told them by allegory that leaves were not sufficient to cover their sin. God showed them that He would provide a covering for shame. This was to be His very own son who freely died at Calvary to provide a covering of sin for those willing to believe, repent, and walk in true spirit. Man-made religion is not adequate.

Christian characters who bear no spiritual fruit do not have Christian character! They are but leaves.

It is not sufficient just to accept God's grace without the responsibility.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Eph. 6:13)

Think about your own witness. Are you clothed with the armor of God, or a covering of leaves? ☐

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“One Nation,
Under God”



Unseen Resources

"So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

A couple of months ago PBS aired a series of programs called "Frontier House." For the program, three modern families agreed to spend five months living as homesteaders in Montana, re-enacting what it would have been like to live in the Montana Territory in 1883. They built log cabins, grew their own food, raised livestock, and prepared to keep fed and warm during the long, harsh Montana winters. Everything had to be authentic to that time, including clothing. Ladies were not allowed to wear make-up.

As the families set out on their journey, the ladies wore 19th century clothing, including bonnets. Most traveled on foot, while some rode in wagons. One team of horses got spooked and began running out of control. One of the women traveling on foot was nearly trampled by the horses pulling the wagon. She was unable to see what was coming.

Why couldn't she see a team of horses pulling a wagon? Her bonnet completely cut off her peripheral vision. She couldn't

see what was coming. She was lucky to have survived and not been run down.

In the case of this woman, she nearly died because of her inability to see what was coming — her lack of vision.

In the book of Proverbs we're told that "where there is no vision, the people perish."

How is your vision?

I'm not talking about your eyesight. I'm not talking about what you can or can't see with your natural eyes. I'm talking about your VISION.

I'm talking about your Faith eyes.

Too often we suffer because we have inadequate vision. Our vision is too narrow. It's obstructed by many things— fear, uncertainty, a desire to have all the answers, an unwillingness to take risks.

Often our vision is narrowed by our inability or unwillingness to look beyond our comfort zones, to step outside of what is familiar, well known.

In Acts 1 we find that the Apostles were hampered by a limited vision.

At the time of this passage, some 40 days after the Resurrection of Jesus, there were 11 Apostles, together with about another 110 disciples, forming a band of Jesus' followers numbering around 120. That's just a little larger than my congregation in Louisiana.

The Apostles had just spent 40 days with the risen Jesus, being tutored in the matters of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was the primary reason why Jesus came in the first place. Jesus came to announce the coming of the Kingdom of

God, to call men and women to follow him and become citizens of the coming Kingdom. The Kingdom of God would be the restoration of the biblical garden of paradise. It would be a time and place in which humanity would once again live in harmony with their creator, God. It would be the age promised by the prophets when the wolf would dwell with the lamb, the lion would eat straw like the ox, and a little child would lead them. It would be the age when the nations would lay down, once and for all, their weapons of warfare and trade them in for weapons of peace. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

What a wonderful, blessed, hope the followers of Jesus were anticipating. It would be a time when, once again, Israel would have her King; the Messiah would rule over them. No longer would Jerusalem be the possession of other nations. No longer would the Egyptians or the Assyrians or Babylonians, or Persians, or Greeks or Romans have control over the land, making the Jewish people their slaves. Messiah would grant them freedom and peace.

The Apostles believed that Jesus would fulfill their hopes of restoring the kingdom, of bringing their nation back to her former greatness and beyond. What is more, Jesus, their beloved king, had promised to give them positions of power and greatness in that Kingdom. They would rule over the 12 tribes of Israel. They would co-inherit the kingdom. They couldn't wait to achieve those positions of

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Zion Connection: The Biblical Mandate

BY DOUGLAS BOOKMAN

When God called Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees, He was demanding that he strip himself of his identity. Abram was to leave all that made him who he was — his family, his possessions, and the land that he had known as home. But God did not intend to make of him a latter-day Cain, a “fugitive and a wanderer in the earth” (Gen. 4:14). That would be punishment, and God was not punishing Abram, but blessing him.

When Abram obeyed God and departed from his beloved homeland, God led him to a new land, just as He had promised. Indeed, as soon as Abram arrived in the land, Jehovah appeared to him and said, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 12:7). From the moment he arrived in that little land on the shores of the Great Sea, Abram’s identity — and that of his descendants — was tied up with that land.

The land promise made by Jehovah in Genesis 12:7 was the first of many. Again and again, the Lord reiterated His covenant promise to the nation descended from Abraham. And again and again, those reminders and restatements of the covenant relationship included explicit reference to the land that God promised to that people. Eighteen times in the book of Deuteronomy alone, as the nation stood on the border of the land, Jehovah reminded them that He had promised that land to them. The theme is so prevalent that *ha-aretz* (the land) is the fourth most-often-used substantive in the Hebrew Bible.

At sundry times, and sometimes in dramatic ways, the promise was reiterated. When Jehovah actually cut a covenant with Abraham, walking alone through the pieces of sacrificed animals in order to establish

the inviolability of His promises, the specific promise was, “Unto thy seed have I given this land” (Gen. 15:18). Again, speaking through His prophet, Jeremiah, the Lord insisted that He would rather break His covenant with the cycle of day followed by night than break His promise to restore Israel to its land (Jer. 33:25, 26). In short, the reality of the promises cannot be denied. The earth and all of its fullness is Jehovah’s (Ps. 24:1), but, in a special sense, God says of little Israel, “the land is mine” (Lev. 25:23). God owns that land, and He has deeded it to Israel. His promises granting that land to Israel are eternal, immutable, and irrevocable (Heb. 6:13-18).

Yet, there is today great debate among Bible believers as to whether the Jews have a “right” to *Eretz Israel*, the land of Israel. From the standpoint of Scripture only, many Christians question the proposition that Israel today has a God-given right to possess the land so often and so carefully promised to them by God, and that believers are under an obligation to support Israel in its struggle. Why is this?

I would suggest that there are three possible explanations. The first is simple neglect. An amazing number of serious, twice-born children of God simply care very little about God’s present relationship with His Chosen People. Indeed, one of the sorriest and most amazing disappointments of Christian history has been the capacity of New Testament believers to forget that spiritually they stand on the shoulders of God’s covenant people — Israel. That tendency toward spiritual amnesia has become less pronounced in this century, largely because of what God has done in restoring Israel to its land. But there are still many who, when pondering

the issue of the right of the Jewish people to the little land they now possess in part, do not stop to consider the promises of Scripture concerning that issue.

The second explanation is “replacement theology,” which teaches that “the church has replaced national Israel as the recipient of the blessings of God,” that “the church has fulfilled the terms of the covenants given to Israel, which they rejected,” and that therefore national Israel has forfeited any rights it ever had based upon promises made to them by God (H. Wayne House, “The Church’s Appropriation of Israel’s Blessings” *Israel: The Land and the People*, p. 78). While this is not the place to struggle with this issue, suffice it to say that replacement theology begins where it should end, and ends where it never should be at all. That is, it *begins* with the New Testament, insisting that the Old Testament means nothing until interpreted by the New. Jesus and the apostles are represented as the only sure guide to truth; therefore (according to this school of thought), if the New Testament informs us that what the Old Testament plainly says is not what God meant, then we will have to allow the New Testament to *unsay* what the Old Testament said. On the other hand, replacement theology ends by insisting that God’s promises are not as dependable as they are represented to be. It is better to allow the Bible in all of its parts to speak for itself. Better to acknowledge that Jesus, who was *the truth*, nonetheless did not regard Himself as a source of revealed truth more dependable than the Scriptures and would never have taught anything contrary to the plain sense of the Hebrew Scriptures that He loved so dearly. Better to remember that wherever we are in the

Scriptures, God expects us to bring with us everything He has revealed in the past and to treat that prior revelation, not as a theological wax nose to be twisted into shape as we please, but as the very words of God, authoritative and true. The promises of God are true evermore. They cannot be debased or jeopardized by anyone or anything, least of all by the later words of the same immutable God!

But there is a third explanation for the skepticism of some Christians as to whether the Jewish people today have a right to the land promised to them by God. Some reason that national Israel has been temporarily and judicially set aside. To be sure, God has not permanently rejected His people (Rom. 11:1), but the natural branch has been broken off, and a day is yet coming when it will be grafted in again (11:19-24). Allowing that in the future the nation will be restored to its land, some Christians reason that it nonetheless follows, from the fact of Israel's present judgment, that they have temporarily forfeited their right to the land; therefore, believers are not obligated to support Israel in their struggle.

This perspective is, nevertheless, seriously flawed. This attitude properly acknowledges that in some profound sense, God has set Israel aside, that it does not today enjoy the same covenant relationship with the Lord that it once knew. Further, this mentality correctly sees Israel's judgment as only temporary and thus cherishes the hope of its national repentance and restoration. It overlooks, however, what God's Word says concerning the relationship that exists between God and the Jewish people during this time of Israel's temporary blindness.

How are we to understand God's relationship to Israel today? It is my persuasion that the best place to go for help in this regard is the remarkable and delightful Book of Esther. Indeed, the story is so enchanting that the theological and historical point of the account is often overlooked. It is a point that speaks to the issue at hand.

Think through the story very quickly. Esther, a young Jewish maiden, was swept into a beauty contest, which was entirely inappropriate for one who was prohibited from marrying outside her scriptural faith. If she were to win, she would be wed to the king and thus become the queen of Persia. Her older cousin/adopted father, Mordecai, an officer in the king's court, counseled her to keep her Jewishness a secret, to learn to get along, if necessary, in a Gentile world. After all, that had been Mordecai's strategy. Then Haman developed an awful plot to slaughter all the Jews in the land. When Mordecai learned of it, his Jewish heritage suddenly became more important to him, and he determined to do all he could to stop the slaughter. Esther was strategically placed, so together they laid a plot to reveal to the unwitting king the wickedness soon to befall his kingdom. The problem was that Esther was not up to her role, and the plan probably would have backfired anyway had it not been for a series of absolutely remarkable coincidences. It *just so happened* that the king couldn't sleep, so he called for chroniclers, who *just happened* to read to him of a time when Mordecai saved his life. Thus, it *just so happened* that later that night the king was very warmly disposed toward Mordecai and Esther when he learned about Haman's plot and about the fact that Mordecai and Esther were themselves Jewish. In his rage, the king demanded Haman's execution, who, *as it happened*, could be hanged on the very gallows that he *just happened* to have built that day.

I would suggest that the Lord intends for us to read Esther as the grand paradigm of His relationship to the covenant people — and of their relationship to Him — during the years of their judicial disinheritance of full covenant blessing. Consider the parallels. In Esther, the main players are two Jewish people who have, for all practical purposes, abandoned their relationship to God and have determined to make the best of it in a Gentile world. But there is a residue of Jewishness, and it manifests

itself in an intransigent unwillingness to allow the Jewish people to be destroyed.

The parallel to the Jewish people during the last two thousand years could hardly be more exact. Whether by choice or by coercion, they have had to make their way in a hostile Gentile world, and they have proven themselves remarkably adept at doing so. Over the centuries, one of the most constant threats to the survival of the Jewish people has been from within: the assimilationist impulse. But when a threat arose from without, assimilation was abandoned, Jewishness was proudly reaffirmed, and all energies were given to the task of delivering that people from whatever destroyer happened to be on the prowl.

Now return again to the Book of Esther. What is the most remarkable distinction of that book? *The name of God is never mentioned.* That is not because He was not at work; it is because He was hiding Himself to all but believers. In fact, it was Jehovah who took the sleep from that monarch and who guided the hands of the chroniclers as they unrolled the scroll. In short, it was God who delivered the Jews from Haman, no less than it was God who delivered the Jews from Pharaoh. In the case of Haman, however, it took the eye of faith to see the hand of the Almighty.

Return again to Israel over the last two thousand years. Despised and hounded, it has nonetheless survived as a people. In the last fifty years it has been victorious in three remarkable wars and continues to survive as a nation. Unbelievers and skeptics attribute that to pluck and luck; believers recognize again the quiet but almighty hand of the God who has promised to preserve His people.

Now return to the question. Should believers support Israel in its struggle for the land? I think the same question could be posed in a slightly different form: Had you been living in the Persian court about 2,500 years ago, would you have been on Haman's side, or on Esther's?

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Are the "Occupied Territories" Really Occupied Territories?

As Adolph Hitler discovered, the Big Lie will eventually be accepted as the truth. The Big Lie, the monster whopper of our time, is that the provinces of Judea and Samaria, often called the "West Bank," are "occupied territories."

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

A Brief History:

Most of the area now called the Middle East was part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire before World War I. Germany lost the war and so did its ally Turkey. The Ottoman Empire ceased to exist and the League of Nations assigned Britain and France as the mandatory powers.

France assumed mandatory control over what is now Syria and Lebanon. Britain assumed mandatory control over all the rest, including "Palestine," which comprised all that is now Jordan and Israel, including the "West Bank." The Golan Heights, which Syria now claims as its age old patrimony, was originally part of Palestine.

In 1917 the British issued the Balfour Declaration, under which Palestine was to be the homeland for the Jewish people. In 1921 Winston Churchill, who was then Colonial Secretary of Great Britain, separated all the land east of the Jordan River from the territory designated to the Jewish homeland and awarded it to the Hashemites, who established the kingdom of Transjordan.

The Arabs, whipped up by their fanatic clergy, fiercely opposed the presence of the Jews on what they considered "sacred Moslem territory." There was constant warfare between the two groups, which

Britain tried to arbitrate, always favoring the Arabs whom they considered more important to their imperial interests.

In 1947 the British decided they'd had enough and resigned the Mandate. They left the Arab/Jewish antagonists to their own devices and turned the matter over to the United Nations.

Their solution was to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. An area west of the Jordan River (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip, was allotted to the Arabs. Jerusalem was to be an 'international zone.' After much soul searching the Jews accepted the partition and, in April 1948, declared their independence in the area allotted to them by the partition. The Arabs rejected the partition out of hand. On the very day of Israel's birth, five Arab armies invaded the nascent Jewish state. In what may be considered an almost



biblical miracle, the rag-tag Jewish forces decisively defeated the combined Arab might. But Israel had suffered enormous casualties — 6,000 dead, about one percent of its population!

ISRAEL NOT AN OCCUPIER:

Israel stayed in control of most of the area west of the Jordan River, except for the Gaza Strip, which stayed under Egyptian control. The "West Bank" and the eastern part of Jerusalem stayed under the



control of Transjordan, which promptly renamed itself Jordan and proceeded to ruthlessly expel all Jews and to obliterate all vestiges of over 2,000 years of Jewish presence in the Land.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel recovered the "West Bank," the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, conquered Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, and conquered and annexed the Golan Heights. During the 19 years that Jordan and Egypt were in possession of the "West Bank" and the Gaza Strip it didn't occur to them, or to anybody else, that the Palestinians should have a state, or even that they were a distinct nationality. The claim for that did not arise until after the Six-Day War.

Jews have been living in Judea/Samaria since biblical times. The area was made *judenrein* (free of Jews), following the Nazi model, by Jordan, when it was in possession of the territory. After 1967, Jews moved back into the territory and a great hullabaloo was raised and is still being raised about the not more than 200,000 "settlers," who do not occupy more than 2 percent of the area. But there is no concern about the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who, lured by the prosperity of Israel, have flooded into the area, nor the

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“I Can’t Forgive Myself!”

What you need to know if you still feel guilty

BY GAYLE G. ROPER

The note slid under my door and skittered across the floor of my room at the retreat center where I was the weekend speaker. “I had an abortion seven years ago,” it read. “I can’t forgive myself. Can you give me some hope?”

The large gentleman wore a Jesus T-shirt and cap and carried a huge Bible, the very image of the eager Christian. “I look good on the outside,” he said. “But inside there’s all this ugliness. I can’t forgive myself.”

A young couple, picture-perfect Christian newlyweds, stared at the floor. “We may have been virgins technically when we married,” he said. “But only by the strictest definition.” “We feel so guilty about the fooling around we did,” she added. “We can’t forgive ourselves.”

Forgiving ourselves has become an accepted concept. We hear it on TV, read it in books, and are instructed from pulpits: “Forgive yourself. God can’t use you until you have forgiven yourself.”

At a Christian writers’ conference, I related a story of some shenanigans that got me in trouble one summer as a teenager at a very strict Bible conference. Everyone laughed except one woman who looked at me very seriously. “It’s obvious,” she said, “that you’ve never forgiven yourself.”

I was appalled that someone would make such a judgment about me, especially based on such a lighthearted story. I was also struck anew by the pervasiveness of the “forgive yourself” mentality.

Perhaps it’s time to rethink this whole concept and evaluate it in the light of Scripture.

What does the Bible say?

Certainly the most magnificent revelation of Scripture apart from the character of God Himself is the story of redemption and forgiveness. It is the scarlet cord that threads its way through the glorious and scandalous tapestry of history. God has never shirked from the reality of our sin nor denied the harm it does to us and those we know and love. Rather He has chosen to send it away and treat us not as we deserve, but as ones bought with the sacrifice of His Son.

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins” (Col. 2:13).

As we read about the gracious forgiveness extended to us by God, we also read about our responsibility to forgive one another, not because people deserve our forgiveness but because we are instructed to offer it. We don’t deny the wrong done to us, nor do we brood on it or suppress it. We acknowledge it and its pain, and then by choice we yield our rights to redress, to apology, to being understood. We forgive out of obedience.

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:13).

But nowhere in Scripture do we find instruction to forgive ourselves. I’m not certain of the reason for this silence on

God’s part. Perhaps it is because His forgiveness is perfect and complete, and there is no need to address any other form of forgiveness.

False Accusations

Another consideration when we talk about forgiving ourselves is the fact that all sin is an offense to God’s holiness. Sin is sin in His eyes.

Certainly the consequences of some sins are more harmful than the consequences of others, but the affront to God is the same. “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you” (Is. 59:2). The man in the Jesus T-shirt whose heart devised evil, the young couple who rushed to wrongdoing — they are as wrong in God’s eyes as the woman who shed the innocent blood of her unborn child, as wrong as the layman who stirs up feelings against his pastor.

It is we who excuse some sins, we who assign additional blame to others. God runs, as it were, an equal opportunity shop. Therefore the thing we have done that is eating us alive is no worse than the sin we readily forgive in others.

Still we struggle with the all-sins-are-equally-offensive logic because Satan, the great accuser (Rev. 12:10), knows our vulnerability and goes after us. If he can accuse us again and again of the same wrong, he can drive a great wedge between us and our Father. Instead of approaching the throne of mercy with confidence, we find ourselves coming hesitantly, apologetically. We act as if our Father is angry with us or disappointed in us when He is really accepting and forgiving, longing for our company.

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Revolving Clergy Harms Religion

BY GERALD L. ZELIZER

The Rev. Charles Chandler felt so blindsided when he was forced out of his church eight years ago that he established the Ministering to Ministers Foundation, which provides emergency funds, housing and legal, psychological and career assistance for clergy of any denomination who have suffered a similar fate.

In 2001, his organization helped approximately 500 ousted or beleaguered ministers. That is up from 400 the year before and 100 when he started.

While few churches routinely keep track of clergy firings, a general survey of those who do suggests the trend is getting worse. A study by the Barna Research Group, which does marketing studies of American culture and the Christian faith, found that whereas 20 years ago the average minister remained at least seven years in his parish, today his stay has eroded to barely five years. Barna's research, conducted between July 2000 and June 2001, was based on a survey of 1,865 senior pastors of Protestant churches nationwide. This trend, George Barna warns, "may be shortchanging pastors — and the congregations they oversee — by prematurely terminating their tenure."

Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive vice president of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, acknowledges that 30% of rabbis who changed positions in 2000 did so because they were forced to leave their congregations.

Similarly, Marcia Myers, director of personnel services for the Presbyterian Church (USA), reports that of the 84 cases in which relations were ended in 2000, one-fourth were involuntary.

To give some context to these numbers, Kevin Leicht, professor of sociology at the University of Iowa and author of *Professional Work*, says,

Clergy firings are very high compared with the national labor force, where 1.2% of all employees are involuntarily terminated. The rate is even higher than coaches in the NFL, a notoriously unstable profession.

This uprooting comes with costs to both the church and its minister:

The congregation misses the most productive period of the pastor's tenure, which Barna says is from years 10 through 14.

There are the emotional wounds to the congregation as they push God's emissary out.

Most grievous is the trauma to the minister, who must dislodge his family and leave town.

For the good of the congregation and clergy, more aggressive strategies are needed to halt this trend. A separate study by church consultant Alan Klaas, president of Mission Growth Ministries, investigated the causes of ousters in various Christian denominations and tried to find the source of the problem and where opportunities for reforms exist. The report put most of the blame on the congregation:

In 67% of the cases, the congregation had been in conflict with the previous pastor, too.

In 45% of the cases, a minority faction was successful in manipulating a supportive majority to push the pastor out.

Only 7% of the time was the cause the personal misconduct of the minister.

Sadly for all, in 62% of the cases, regional officials of these various denominations who could have helped mediate were kept away until it was too late to solve the dispute.

To put a human face on this problem, consider the case of Pastor Matthew Robinson. Robinson says he was asked in 1995 to bring stability to the First Presbyterian Church in Hobbs, New Mexico, which had lost more than 100 members and suffered from financial problems.

Through his programs for new and potential members, the church's roster quickly grew by 50 new members. By 1996, the church's finances were the healthiest in a decade. But for some longtime laity, their previous gifts to the church suddenly seemed mediocre when measured against the burgeoning new pledges that Robinson's stewardship was eliciting.

With the arrival of many new faces, one angry churchgoer complained to the pastor, "You are bringing in too many blue-collar members," and another said his dramatics in worship were not done "decently and in order."

Finally, Robinson sought other posts. By Thanksgiving 1999, he was called to a larger and more stable church in Kearney, Nebraska. "I could have stuck it out," he says, "but it was not worth a heart attack."

This ecclesiastical hell is bred in the contradictory situation of the minister who works for God and simultaneously for the will of his congregation. But even within that conflicting organizational structure, more can be done.

For one, church elders should skillfully exclude from leadership roles laity whom

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Revolving Clergy Harms Religion *(continued from page 9)*

the author G. Lloyd Rediger calls “clergy killers.” Their complaints should be heard, but they should be blocked from bullying the silent and satisfied majority of parishioners into unreasonable dissatisfaction.

Secondly, all denominations should appoint teams composed of a layperson and a clergy member to actively intervene as the

relationship between a particular congregation and its minister begins to sour, to identify the problems, recommend solutions and then return to monitor improvement.

The leaders of Protestant and Jewish houses of worship, which are largely autonomous and decentralized, would likely

resist this solution. But if it is not done, the risk is that the most competent clergy will flee the calling, mediocrity will fill the void, church numbers will erode, and America’s faiths will diminish. □

Gerald L. Zelizer is rabbi of Neve Shalom, a Conservative Jewish congregation in New Jersey.

“I Can’t Forgive Myself!” *(continued from page 8)*

Satan’s accusations cripple us and make us pull away from God in needless remorse and regret. In contrast, genuine Spirit-sent guilt turns us to God in repentance, to restore the damaged relationship between Parent and child. Once confession has been made, Spirit-induced guilt disappears, its purpose accomplished. If guilt continues beyond confession, it is not of God.

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

Receive what is already yours.

When we worry about forgiving ourselves, we demonstrate a view of God’s forgiveness that is too low and a view of ourselves that is too high.

When Christ died on the cross, He washed us of all our sins. All. Every single one. When we believed, He forgave us entirely. Absolutely. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

The blood of Christ isn’t like bleach, which makes the stain seem to disappear

when in reality it still exists, visible in certain kinds of light. Jesus’ cleansing is total, His forgiveness absolute.

If we insist on forgiving ourselves, we are saying — intentionally or not — that the atonement wasn’t sufficient. The stain still lingers, visible to our perceptive eye, and only we can deal with it. We are telling God, “I’m sorry. It’s not that I don’t appreciate what Jesus did for me. I really do, and I mean no offense. But I have to forgive myself, or this issue in my life isn’t properly handled.”

If we think carefully about such a mindset, we will be struck by our egotism. Jesus can’t do it all. He needs my help.

I have a memory with which I struggled for a long time. Regret mingled with guilt, and any time the memory came to mind, I was spiritually paralyzed, even though I had not fallen into that particular sin in many years. I felt like David when he cried, “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (Ps. 38:4).

“Oh, God, I’m so sorry!” I’d cry time after time.

Then in one of those wonderful moments of God-granted insight, I realized I

had no need to ask forgiveness for that particular sin. It had been forgiven years ago, and I had forsaken it. Every time I cried anew for release from guilt, I was denying the effectiveness of Christ’s death. How dare I demean forgiveness bought at so great a price!

This insight was the first step in claiming what was already mine as a child of God.

What freedom there is when we accept God’s forgiveness as sufficient, when we act on what we say we believe.

Deliverance

I shared many of these thoughts with the women at the retreat, hoping to touch the heart of the woman who had written the anonymous note about her abortion. I scanned the crowd, wondering to whom I was speaking.

On Sunday afternoon, when everyone was saying good-bye, a young woman shook my hand.

“Thank you for coming,” she said. Then she leaned in and hugged me. “And thank you,” she whispered in my ear, “for answering my question and giving me hope.” □

Matthew 18 and “Differentiation”

BY THOMAS F. FISCHER, M.Div., M.S.A.

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood concepts of systems theory is self-differentiation. Unfortunately, when leaders misunderstand self-differentiation they leave themselves open to some very unethical and un-Christian approaches. In some cases, misunderstanding self-differentiation can even lead to abusive forms of leadership.

Many inquiries made about self-differentiation follow the pattern of the “Differentiation in My Church” story below.

“Differentiation in My Church”

“Tom, I’m in an anxious congregation. I’ve been here for a couple of years now and since I’ve been here I’ve been concerned about this congregation’s history. It seems that every five or six years a small group of five or six people, led by one very powerful antagonist, rise up against the pastor. The conflict intensifies, and the pastor is forced out or resigns.

Since I’m familiar with Friedman and Bowen family systems theory, I’m training leaders in my church about self-differentiation. I believe that if they know what is meant by self-differentiation, that the leaders will be able to stand up to this antagonist and those who follow him.

We have met regularly to study and apply self-differentiation. Now I have one question. How can we get rid of this person? I and the leaders in my self-differentiation group believe in Matthew 18. Tom, now that we are self-differentiated, can you tell me how we can confront and get this

antagonist to leave our church according to Matthew 18?”

Inquiries similar to this fictional account are almost always well-intended, from leaders who want the church to become healthier, more grace-driven and more effective in sharing and living in God’s love. Indeed, the most driven and concerned leaders often make these inquiries. If they weren’t driven, concerned and committed, they wouldn’t have made the inquiry.

That these leaders do want to effect positive change is the good news. The bad news, however, is that their misunderstanding of systems theory — and specifically self-differentiation — will undermine their good intentions.

Self-Differentiation: It’s About Relationships

In its simplest application, self-differentiation is the ability to consistently maintain one’s self, goals, values, and beliefs despite pressures to the contrary. It is the ability to contain one’s fears and the capacity to avoid engaging in unhealthy reactive behaviors to pressure from others. Another key facet of self-differentiation is the ability to avoid anxious relationship patterns of cut-off and fusion.

Since self-differentiation is essentially a way of describing healthy relationships, it will necessarily challenge our relationship patterns and ways of connecting and disconnecting.

Self-Differentiation: It’s About Self

Those aspiring to greater self-differentiation must ask some important questions of themselves, which require deep relationship soul-searching. Central questions in the process include:

- 1) Am I in relationships because of anxiety or fear?
- 2) Do I tend to make relationships based on my anxieties?
- 3) When I become anxious in these relationships, do I sacrifice or compromise my own core beliefs and values so that I will not lose the relationship?
- 4) When I become anxious in my relationships, do I tend to cut off these relationships?
- 5) Do I find it difficult to maintain relationship connections even when others cause me anxiety?
- 6) When anxious, am I controlled by my reactive “triggers” for cut-off or fusion? Or am I able to manage, contain and control my reactive instincts in a non-anxious manner?
- 7) Do I feel that I, as a leader, always have to be right and in control? Do I feel that if I’m not right or in control, that people won’t like, respect or value me?

Self-Differentiation: The Greatest Difficulty

The nature — and difficulty — which the questions above pose indicates one important fact. When one desires to be self-differentiated, the greatest difficulty is not dealing with others. The greatest difficulty is dealing with us.

The inquirer in the story above may have studied self-differentiation and Bowen Theory, the inquirer may be able to quote Friedman or others, and the inquirer may even be leading others to be less anxious. But the inquirer in the story doesn’t really understand self-differentiation.

Three Marks of Differentiation

The main problem is that the inquirer doesn't understand three key marks of self-differentiation — the capacities to:

1) *Stay Calm*: Those who are well differentiated can rise above anxiety-driven behaviors. Amid the greatest anxiety they will be able to be the "calm in the storm." Their calmness will not only be evident to others, but will calm others, too.

2) *Stay the Course*: The greater the level of differentiation, the greater the sense of one's calling, purpose and course. Not only that, however, but differentiated individuals have a non-anxious conviction that their course is God's will for them. That conviction provides continued focus to remain differentiated — and stay the course — for the long haul.

3) *Stay Connected*: Staying calm and staying on course is easy when one disconnects from others. But self-differentiation, properly understood, is being able to stay calm and stay the course while staying in healthy, connected relationships with others — even those who do not agree.

Differentiation: It's About Connection

Perhaps the greatest problem in the story above is that self-proclaimed "self-differentiated" leaders such as in this illustration are not healthily differentiated. Why? They have plotted a course for themselves and their followers and believe they are calm, but their calmness is contingent on removing the antagonist.

If they were truly healthily self-differentiated, congregational leaders:

- 1) would be much less anxious,
- 2) would be less focused on the antagonist,
- 3) would not feel so out-of-control because of the antagonist's working,
- 4) would recognize that their efforts toward self-differentiation and the results-to-date are anxiety-based, not based on what Bowen calls a healthy "I position" (i.e., sense of "self"),

5) would recognize that as long as they seek disconnection from the antagonist(s) they are really participants enabling the anxious system to repeat what it has always done before: release escalated anxiety by removing the pastor.

Healthy self-differentiation must have all three marks of self-differentiation: 1) stay calm, 2) stay the course, and 3) stay connected. Without these three marks, self-differentiation cannot be properly understood or applied. Such misunderstanding can lead to potentially disastrous misapplications and some catastrophic kinds of abuse and consequences.

Matthew 18 and Self-Differentiation

The story above also illustrates one of the most common misapplications of self-differentiation. Leaders who are too focused on Matthew 18 as a means to remove someone are *de facto* not self-differentiated.

Matthew 18 is one of the most abused teachings of Scripture, perhaps second only to the teaching of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Historically the Church has misused and misconstrued excommunication to justify all kinds of self-serving agenda. Often when the church or its leaders were threatened by individuals, they engaged in self-proclaimed holy war to justify condemnation, shunning, censorship, imprisonment, excommunication, stake burning, crusades, martyrdom and even crucifixion.

Jesus' intent in Matthew 18 was not to give a simple three-step "How to Kick People Out of Your Church" program. Instead, Matthew 18 is all about how to *maintain* healthy relationship connections. It begins and ends with this emphasis.

Matthew 18: An Invitation to Grace

Matthew 18 begins with Jesus' teaching that the Kingdom of God is all about receiving little children. Whoever would

cause one of these to stumble, Jesus warned, is in danger of eternal judgment. So, Jesus concluded,

"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire." (Matthew 18:8 NIV)

Perhaps Jesus also could have added,

"If because of your anxiety you want to excommunicate someone from your church, get rid of your anxiety. It's better for you to enter life without anxiety than to have your anxiety and be thrown into eternal fire."

Jesus' teaching of "The Lost Sheep" in Matthew 18:12ff emphasizes that the church is about relationship connection. The simple message of the "Lost Sheep" is that when a sheep becomes wayward, one is not to let it die. Instead, Christians will confront extreme anxiety — even risking their own lives — to save the lost one, even if that lost one creates anxiety.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to a proper self-differentiated implementation of the principles of Matthew 18 is illustrated at the end of the chapter in the "Parable of the Unmerciful Servant." As long as we focus on how others cause us anxiety instead of forgiving, sacrificing and reaching out to them as Jesus did, we are unable to extend grace to others. As Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11 NIV). Anxiety can get in the way of church discipline. That is why Paul wrote, "If someone is caught in a sin, you who are *spiritual* should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or *you* also may be tempted." (Gal. 6:1, NIV, italics added).

Anxiety can blind us to Jesus' invitation of grace in Matthew 18. In line with what Paul wrote, it is about correction, confession, absolution and restoration — in

gentleness. It's a precarious process, one in which even the most spiritual must constantly watch themselves, their motives and their anxieties.

Without this understanding, Jesus' teaching regarding excommunication will be abused at the expense of grace. With this understanding, excommunication, when necessary, can be carried out in a way that upholds grace in a non-anxious environment.

Self-Differentiation in Your Church

Those desiring to have a more differentiated church desire a noble thing. It is not easily accomplished and does not happen overnight. And, most importantly, in the endeavor to train a church to be less anxious and experience higher levels of differentiation, it must be based on a healthy, non-anxious and correct understanding of self-differentiation.

Self-Differentiation: The Essential Base

No matter what strategy or process is used to teach or promote self-differentiation, the essential base of self-differentiation is a strong sense of self. When one's direction, purpose and calling comes from the self — and not from external pressures or anxiety sources — one is certain of

their course and more able to stay the course.

There is a relationship between the degree of self-differentiation and the degree to which one's sense of purpose is internalized. The more consistently one lives out their unique calling, maintaining an "I Position" and following their "bliss," the more consistently they will be able to be differentiated.

By definition, those whose sense of self can be threatened by others' anxiety, or distracted by the pressures of the world, or are dependent on the desire to please or conform to others, have a weak sense of self. As this self is strengthened, the capacity to differentiate increases.

Often individuals will seek higher levels of self-differentiation in reaction to conflict, fear or major anxiety. Though pain often leads us to strength and insight, self-differentiation is not simply a reaction to or defense against anxiety. Instead, self-differentiation is rooted in the calling of the soul.

Unfortunately, most human beings — including Christian leaders — can't, won't and don't seek God's personal unique calling for them unless He sends us anxiety in our professional and personal lives.

Our Greatest Focus: He Cares For You!

When we realize that others cannot increase our anxiety unless we let them, we gain the proper focus for being better self-differentiated. We must realize that we are children of The Fall and we cause our own anxiety. One of our greatest challenges in our journey of faith is to rightly identify the focus of our anxiety and manage it properly.

Proper management entails that

- 1) we stay calm, stay the course and stay connected,
- 2) we recognize our unique calling in grace and let God lead us to realize this, and that
- 3) we recognize that God will test our capacities to handle anxiety as He calls us to trust Him.

"Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you," Peter wrote (1 Pet. 5:7, NIV). You'll know you're really self-differentiated when you can cast all your anxiety on Christ.

No matter what the anxiety, you can trust Him. In grace, He'll *never* abandon you. "Cast all your anxiety on Him...He cares for you." □

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Are the "Occupied Territories" Really Occupied Territories? *(continued from page 8)*

more than one million Arabs who live in Israel proper and who enjoy full rights of citizenship.

Israel acquired the territories (the "West Bank" and Gaza) in defense of an aggressive war waged against it. No country in history has ever been asked to return such territories. Do the Poles return the huge chunk of Germany which they acquired in the wake of World War II? Do the

Czechs return the Sudetenland, do the French return Alsace-Lorraine? Of course not! Only Israel is being asked to return such territories. The last sovereign of the "West Bank" and of Gaza was the Ottoman. The "West Bank" and Gaza are unallocated territories. To speak of Israel as "occupier" is preposterous; to speak of it, as Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the UN does, as "illegal occupiers," is

poisonous slander. He knows better. But unfortunately, the **Big Lie** of Israel's "occupation" has been repeated so long and so often that even people of good faith have come to believe it and to accept it. □

The preceding was copied from an advertisement by FLAME (Facts and Logic About The Middle East) in the May 24 issue of the Jerusalem Post.

How Many?

BY PASTOR DON WARD

The Bible stresses and reiterates in both Old and New Testaments that there is one God and only one God. However, in 325 AD a creed was formulated stating there are actually three Gods, equal in every sense, which somehow comprise only one God. This concept is called "Trinity," an idea credited mostly to a man called Athanasius. And the children of Athanasius have been trying to explain it ever since.

Those who opposed Athanasius were not necessarily correct either. However, our faith should not be built on this or later councils anyway, but "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

To begin with only a minority of bishops of the Roman empire would come to the conference at Nicea to consider this strange (trinitarian) idea. And of that minority, possibly only a minority really supported it. But Constantine, the non-Christian, un-baptized emperor decreed it the official creed of the church and threatened to banish council members who would not sign it. Constantine further declared that all who would not believe in the infallibility of this decree and future church council decrees were to be condemned as heretics.

From the very outset fear has accompanied this concept. Not the fear of God but the fear of man, and for good, historical reasons. The council of 325 decreed that any who did not accept its teachings were doomed to hellfire. We do know that, in time, many were imprisoned and suffered

terrible abuses. Some were even burned at the stake for failure to confess such a belief, but it was not God but man that held the match.

So then, how could people have been saved who lived before all of this was figured out? Since the word "trinity" is not even in the Bible, they had no option but to hold the mistaken notions that there is only one God, that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Spirit of God is the Spirit OF God.

You should ask yourself, "If I and a group of normally intelligent people (who had no prior knowledge of the Bible) were given the Bible and told to find out what it teaches, would we ever determine that in reality there are three Gods described as one God?" Remember, it took about 300 years to figure it out the first time and you're not going to have that long.

Would God conceal a doctrine crucial to salvation so deeply in His word that it would take centuries just to discover it?

Often some of the arguments supporting the Trinity are so convoluted it makes the rides at Worlds of Fun seem mild. For example, we are told that "one" (as in "one God") does not really mean one but a unity of one. So we end up with this centuries-old record (the Bible) repeatedly telling us there is only one God just to find out that what it really means is there are three Gods (NOT one) in unity. Can we even be sure that three means three? If there is more than one who is God, maybe there are more than three. Revelation speaks of the "seven spirits of God" (Rev. 4:5).

And if the Holy Spirit(s) is yet another God distinct from God the Father, would not that make Him the father of Jesus according to Luke 1:35, and the Creator according to Genesis 1:2? These represent just a few of the perplexing problems the doctrine of the Trinity raises.

We believe that God is one and there is only one true God in the ultimate sense.

Moses – *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one* (Deut. 6:4).

Jesus – *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent* (John 17:3).

Jesus – *How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?* (John 5:44).

Paul – *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live* (1 Cor. 8:6).

Paul – *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tim. 2:5). □

Editor's Note: For a good, easy to read study of the Arius-Athanasius conflict which led to the development of the Dogma of the Trinity read: *When Jesus Became God, The Epic Fight over Christ's Divinity in the Last Days of Rome*, by Richard Rubenstein. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1999.

Immortality

BY DR. JOHN THOMAS

"God only hath immortality" — 1 Timothy 6:16.
"When this mortal shall have put on immortality" — 1 Corinthians 15:54.

"Immortality," *athanasia*, is a word signifying *deathlessness*; hence we are taught that the only deathless being in the universe is "the incorruptible God" (Rom. 1:23), *ho apthartos Theos*, "dwelling in the light, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." The invisible God was never deathful nor subject to death; but all other intelligences of the universe have been or will be subjected to death, or something equivalent to it. Their immortality is bestowed at some time subsequent to death; but His, who is the Life of the Universe, is underived; for He is from everlasting to everlasting deathless.

The testimony that "*God only hath deathlessness*" teaches that the immortality or deathlessness of men and angels dates from a change or resurrection from the Death State. At this crisis their "mortal body" (Rom. 8:11) puts on deathlessness, so that thenceforth "they die no more." (Luke 20:36). To constitute them deathless their bodies must become "incorruptible" — *aphtharsia*; for a corruptible body cannot be deathless or immortal. *Aphtharsia* is the substratum of *Athanasia*; that is, Incorruptibility is the underlay of Immortality. Incorruptibility is not immortality; but without incorruptibility, immortality cannot be. Hence Immortality is something more than incorruptibility. It is "Life and Incorruptibility" — *zoe kai aphtharsia* — combined. Incorruptibility has regard to physical quality of body,

which may be living or inanimate. A diamond may represent an incorruptible body; but because incorruptible, it is not therefore living or deathless. An immortal body, however, is necessarily an incorruptible body; because immortality cannot be without incorruptibility. God though "a spirit" is also a body; for He is styled "the *incorruptible* God," and incorruptibility is scripturally affirmed of body. *Immortality is life manifested through an incorruptible body*; and is the opposite to mortality, which is life manifested through a corruptible body. Such is the immortality brought to light by Jesus in the gospel of the Kingdom — "*mortality swallowed up of life.*" (2 Cor. 5:4). The supposition of deathliness and deathlessness co-existing in the same body, or of an "immortal soul" in mortal flesh, is pagan foolishness; and implies ignorance of "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is the Spirit of God that makes alive; the flesh profiteth nothing. (John 6:63). Hereditary immortality is a fiction of the carnal mind, at once revolting to reason and the word of God.

Immortality is a part of the righteous man's reward, which he seeks after by a patient continuance in well doing. (Rom. 2:7). To talk of the wicked being immortal in any sense is to contradict scripture. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," saith God (Ezek. 18:20). "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord" (Rom. 6:22, 23); therefore "hope to the end for the gift that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:13).

The following extract from a canon decreed by the council of Lateran, in the reign of Leo X, will show the kind of

authority by which immortal-soulism became an article of the popular creed.

Some have dared to assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal; we, with the approbation of the Sacred Council do condemn and reprobate all such, seeing, according to the canon of Pope Clement the fifth, the soul is immortal; and we strictly inhibit all from dogmatizing otherwise; and we decree that all that adhere to the like erroneous assertions shall be shunned and punished as heretics.

— *Caranza*. P.412, 1681.

In his "*Defence*" in 1530, Martin Luther says,

I perceive that the Pope makes articles of faith for himself and his faithful ones, as Emperor of the World, King of Heaven, and god upon earth, such as *that the soul is immortal*, with all those monstrous opinions to be found in the Roman dunghill of decretals.

Bishop Tillotson remarks that "*The immortality of the soul is rather supposed, or taken for granted, than expressly revealed in the Bible.*" — Sermons, vol. 2. 1774.

Dr. Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, in his "*Revelation of a Future State*" observes,

To the Christian indeed all this doubt would be instantly removed if he found that the immortality of the soul were revealed in the word of God. In fact no such doctrine is revealed to us. The Christian's hope, as founded on the
(continued on page 16)

Unseen Resources *(continued from page 2)*

power. After all, some of them had started out in lowly tasks, fishing and collecting taxes. By the world's standards, they were nobodies. But Jesus would make them rulers.

They were, understandably, anxious to know when this wonderful kingdom would begin. For them, the sooner the better. So they asked Jesus. "Is it now, lord Jesus, that you will establish the Kingdom? Now will you restore the kingdom to her former greatness of the times of David and Solomon?"

Put yourself in their shoes. Wouldn't you have found yourself asking the exact same thing?

So, what did their vision allow them to see? Their nation, Israel, the center of the Kingdom. Jesus, the king of Israel, ruling on the throne. They, themselves, the Apostles, ruling with Jesus. That was what their vision allowed them to see.

Jesus, on the other hand, had a much larger vision in mind.

Jesus was not simply interested in restoring the little nation of Israel to her former position as most favored nation in God's eyes. He was not simply interested in freeing Israel from the oppression brought on by the Romans. Jesus wasn't just interested in saving the few hundred thousand Jews who happened to be living at that time.

Jesus' vision was as wide as the Apostles' vision was narrow.

If your vision is small you're interested in achieving quick results with little risk and little personal investment. Of course the Apostles must have felt that they'd already invested a great deal. They had spent three to three and a half years traveling with Jesus. They, no doubt, believed that they'd already paid their dues. They were now ready to begin reaping their rewards.

They were ready for Jesus to climb on his throne, kick out the Romans, and begin the wonderful Kingdom of God in Israel.

But Jesus had a much wider vision for them. To paraphrase him:

Don't get fixated on when or how soon all this will happen. This job is far greater than you can possibly imagine. You see, in the Kingdom of God, God isn't throwing together a quick little dinner party for a few of His closest friends. God is putting together a feast to end all feasts, and He wants to invite EVERYONE. YES, THAT'S WHAT I SAID. EVERYONE!!!

Apostles, you need to increase your vision. Remove the barriers to your ability to see.

God has a job for you that is so big, so vast, so amazing, that you can't possibly bring it about by your own efforts.

God isn't just interested in saving a few Jews. God wants to save the whole world. God wants all people to participate in His kingdom.

Apostles: You mean we're not the only ones invited to this party?

Jesus: That's right. God wants everyone in Jerusalem to be invited.

Apostles: Is that all?

Jesus: No, after that, invite everyone in the Parish. All of Judea.

Apostles: Is that all?

Jesus: No, once you finish inviting them invite all the people from up north!

Apostles: You mean Canadians? You want us to invite Canadians?

Jesus: Yep, I sure do.

Apostles: Anything else you want us to do, Lord?

Jesus: Yep, after you've invited all of them go everywhere else and invite everyone else!

Apostles: Everyone?

Jesus: Everyone!

Apostles: Everyone is a lot of people. That's going to take a lot of time and a lot of manpower! It's going to cost a lot of money too, Jesus. We don't have that kind of money.

Jesus: God will provide you with what you need.

Apostles: Where will we stay? Some places aren't very hospitable.

Jesus: God will provide you with what you need.

Apostles: Lord, people speak lots of different languages. How will we be able to communicate with those who don't speak our language?

Jesus: God will provide you with what you need.

Apostles: Jesus, this is too great a task for us. We aren't strong enough or wise enough or wealthy enough to carry it out.

Jesus: God will provide you with what you need.

And then, do you know what Jesus did? He left!!!

His departing words could have easily come from an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. "I'll be back."

Jesus will be back!

Of course we'd like to know when. Why has it taken so long? It has been nearly 2000 years since he left.

The Jews are living in Israel again, and they are still struggling to maintain their

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independence and their right to exist as a free nation.

From that standpoint, little has changed. The disciples' LIMITED vision has not yet been fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Christianity continues to spread in some parts of the world, while, in other areas, like Europe and in some parts of the US, it seems to be dying out.

What's happening?

For many, they've lost the Vision. They are once again limited by our finite human resources. There's not nearly enough faith in God.

Friends, let's start with our Jerusalem. Jesus told us to be witnesses right where we are. We're to share our faith with our immediate family, friends and neighbors. The people we know and see on a regular basis. The people who are like us. We are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to them.

Beyond that, we're to be witnesses in Judea and Samaria. That's our town, city, county, we're to witness to them for Jesus Christ.

And to the uttermost parts of the earth. That means people in Russia, and Malawi. People in the Philippines and Mexico. That's people in Haiti and Korea.

We're to witness to each and all that Jesus is the Messiah, the King, not just of Israel but of all the earth.

Jesus doesn't just love Jews or Christians. He loves Muslims and Buddhists, Hindus and pagans. Jesus loves everyone. Jesus died so that everyone might know the one God, who created heaven and earth. He wants all people to come to the party.

"But," you argue, "it's too big of a job. We don't have enough resources. We don't speak all the languages. We simply can't undertake such a large task with such limited resources."

But we're not limited by our resources. We're only limited by our Vision. We're only limited by our faith, or our lack of faith.

God owns everything. God has the resources to do whatever He wants to do. Our job is to find out from God what He wants us to do and then to do it. God doesn't want us to worry about how we're going to find all of the necessary resources to do the job. He wants us to do what He tells us to do and trust Him to provide whatever tools we need to get the job done.

Could those few little Apostles possibly have imagined that in just over a week's time God would send the Holy Spirit

equipping them to speak different languages, enabling Peter and others to preach to the various groups that had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast? Who would have imagined that as a result of that event, 3000 people would have been saved in just one day?

Friends, God has enough resources to do whatever He wants. What He's looking for are people who trust Him enough to do what He tells them to do. People who have faith in Him. He's looking for people who are willing to take off their blinders and allow themselves to see HIS VISION. He's looking for us.

What does God have in store for the Church of God General Conference?

I believe He wants to use us to accomplish His mission in this world, and I believe it is far greater than we can imagine.

Will we say "Yes" to God and do what He tells us to do, or will we put on our blinders, keep our vision narrow and limited, and only do what we know we can do WITHOUT God's help?

I don't want to be limited by what I know I can do by myself. That's not faith.

Let's be a people of faith and vision. Let's trust God and do what He tells us to do. □

Immortality (continued from page 14)

promises contained in the gospel, is the resurrection of the body.

Dr. Lowth speaking of the prophets says, "that which struck their senses they delineated in their descriptions; *we there find no exact account, no explicit mention of immortal spirits.*"

"Life," says Irenaeus, a contemporary of the apostle John,

is not from ourselves, nor from our nature, but it is given or bestowed according to the grace of God; and

therefore, he who preserves this gift of life, and returns thanks to Him that bestows it, he shall receive "length of days for ever and ever." But he who rejects it and proves unthankful to his Maker for creating him, and will not know Him who bestows it, deprives himself of the gift of duration through all eternity.

"That the soul is naturally immortal," says Richard Watson, "is contradicted by scripture, which makes our immortality a gift dependant upon the giver." — *Institutes*, vol. ii, p. 250.

The existence of an immortal soul in sinful flesh being set aside, and the testimony that "*the dead know not anything*" (Ecc. 9:5) received, the Mother of Harlots is stripped of the Virgin and Saints, whose deified "souls" she worships, and makes her as idolatrous as her pagan predecessor in "the Eternal City!" The physical regeneration of infant souls, purgatory, glorification in heaven at death, apostles on their thrones, kingdoms gained by saints beyond the skies at their decease, &c., are all exploded as the merest fictions of distempered minds. □

Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, May 1851.

We Must Be Born Again (John 3:1-5)

BY PASTOR JIM MATTISON

“Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”

“Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”

Jesus was saying that a **spiritual birth** was necessary if we are to enter the Kingdom of God which is to be established here on earth when Jesus returns. Men cannot bring about this new creation by themselves. It must be by means of God’s word and His Holy Spirit.

As God created heaven and earth and all things by His Word (Gen. 1), so also it is His Word that causes the new spiritual birth Jesus teaches here in John 3:3-5.

In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, the sower plants the *seed* that causes this spiritual birth, growth, and eventual immortality. That seed is “**the word of the Kingdom**” (v. 19). The Gospel Jesus preached was this coming Kingdom (Luke 4:43). We are to listen to Him (Luke 9:35).

Trees, flowers, even man, come from a seed planted. (The Bible speaks about man’s “seed.”) When the message of the Kingdom is planted in our hearts, and we repent, and are baptized in Jesus’ name, we begin the walk to immortality.

Peter stressed this. “You have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through **the living and abiding word of God**” (1 Pet. 1:23). He continues to explain our mortality, and shows how the word of the Lord abides forever. If that *word* endures in our lives we will live forever. James agrees, and says we are begotten with “**the word of truth**” (1:18).

A comment on this by Bible scholar Anthony Buzzard:

It is obvious that the Apostles share a common understanding about how salvation words. James writes: “In the exercise of His will, the Father gave us **new birth** through the word of Truth. So that we might become, so to speak, the firstfruits of his creatures . . . In humility receive **the word implanted**, which is able to save you” (James 1:18, 21). John speaks the same language: “No one who has received rebirth from the Father [been born again] practices sin, because God’s **seed** remains in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). Such are constituted believers because they are “of the truth” (1 John 3:19), a word which interchanges with “Gospel.”

Paul also speaks of rebirth in Galatians 4:28, 29. “You, brothers, are children of the promise. But just as then the one born of the flesh persecuted the one **born of the Spirit**, so it is now.”

Jesus Himself was **born of God** (1 John 5:18). And, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**” (1 John 5:1).

Thus we see it is vitally important to fully believe the good news of the coming Kingdom and trust in Jesus the Christ if we are to be born from above. This was the saving message Philip preached in Acts 8:12.

The Seed planted in our hearts is the first step to salvation. Sorrow for our sins is next (Mark 1:14, 15). We cannot be saved if we do not repent. That is followed by baptism: “Repent and be baptized in the

name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). This baptism is the birth “**of water**” Jesus taught. Being **born of the Spirit** occurs when **the seed** (Jesus’ message of the coming Kingdom of God) is fully planted in the heart. Jesus said, “The **words** that I speak to you, **they are spirit and life**” (John 6:63). Paul speaks of being led by the Spirit instead of the flesh (Gal. 5; Rom. 8). This is absolutely vital if we are to be God’s people.

Rebirth, then, comes by the seed of the Kingdom planted in our hearts, and our responding by repentance, baptism, and life lived by God’s Spirit. It is a transformation that comes from “the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:32). We change the way we think. Now we think first of the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness (Matt. 6:33). No longer do we walk by the way of this world.

Only a few accept Jesus’ teaching of the coming Kingdom on earth after the resurrection at Jesus’ coming. Yet it is a pearl of great price, a treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13). The devil tries to destroy that seed (Luke 8:12). But we can overcome with the help of Messiah, who came first to teach and to die. When He comes the second time the spiritual birth will be fully completed as He raises His own to life in the age to come. “This mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:54), for flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom (15:50).

Being born again is the greatest thing that can happen to us, and the most important. By it we become new creatures before God and He will reward us accordingly, while the wicked will die. □

Unplugging Internet Porn

BY STEVEN ISAAC

“My 50-year-old husband has discovered the Internet. He purchased one of those fancy mega-mega-hertz jobbies and plunked it down in his home office, and he’s on that thing all day and half the night. Recently I walked in to peer over his shoulder — just being friendly — and he hit some command and the screen went blank. Do you think he was on a porn site?”

He very well could have been. Unfortunately, the Internet was built on the back of the porn industry. Finding these sites is easy. If you suspect your husband of dabbling in these Internet porn areas, you will have to:

1. Ask him point blank about it, but make sure you do it in a loving confrontation.
2. Check “favorite places” or “bookmarks” on the computer’s browser to see if shortcuts are there to some of those Web porn sites. You can even look for downloaded pictures by searching for graphics files that end with jpg or gif. Most browsers also keep a history list of what sites have been visited.
3. Look through your credit card statements for suspicious charges. Keep in mind that the entries usually look pretty innocent, so look for unusual items or things you don’t remember.

How worried should you be? Years ago the fear of “getting caught” kept many men far away from the evils of porn. Now, with cyberporn at everyone’s fingertips in the

privacy of home, the fear of getting caught is evaporating. Your husband’s character still determines what kind of choices he makes.

Your husband needs to hear a pretty simple, time-honored concept — watch where you wander. Or, in his case, watch where he clicks his mouse. There are one or two very concrete things you can do. Blocking software, such as Cyber Patrol, Cybersitter, SurfWatch, and Net Nanny, will keep most of the porn sites out of your husband’s reach. Another option is to switch your server provider to one that promises “safe” browsing. A benefit of service provider blocking is that there is no way to force your way through their shield. You can do that with the blocking software if you’re computer savvy enough.

If your husband admits that he’s been traveling through porn sites, you can work together to help him get out — and stay out — of digitized danger. Go over these seven ways to survive in cyberspace together, then follow the advice.

1. Don’t keep the computer in his home office or unused bedroom. If he places the computer in the family room or some open nook, secrecy is hard to come by. Secrecy is his enemy. He should avoid it at all costs.

2. Have him surf the Web with you. If you share this experience and become familiar with what he likes to do online, you will find there’s a lot of good stuff out there, and he will benefit from knowing you are interested in his world.

3. Have him turn the computer off at night. The Internet (especially chat rooms)

is more hazardous the later you go into the night.

4. Tell him to be street smart. This means never giving out his name, address, phone number, credit card number or any other personal information on the Web.

5. Make sure he’s very careful about chat rooms. Seemingly innocent chats turn into illicit relationships that can have life-long consequences.

6. Obviously, don’t do something stupid. “Something stupid” would be arranging a meeting with someone (usually for sexual purposes) he has “met” on the Internet.

7. Don’t forget the biblical call to flee immorality. Jesus has promised that with every temptation, there is a way of escape.

The Internet isn’t really so different from everything else in our lives. If we use the same rules and morality that we exercise in our “real world” lives in cyberspace, there won’t be any problems. Together, you can beat the porn monster and, in the process, discover the true benefits of cyberspace. □

Excerpted from *Your Fabulous 50s — Answers to Your Most Asked Questions about Life After 50* compiled and edited by Mike Yorkey (Cook, 2000). Used by permission.

Steven Isaac is associate editor of *Plugged In*, a Focus on the Family Publication that evaluates popular media, including the Internet.

Knowing the Lord

BY WILLIAM M. WACHTEL

We live in the so-called “age of science.” Marvels unknown to our ancestors surround us on every side, and we take them for granted. Men have walked on the moon, a feat some of us only dreamed of as children, when we looked at the full moon and wondered what it would be like to be there! These marvels are the result of the advance of human knowledge, and of course the word “science” itself is merely the English form of the Latin word for “knowledge.” Truly, man’s knowledge has been increasing at an amazing rate in recent decades — doubling every few years, it is said. In fact, it seems that the Bible foretold, in Daniel 12:4, that there would be such an increase of knowledge at “the time of the end.”

With all this increase in what might be called “*factual knowledge*” — a better understanding of how things work and what are the characteristics of our universe and of our environment — it seems to many Christian believers that the most important knowledge of all — that of God, His Son, His Word, and His plan for our lives — is sadly lacking, even among many who profess to follow Him!

The Bible itself gives us some examples from long ago to demonstrate that this is not a new problem. The expression “knowing the Lord” is one that may be used to describe or define the problem that we wish to address. In Judges 2:10, the writer speaks of the generation of Israelites who had gone through the Wilderness with Moses and Joshua, but who had now died. He goes on to describe the following generation as one “who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.” As we look at this statement, it is hard to imagine

that the writer is saying that they did not know *about* the LORD or the facts regarding Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and preservation throughout those fateful forty years in the Wilderness of Sinai!

It seems obvious that the Bible is telling us here that the kind of “knowledge” in view is that of personal acquaintanceship, personal relationship. The new generation knew only what they had heard from their parents and grandparents; they had a *second-hand* knowledge of God and His ways, not an intimate, personal familiarity with the One who had been so manifest in the daily experience of their parents and grandparents.

A similar example is found in the history of the child Samuel, taken by his parents to serve in the house of God, under Eli the priest. One night the LORD spoke to the young lad, waking him up. We are told that “Samuel did not yet know the LORD: the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him” (1 Sam. 3:7). Again, we realize that this cannot mean that Samuel was ignorant of all the *things* of the LORD or the *facts about* Him. He simply as yet did not have any personal experience with the LORD. He did not “know” the LORD for himself. His knowledge was still “second-hand”!

As for Eli’s own sons, grown-up and priests themselves, sadly *they* did not know the LORD (1 Sam. 2:12), even though they were trained and active in His service! They as priests had to know all the correct rituals of God’s house, the laws regarding the sacrifices and the worship of God. And yet it was possible for them *not to know God Himself!* Their lives of wickedness demonstrated to everyone that they had no personal experience of God or friendship with Him (1 Sam. 2:13-25; 3:11-13).

Many of the Jewish religious leaders at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry were in the same condition. He told them,

If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though *you do not know him*, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. (John 8:54, 55)

These leaders prided themselves on being the guardians of the truth of God, the experts in the Scriptures and their interpretation, and God’s authorized spokesmen to the world. But Jesus declared that these men, for all their knowledge, *did not know God!*

The Apostle Paul, when visiting Athens, saw that the city had an altar “to an unknown God” (Acts 17:23). The Athenians were worshiping this God along with their idols, but at least they were honest in admitting their ignorance of Him! Paul used that fact to introduce them to some of the truths about God and His Son. Paul later foretold, however, a less excusable ignorance among some living in the last days, those having “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5). Such would be “ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (v. 7). The expression “having a form of godliness” seems to imply that they would be professing Christians, church members, and yet would be lacking the vital personal knowledge of God that brings power and life! Even in Paul’s own day, there were some in the Corinthian church who were “ignorant of God” (1 Cor. 15:34, NIV) or without “the knowledge of God” (KJV). Since they did not really know

(continued on page 20)

God, we can understand how they could say that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (v.12). There may be some professing Christians today who have the same problem!

What are the results of not knowing God, especially among religious people, professing to know Him, but who do not? Jesus warned His followers to expect persecution at the hands of those "who do not know the One who sent me" (John 15:21). The believers would be "put out of the synagogue" by the religious leaders, and even killed, because such leaders "have not known the Father or me" (John 16:1-3).

Even Paul himself, as Saul, was one of these persecutors and leaders; but after he came to know God, through Christ, he wrote that those who are born of the Spirit, who *do* know God, are persecuted by those who have only been born of the flesh (Gal. 4:28, 29). Church history is filled with horror stories of "Christians" persecuting and killing for religious reasons. Such violence only proved that they *did not know God*, no matter what they professed to be as members and leaders in the churches!

Another result of not knowing God, especially among those who once did know Him but who forsook Him, is abandoning oneself to all sorts of malicious wickedness, as catalogued by Paul in Romans 1:21-32. It is not simply the errant or sinful lifestyle of those who have never known Him and His ways, but rather the deliberate and willful rebellion of those who have consciously rejected Him so that they may pursue their chosen evil course of life, the road leading to eternal destruction (Matt. 7:13; 2 Thess. 1:9; Isa. 66:24; Mal. 4:1-3).

In happy contrast to this awful picture is the promise of God's Word that someday "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, and "no longer will a man teach his neighbor . . . saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD" (Jer. 31:34).

In His prayer for His people, Christ said to His Father, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only

true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Eternal life is both the result of knowing God and His Son, and also its very purpose. We must know them now if we are to be saved, but a major reason for being saved is to get to know them even better and more perfectly! When we receive immortality, at the resurrection when Christ returns, we will come to "know even as also [we are] known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Then we shall see "face to face"!

I would like to close with the wonderful privilege that Jeremiah describes (9:23, 24), that each of us may enjoy even now —

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that *he understands and knows me*, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. □

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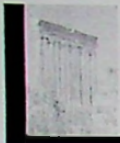
August, September 2002

7 Ways

**A Father Can
Improve Leadership
in the Family**

Also in this Issue:

- The Four Living Creatures and the Twenty-Four Elders of Revelation
- Tribulation and Wrath
- The Bible and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- A Hard Look at Islam
- Inheritance



Message from the Editor

Our Kingdom Quest



In the Native American Lakota tradition, young men (and sometimes women) on the verge of adulthood go into the wilderness for a period of several days, (generally three or four days), where they live in the solitude of nature, fast and praying earnestly seeking direction or vision from their great spirit. This naturally reminds us of the Lord Jesus, who went into the wilderness for 40 days seeking his Father's direction at the beginning of his public ministry. What was his mission? What kind of a Messiah was he to be? How would he use his power? These were important questions that Jesus needed to have answered in his own mind and heart. Really, what Jesus was doing for those 40 days was defining for himself what it meant to seek the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was the primary passion of Jesus. For over three years Jesus taught the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43). Jesus taught his disciples to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). And after his resurrection Jesus spent his last 40 days speaking "about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Jesus' passion was the Kingdom. Jesus' whole life and ministry might best be summed up as a "kingdom quest".

In the 21st century, people are seeking after a lot of different things: success, money (and the things money can buy), pleasure and fulfillment. But sooner or later, most people discover that these things don't bring true satisfaction and fulfillment. True fulfillment can only come from knowing God intimately and knowing the purpose for which we have been created. We have been created to be in a relationship with God which ultimately culminates in a restoration of the biblical paradise as originally created by God. That is, the Kingdom of God.

I'm excited that the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith is making a fresh, new attempt to guide our young people, who are preparing to become adults, to enter a Kingdom Quest. Through our Christian Education Department, under the leadership of Myra Montgomery, our young people will be guided on a journey of discovering God's purposes for their lives.

As Editor of THE RESTITUTION HERALD I fully endorse Kingdom Quest. I encourage all Churches to use Kingdom Quest in their Christian Education (Sunday School, Jr. Church, Youth) programs. Our isolated members, who have no immediate congregations nearby, can also make use of Kingdom Quest materials for family devotions and worship. Let us support this resource and use it toward achieving the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations.

For more information, see the Church of God website (<http://www.abc-coggc.org>) or to order contact Jessica Madonia at jmadonia@abc-coggc.org

Jeff Fletcher, Editor



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- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 3:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:7);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:25);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.



The Four Living Creatures

and the Twenty-Four Elders of Revelation Chapters 4 & 5

Pastor Russ Magaw

Introduction

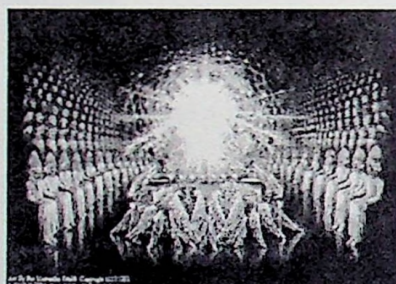
Why study the living creatures and 24 elders of Revelation 4 and 5? Can we learn anything from them which helps our understanding of God? What impact will this study have on eschatology? Will our faith be strengthened? How? These questions form the basis for this article.

The four living creatures and the 24 elders are introduced in Revelation 4. They are part of the throne room scene in heaven where someone, whose "face gleamed like such precious stones as jasper and carnelian" (4:3, GNB*), sits on a throne which is surrounded by 24 thrones and 24 elders sitting on them. Also surrounding the throne "on each of its sides, were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and behind. The first one looked like a lion; the second looked like a bull; the third had a face like a man's face; and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight. Each one of the four living creatures had six wings, and they were covered with eyes, inside and out" (Rev. 4:6-8).

These personages perform several worship tasks in chapters four and five, as well as occasionally in other parts of Revelation.

* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotes are from the *Good News Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, ©1985.

Many questions have risen over the centuries regarding the identity, purpose, and mission of the four living creatures and the 24 elders. But before these questions can be answered, some background material will help our understanding of them. Something about the purpose of the book of Revelation itself must be understood; then a brief interpretation of the vision of



Art by Pat Smith Copyright 1982/1992

chapters four and five also helps in discovering the mission of the living creatures and the elders.

Revelation: The Book

At least two genres are used in the book: the prophetic and the apocalyptic. While the two are similar, some minor differences are evident. Prophets attached their message to the course of history. The apocalyptic reaches beyond history. The prophets proclaimed God's working in and through the course of history. The apocalyptists anticipated a radical intervention by God at the end, beyond history. It

should not, however, be concluded from this that present history was of no significance for apocalyptists. Quite the contrary, in the apocalyptic perspective the contemporary scene is the stage on which God's purpose is worked out. In this sense there is continuity between the "here" and the "hereafter."¹

Revelation uses apocalyptic images and prophetic visions to picture God's final victory over sin, Satan, the world, and all who attempt to frustrate His plans. The struggle between the woman and the dragon in chapter 12 is a glimpse of Revelation's message. In chapter 13 through chapter 19, this epic struggle is pictured in horrifying images, concluding with Christ's coming. "The great spiritual conflict between God and Satan is resolved, as in final rebellion the forces of darkness spend their last energies to frustrate and overthrow the plans and purposes of God and His kingdom."² Then finally, with the coming of the New Jerusalem in chapters 21 and 22, God and His people win the victory.

Revelation is written in letter format to "seven churches in the province of Asia" (1:4) as a message from Christ himself to give hope and encouragement. But in a larger context, readers are urged to find happiness in obeying its



The Four Living Creatures

and the Twenty-Four Elders of Revelation Chapters 4 & 5

Pastor Russ Magaw

words (1:3), because “the time is near when all these things will happen” (1:3b).

The major theme of the letter is that God’s plans will become complete at the time of Christ’s return when “he is coming on the clouds! Everyone will see him” (1:7). At the letter’s conclusion, Jesus says, “I am coming soon! I will bring my rewards with me, to give to each one according to what he has done” (22:12).

A brief outline of the book’s message can be seen in the four times John is urged by a heavenly messenger to write something or “come and see” a vision. These four visions are often concerning groups of sevens.

The first vision: “write down what you see” (1:11), is of Christ and the seven churches, contained in chapters 1-3. The second vision: “Come up here, and I will show you . . .” (4:1), takes the reader into the throne room with the Lamb and the seven-sealed book (chapters 4 and 5), and unveils the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls, which comprise chapters 6 through 16. The third vision: “Come, and I will show you . . .” (17:1), unveils Babylon and her judgment (chapters 17 and 18), the marriage of the Lamb and coming of Christ (chapter 19), the millennial kingdom (chapter 20), and the destruction of Satan and death (20:7-21:8). The fourth vision:

“Come, and I will show you . . .” (21:9), unveils the New Jerusalem and coming of Jesus (21:9-22:21).³

Within the second vision is the scene of the throne room with the glorious personage on the throne, the scroll in his right hand, the Lamb “standing in the center of the throne” (5:6), the four living creatures and the 24 elders. This throne room scene is critical at this juncture because it establishes at the outset the source of power in the universe. While on earth it seems that demonic forces are in control, that is a faulty assumption. Arching over all authority everywhere is the awesome power of the Almighty God. As the living creatures and elders chant, “You created all things, and by your will they were given existence and life” (4:11). Clearly, God is still in control of His universe. As the rest of Revelation demonstrates, He will take visible control one day forever. And the part the creatures and elders play in the grand picture of Revelation will be the focus of this article.

Twenty-four Elders

In the New Testament, elders are seen as church leaders, having charge of local congregations. A brief synopsis of the office follows:

Elder (title), or presbyter

(Greek *presbuteros*, “an older person”), title given to officers in certain churches. The term has had various meanings. In the Old Testament, an elder was a tribal or family head, usually somewhat older than other men of the society. The Israelite elders were officials of civil and religious government; the lay members of the later Sanhedrin were also termed elders. In the early Christian church, elders were administrative officials of local congregations who served along with deacons and bishops. The title is used in some modern denominations, notably The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴

The 24 elders of Revelation are different personages than normally viewed in the New Testament. These elders appear several times in Revelation. They first appear in the throne room clothed in white robes and wearing crowns (4:4), which they cast before the throne (v.10). As a unit they continually offer worship and praise (5:11, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4), and bring to God the prayers of the saints (5:8). One of them encourages John when he is sad (5:5), and one of them acts as interpreter of one of the visions (7:13). God is the main character of the scene where He is “surrounded by the council of His spirits, and unceasingly praised by all the adoring creatures of



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heaven."⁵

Are these personages people, or do they merely represent people, and which people? These and other questions plague interpreters of their identity.

Some have found identity with the two sets of twelve in the New Jerusalem of chapter 21:13, 14. The twelve gates correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 foundation stones correspond to the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

This combines into unity the Old Testament and the New; the old 'people of God' of pre-Christian times, and the new Israel of which the apostles are foundation members. Thus we reach the number 24.⁶

Of course, this view takes away from the elders any particular personage, making these 24 elders only a figure, or emblematic of persons.

Another view corresponds these elders with the Old Testament council surrounding God. Micaiah the prophet sees God sitting on His throne with all His angels around him (1 Kings 22:19). The ancient patriarch has the sons of God come to meet the Almighty (Job 1:6; 2:1). Isaiah sees God ruling in Jerusalem with all His hosts (Isa. 24:23), perhaps a precursor of the throne room in Revelation.

In *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, written around 200 AD, a vision

narrated by Saturus tells of him and his friends being carried by four angels up a hill and into the heavenly throne room where they hear the *sanctus* chanted continually by angels wearing white robes and see an aged man with white hair with four elders on his right and left with others behind him.⁷

This story almost certainly borrows from John's throne room scene.

While the Jews were in exile in Babylon, they came in contact with Chaldean ideas and assimilated many into their religion. One such idea was the 24 star gods the Babylonians worshiped. Perhaps John borrowed from these concepts for his 24 elders. But why would the apostle include such pagan dogma in his treatise for Christians?

Perhaps a more likely parallel is the 24 different divisions of priests serving in Israel's Temple (1 Chron. 24:7-18). Each division had a president, known as an elder of the priests. Levites who were in charge of musical instruments were also divided into 24 sections (1 Chron. 25:6-31). Did John adapt this idea for his 24 elders? Whether or not this would be understood by John's first-century audience is not clear.

Another provocative question is the number 24 itself. As already suggested, it could stand for the 12 Israelite tribes and the 12 Christian

apostles, thus representing the church in totality. But this is the only time the number appears in the Apocalypse, so its significance isn't large.

The obvious symbolism these elders represent is the totality of worship of the one on the throne. One day all believers will enjoy glorious worship in the presence of God Himself.⁸

Ministry of the Four Living Creatures and the Twenty-Four Elders

"The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each had a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people" (Rev. 5:8). Clearly, these beings have a ministry before God, that of keeping and presenting before the Almighty the bowls of prayers of the people of God. This ministry should encourage every Christian to pray without ceasing, knowing full well that those prayers are never forgotten, and they are always in God's presence. Consider how this ministry of these beings has impacted one believer:

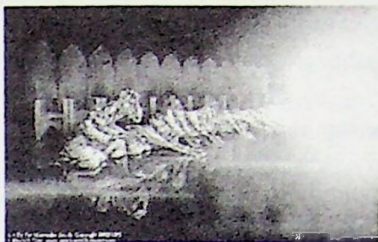
My prayer life was dragging. I'd been asking God to do work in my son's life for more than 15 years, and I'd become weary. "Give it up, Marion," I kept telling myself. Discouragement and I had



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become great pals.

Then one day a package arrived from an old friend who I hadn't seen in 25 years. I smiled, remembering her tremendous faith, and was relieved that she didn't know about my pathetic prayer life. When I opened the package, though, I was aghast. It was a book, *Intercessory Prayer*, by Dutch Sheets.

I started to read the book, mostly because I knew my friend would ask me about it. When I got to page 208, I found something that spoke to me so clearly, I could hardly believe it!

"There are bowls in heaven in which our prayers are stored," the author wrote. "I think it very likely that each of us has his own bowl in heaven. . . . When enough prayers have accumulated to get the job done, He releases power. . . . Victory goes to the persistent." He included Revelation 5:3-8 in his powerful explanation of "Tipping the Prayer Bowls of Heaven."

I put down the book, picked up my Bible and, sure enough, I found the amazing promise. So I quietly slipped to my knees

with a clear mental picture of my son's prayer bowl. It looked just like the huge green bowl he'd always used for cereal. And I prayed: **Father, help me fill that big green bowl so full of prayer that one day You'll tip it and Your glorious answer will pour forth!**⁹

Prayer lives of Christians everywhere would increase when the ministry of these heavenly beings is fully utilized.

Four Living Creatures

A prominent teaching is that these creatures are emblematic of the ability of Him who sits on the throne. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* sets up these creatures:

Living Creatures. (*zoon*, "living thing," "animal"): The four "living creatures" (the King James Version "beasts") of Rev. 4:6, etc., the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third having a face as of a man, and the fourth like an eagle, having each six wings.¹⁰

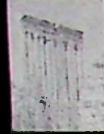
W.L. Walker adds from the same source:

The four living creatures in Rev. (4:6) are not *under* the throne but "in the midst of the throne" (the American Revised Version, margin "before"; see 7:17; compare 5:6) and "round about the throne." They are also

cherubim, and seem to represent the four beings that stand at the head of the four divisions of the creation; among the untamed animals the *lion*; among cattle the *calf* or *ox*; among birds the *eagle*; among all created beings the *man*. It gives "a perfect picture of true service, which should be as brave as the lion, patient as the ox, aspiring as the eagle, intelligent as man" (Milligan in the place cited). They represent the powers of Nature - of the creation, "full of eyes" as denoting its permeation with the Divine Reason, the wings signifying its constant, ready service, and the unceasing praise the constant doing of God's will. The imagery is founded on Ezekiel as that had been modified in apocalyptic writings and as it was exalted in the mind of the Seer of Patmos.¹¹

As questions abound concerning the 24 elders, so the same questions are asked of these four living creatures. Where do they come from and what do they symbolize?

Perhaps John inherited them from Babylonian sources; they may have stood for the four main signs of the Zodiac. Could they depict the four winds coming from the four quarters of heaven? Such conjectures are only that: guesses from the dust bin of history.



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More likely, these creatures stand for everything that is

noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest in nature . . . The lion is supreme among beasts; the ox is supreme among cattle; the eagle is supreme among birds; and man is supreme among all creatures. . . Here we see nature praising God. "The ceaseless activity of nature under the hand of God is a ceaseless tribute of praise."¹²

The idea of nature praising God is not foreign to Scripture. The Psalmist often speaks of "the heavens telling the glory of God" (Psa. 19:1), and the Lord being blessed by "all His works" (Psa. 103:22). We may recoil in shock at God being in dung beetles and earth worms, but they also share in the larger picture.

If man's chief purpose is to glorify God, then these living creatures repeat that refrain. In fact, on earth, every work well done rises as a hymn of praise to God. Thus, the doctor on his rounds, the scientist in his laboratory, the teacher in his classroom, the musician with his instrument, the artist at his canvas, the shop assistant at his counter, the office worker at his computer, the homemaker in the house — all are working as part of a grand act of worship of the one who sits on the throne.¹³

Symbolism of the Living Creatures

That these beings are seen as symbolic goes back to Irenaeus of AD 170. He held that these creatures pictured the four aspects of Christ's ministry, which in turn are represented in the four gospels. John views Jesus' divine Sonship and is the powerful *lion*. The *ox* is a symbol of sacrifice which Luke pictures with the priest Zechariah in his first chapter. Matthew describes the human descent of the Messiah which the *man* pictures. Mark starts with a reference to the "Spirit of prophecy coming down from on high upon men which 'points to the winged aspect of the Gospel,' and, therefore, is symbolized by the *eagle*."¹⁴

Since Irenaeus, other church fathers have identified the living creatures differently. Athanasius saw Matthew as the man, Mark as the ox, Luke as the lion, and John as the eagle. Victorinus agreed with Matthew being the man, but gave Mark the lion, Luke the ox, and John the eagle. Augustine agreed with Victorinus on Luke and John, but reversed Matthew and Mark. Augustine's designations became the most accepted. But such representation seems artificial and merely a false imposition placed on living beings around the throne. Let them stand as such, beings

alive with the praise of the Father.

The function of these beings is more important than any symbolic representation. God is able to see and control all things in His universe, using, emblematically, the four living creatures, who are probably the highest of angelic forms. Preterist Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. paints a picture of this view:

In Revelation 4 John sees God sitting on His judicial throne and actively ruling over all creation (4:2-6, 11). The four "living creatures" closest to the throne seem to be angels of the highest order: They ever watch (being "covered with eyes," v.6) over creation (appearing as creatures and singing of creation, vv. 7, 11), ready to do God's holy bidding (having six wings to fly swiftly and singing of God's holiness, v. 8) in all of creation (their number represents the four points of the compass, v. 7; cf. 7:1; 21:13). Whatever John witnesses thereafter - however terrifying the judgments, however vicious the opposition - he may rest assured that not only does Christ concern himself with the affairs of his people in history (chap. 1), but God is actively controlling all things from above history (chap. 4; cf. Dan. 2:21; 4:35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11).¹⁵



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If Gentry's view that these living creatures are the highest of angels is correct, then the question is: Which order of angels? Apparently they are higher than what is commonly termed an archangel, like Gabriel and Michael, which seems to be the highest order of angels. He is right in noting that they depict God's control of the universe from beyond our sphere of time and place.

Others have seen close identity of the four creatures with the seraphim of Isaiah 6, the cherubim of Ezekiel 1, and the guards of the throne of God in the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch, the latter written about the same time as Revelation. All these seem to merge into the type of heavenly being of Revelation 4 and 5.

All of this serves to demonstrate that John is not original in his use of symbolism; indeed, that he may not be wholly original in his use of the O.T. On the contrary, it would appear that he was in the main stream of a growing apocalyptic tradition which greatly influenced the currents of his own thought.¹⁶

Ministry of the Living Creatures

These living creatures with six wings each and eyes everywhere in the form of the ox, lion, eagle, and man were nearest Him who sat on the

throne. From their vantage point in the presence of the Almighty, they alone could minister best to the Eternal. Their worship was perfect. From that worship exuded praise in every direction, and to every realm in the universe.

From their song of ceaseless praise we discover the crux of their ministry. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come" (4:8). Three attributes of God are recognized in their song.

(1) Because He is different than men, God is supremely set apart: "holy." Created beings can do nothing more than praise His holiness. (2) This God is all-powerful, omnipotent. No legion of Rome's best fighting men stood a chance against the personage who controls the universe. (3) This God is everlasting. Empires come and go, but God lasts forever.

Note that with God holiness comes first and foremost. Our God is holy.

The word means primarily 'separate,' and this separateness includes complete purity. Our God is good. And He is the *Lord God Almighty*. Real power is not with evil, but with God who is holy. Nor is this a passing phase. God is He who *was, and is, and is to come . . .* God's power and eternal being ensure that His

holiness will triumph over all evil.¹⁷

"They Sang a New Song," Revelation 5:9, 10

In chapter five the slaughtered lamb is seen by one of the 24 elders standing in the center of the throne. He alone is able to break the seals of the scroll in the right hand of the one seated on the throne. When that is determined, the living creatures and elders form a choir to sing a new song, this one in worship of the Lamb.

That song of praise and worship rightly exalts him who gave his all in sacrifice for humankind. Before its meaning is fully understood, some questions must be answered which will help us determine the identity of these personages.

The chief question is if the elders and living creatures include themselves *with* the redeemed in the song, or are they singing *about* the redeemed? To understand this query fully, look at this passage in the King James Version:

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.



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Next, examine the passage from a more recent translation, such as the Good News Bible:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals. For you were killed, and by your sacrificial death you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race. You have made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God, and they shall rule on earth.”

The difference in verse 9 is seen in changing “redeemed us to God” of the King James Version into “bought for God people” in the Good News Bible. In verse 10 the “us” of the KJV becomes “them” in the GNB. Obviously, the singers distinguish themselves from the redeemed in the song in the later translation. If that is true, then the elders and living creatures cannot be seen as represent-atives of the redeemed. They are not part of those being saved. Their identity must be seen as different from the redeemed.

This conclusion seems to support the whole tenor of their ministry. Their presence around the throne calls for them to be a higher being than the redeemed. As perfect ministers to Him who is on the throne, they have no need for redemption. They are not part of this world’s order.

Before making those

conclusions, it must be questioned whether the text allows for the rendering of the later translations. That demands a brief review of textual variation in the book of Revelation and the reasons for the variation.

In Neb B. Stonehouse’s book *Paul Before the Areopagus*, chapter 4, “Elders and Living-Beings in the Apocalypse,” is an exhaustive study of textual variation in this passage. The author identifies the King James Version as the *textus receptus* and points to several scholars of a century ago who favored its pronouns because early manuscripts contain them. However, several other solid manuscripts have dropped the pronouns. Later scholars, like Bruce Metzger, a revered textual specialist who labored on the committees of the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version, pored over the variation and concluded that the pronouns should be left out. After carefully considering all the evidence, Stonehouse drops the pronouns and points to the *objectivity* of the elders and living beings.

They extol the Lamb because of the accomplishment of the redemption of a great company from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, but, on the correct text, they pointedly

refrain from identifying themselves with the redeemed. Similarly in Rev. 11:17, 18 the elders refer to “the saints” and “the corrupters of the earth” with equal detachment. How can one possibly account for this *objectivity* of reference to the redeemed, this detached attitude toward them, if we are meant to understand that the redeemed people of God, represented by the elders, are glorifying God for their own salvation?¹⁸

J. Ramsey Michaels reviewed Stonehouse’s findings, and, along with other scholars, supported the dropping of the pronouns. He concludes:

If the four living creatures and twenty-four elders are not singing about themselves as the redeemed, then it is idle to try to identify them with Jews, Christians, a chosen remnant, or Christian martyrs. They are what they appear to be — angelic figures who are part of the setting of John’s vision of the throne room of heaven, and who celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ on behalf of his people.¹⁹

If the foregoing is true, then some eschatological conclusions of dispensational authors are called into question. Those who believe the church age saints are



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raptured at the beginning of Revelation 4, and feel that the elders and living creatures are representative of such believers, are dismayed by what later translations have done to verses 9 and 10. Similarly, some millenarians might be disillusioned to think that dwellers in heaven, earth, under the earth (those dead), and in the sea join the elders and creatures here in worship (5:13), before the dead are raised. To them it might seem that such a united choir cannot take place until the 1000-year period as defined in Revelation 20:6.

But such is the fluidity of language in Revelation. Strange imagery and symbolic figures abound. These by themselves cannot be foundations on which to build eschatological systems. Likewise, one should not suppose that some simple hermeneutical principle will satisfy every exegetical situation. One must not construe every detail as literally possible. Too often in the Revelation the decision between a literal and a figurative interpretation will prove difficult. But progress can be seen when one seeks to understand the language in the context of the Scriptures.

While the end of Revelation 5 depicts all the saints of the ages joining in the worship of God and the Lamb, one should not jump to the theological

conclusion that the saints have been raised before chapter 20. There is a difference between reigning with Christ on the earth in the future and a present-day rule of Christ within us. It is the anticipated eschatological future which is expressed by the choir of the ages in chapter 5.

Final Observations

Four living creatures are nearest the throne of God. They unceasingly honor His holiness. Next to them are 24 elders who join the creatures in songs of praise to the Eternal. They then together draw the seer to the Lamb, who appears to be in the midst of the throne. He alone, they reveal, can open the seven-sealed scroll. That announcement calls for praise to the Lamb, praise which encompasses all who live in the universe.

Today these elders and living beings perform the most important service mortals need in their search for God and the Lamb. They take our prayers, offered as incense, before the eternal presence. These prayers are always part of the makeup of the throne room. God and the Lamb hear and answer those prayers.

The ultimate answer comes when the redeemed join with God and the Lamb to reign with them on the earth. God's care of His people is complete and perfect. He will remember

and act on their behalf. He will share His ultimate victory with the saints. Because of the ministry of the four living creatures and the 24 elders, we are assured that we are always in the presence of God and the Lamb. ☩

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Tribulation and Wrath

Author Unknown



One of the keys to understanding end-time events is to notice that the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God are separated by the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and one follows the other.

Notice that Jesus said, "immediately *after* the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." This will be followed by the sign of Christ in heaven and by the mourning of all the tribes of the earth as they see Christ coming in power and great glory (Matt. 24:29-30). So, according to our Lord, the Great Tribulation will come *before* the darkening of the sun.

Then notice that Joel said, "the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood *before* the great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (Joel 2:31). Bible students know that the great and terrible "Day of the LORD" refers to the day of God's wrath on the sinners on earth. "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15). Zephaniah said: "The great day of the LORD is near . . . that day is a day of wrath" (1:14, 15). Thus we are told by the inspired prophet

that the sun will be darkened *before* the great and terrible day of the LORD's wrath.

Here, then, is a key to understanding future events. The Great Tribulation is to occur *before* the darkening of the sun. The Wrath of God is to occur *after* the darkening of the sun. The two events are not the same. One occurs, then the other. They are separated by the signs in the heavens.

"... make every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with our Lord"

This is good to know. Christians will go through the Great Tribulation. We know this because the resurrection trumpet sounding is the fifth part of Jesus' outline in Matthew 24:29-31, after the Great Tribulation has already passed.

The faithful have always gone through tribulation. Notice the list in Hebrews 11. They were tortured, imprisoned, and even sawn asunder for their faith. But never did they feel the wrath of God.

God's wrath is reserved for sinners, for those who have not known God and have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8), for those who have "destroyed the earth" (Rev. 11:18). Isaiah was given a vision of the day of judgment. In his thirteenth chapter, by inspiration he wrote, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land

desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." He said this would be announced by the darkness in the heavens. "And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity" (vv. 9-11).

"The time has come for the judgment of God on the house of God [the church]" (1 Peter 4:17). Today is the day of our conversion for salvation. Jesus has come preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God; He has died to take away our sins; He has ascended to God to mediate for us with God, and to help us day by day in living the holy type of life. When we accept Him fully into our minds and hearts as our Lord and Savior, we pass from the judgment of death to the hope of eternal life (John 5:24).

Knowing of God's plan for the righteous and the wicked, Peter encouraged us to make every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with our Lord (2 Peter 3:14).

We can gain the victory over all tribulation with strength from the Lord. Remember the Bible speaks of those "who came out of great tribulation" because of washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). Remember also Daniel's comforting words, that after the terrible time of trouble, the deliverance shall come. Those found written in the Lord's book will be resurrected to everlasting life (Dan. 12:1-2)

Keep looking up, and living the Life! ☩



The Bible

and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Mark M. Mattison

Editor's note: With the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through homicide bombings and the ongoing threat to America following September 11, we are challenged, as thinking Christians, by how we should respond. But there is no unity of thought even among Christians. The following two articles express the wide range of thinking that exists among Christian believers. Their presence in THE RESTITUTION HERALD is not intended to endorse any particular opinion, but rather to help readers think more deeply for themselves. As always, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit are our ultimate guides. ✠

On March 4, 2002, Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla) argued from the Senate floor: "The Bible says that Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar before the Lord. Hebron is in the West Bank. It is at this place where God appeared to Abram and said, 'I am giving you this land,' - the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true." (1)

And so, armed with Bible verses like these about the promised land, influential men at the highest levels of our government regularly set out to ensure the fulfillment of Bible

prophecy by supplying Israel with F-16 fighters, Black Hawk, Cobra, and Apache Longbow attack helicopters, torpedoes, air-to-air missiles, M16 rifles, and so on, (2) to the tune of over 125 billion dollars since 1948. (3)

Is this the correct response to the words of Scripture? Is military support of the state of Israel the real point of the Abrahamic covenant? More importantly, how should we evaluate the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict in light of the Bible?

Isaac and Ishmael

To explain the Israeli-Arab conflict, many Bible students turn to Genesis 16:12. That text describes Ishmael, the brother of Isaac. Isaac is understood as the progenitor of Israel, Ishmael of the Arabs. The New International Version's rendering of this passage is less than flattering:

He [Ishmael] will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.

The phrase "a wild donkey of a man" may seem to make Ishmael sound stupid, stubborn, bestial (all racist caricatures used to portray Arabs by the

West). However, that's probably not the implication of the text. The NIV Study Bible footnote puts it a little differently: "Away from human settlements, Ishmael would roam the desert like a wild donkey."

Similarly, the part about living "in hostility" is not as straightforward as it may seem. There is another possible translation. The NIV text note provides the alternative: "he will live to the east of all his brothers."

Nevertheless, the text does state that Ishmael's "hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him," clearly a description of conflict. It should be emphasized, however, that there is no reason to regard this characterization as a permanent, unending, never-changing reality.

Genesis 16:12 is not the only prophecy about Ishmael. It is followed by Genesis 17:20:

"And as for Ishmael . . . I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation" (NIV).

Apparently, the author(s) of Genesis portray both 16:12 and 17:20 as fulfilled in Genesis 25:16,18: "These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements



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and camps . . . His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward [alternate: "And they lived to the east of"] all their brothers" (NIV).

My point is this. Genesis 16:12 is not a perpetual promise that Arabs will always by definition live in enmity toward Israel. Genesis 16:12, together with 17:20, is fulfilled in 25:16,18 and therefore need not be regarded as an ongoing prophecy.

Besides, to condemn millions of people to oppression and poverty because of an interpretation of Genesis is not only absurd, it's cruel. It's no different than justifying the enslavement of an entire race of people on the basis of the mark of Cain. To regard Palestinians as hating beasts is irrational and irresponsible.

The State of Israel

However, there are more texts to consider besides a few verses in Genesis. Those who support military aid to Israel against Arabs also interpret current events in terms of the messianic prophetic texts. One of the best known is Isaiah 66:8:

Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a

moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children (NIV).

Texts like these are regularly said to have been fulfilled in 1948 when Jewish immigrants to Palestine finally declared statehood according to the U.N. partition plan of November 1947. This in spite of the fact that all of these are messianic texts.

It is worth asking what the supposed fulfillment of these texts in 1948 was really like. The native residents of Palestine at that time, not surprisingly, did not support the Zionist cause, but their feelings hardly counted, according to the British statesman Lord Balfour, who wrote in 1919 that "Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land." (4) It should be noted that even native Palestinian Jews of that period opposed the creation of the state of Israel.

The Zionist cause gained critical momentum in the wake of World War II, however. Western nations, racked with guilt over the Holocaust, eagerly supported the creation of Israel in Palestine so that Jews could have a homeland. Many Jewish refugees actually

preferred to emigrate to the United States, but they were not welcome. (5) And so, the mostly Arab occupants of Palestine were made to pay for the crimes of Western Christendom.

After the announcement of Palestine's partition in 1947, violence broke out on both sides. Two of Israel's terrorist armies, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi led by Menachem Begin and LEHI (the Stern Group), led by Yitzhak Shamir, massacred 250 Arabs (including 100 women and children) at Deir Yassin in April 1948. Massacres such as these spurred the mass exodus of many of the Arabs. Yitzhak Shamir later became Israel's Foreign Minister, and Menachem Begin later became Israel's first Prime Minister. (6)

Before it was over, some 40 massacres of unarmed Palestinians had been committed, more than 400 villages and urban neighborhoods had been systematically destroyed, and about 750,000 Palestinians had lost their homes. (7)

Another major war occurred 19 years later, in 1967. Israel used this conflict as an opportunity to seize additional territories (including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) for "security purposes." Millions of Palestinians have suffered under the Israeli military occupation ever since, a problem admitted by Israel's current Foreign Minister Shimon Peres who said



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earlier this year that "We cannot keep three and a half million Palestinians under siege without income, oppressed, poor, densely populated, near starvation." (8)

Is that what Isaiah and other prophetic books are all about - bloody conquest and military occupation?

The Abrahamic Covenant

If today's Middle-Eastern conflict is unrelated to the Bible's messianic prophecies, how does it relate to the Abrahamic covenant? The key text for this discussion deserves close consideration:

The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:1-3, NIV).

This last verse, verse 3, is the key text cited for military aid to the modern-day state of Israel. In his March 4 speech, Senator Inhofe made that point explicitly. But is that how Paul

applied this text in the New Testament?

Paul's interpretation of Genesis 12:3 is spelled out in Galatians 3:7-9:

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

According to Paul, the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in God's covenant community made up of both Jews and Gentiles (including Arabs), not in a political or ethnic nation-state apart from the coming of the Messiah. This New Testament interpretation is not limited to Paul. Compare Acts 3:25.

In Romans 4 as well as Galatians 3, Paul argued that the promise to Abraham was made available not just to Abraham's literal descendants through Isaac (the Jews), but equally to Gentiles as well as Jews on the basis of faith (cf. Rom. 4:16,17). As he put it in Galatians 3:29: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the

promise" (NIV).

From the perspective of early Christian faith, then, covenant Israel has been redefined. The "new covenant" has replaced the old (cf. particularly Heb. 8:6-13). God's people are no longer confined to a single, theocratic nation. The promises made to Abraham are focused in Christ and given to all members of the new covenant community, Jews as well as Gentiles.

Of course, this is what became the unique Christian perspective. The mainstream of Judaism did not ultimately take this route; it took a very different turn and developed in very different ways. This immediately raises an important question, to which we now turn.

The Problem of Anti-Semitism

What does the foregoing mean for Jews who did not choose to follow Jesus as their Messiah? This thorny question is what Paul struggled with in Romans 9-11. Commentators differ over Paul's exact meaning, but agree that Paul was afraid that the church might become arrogant and abuse the Jews (Rom. 11:11-32). Unfortunately, the church did not long heed Paul's warning, and history is replete with examples of anti-Semitism in the church.

Persecution of Jews has not been limited to the church, however. Muslim persecution of



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both Christians and Jews is a very real problem in many nations today. And there are Islamic militants battling Israel who are not interested in a negotiated settlement to the current conflict. Suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks ignite military reprisals, sieges, and targeted assassinations from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

For about one-fifth of Jews and one-fifth of Palestinians, there is no room for compromise. Islamic militants and Israeli settlers of the Palestinian territories occupied since the 1967 war are out for a full victory. For these, the battle over Palestine is a religious battle between the God of the Jews and the God of the Muslims.

However, this is not simply a religious conflict, and certainly not just a Jewish-Muslim conflict. Many Palestinian Arabs are Christians, for instance, and suffer right alongside other Palestinians under the Israeli military occupation.

Suicide bombings cannot be explained simply in terms of Islamic martyrdom. Most Muslims, obviously, do not resort to such desperate tactics. These are last-ditch resistance efforts for those who feel they have no other options.

Are there options and alternatives?

Solutions

As the foregoing observations imply, the Middle East conflict is not simple and straightforward. Unfortunately, black-and-white, simplistic application of Bible passages to the conflict distorts the issues and hinders the path to peace. For many, such as Senator Inhofe, Scriptural promises preclude any compromise over the "holy land."

However, what if Christians were to take their cue, not from various interpretations of Bible prophecy, but directly from the ethical teachings of Jesus? This would lead to a far different approach. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus blessed the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9) and urged love for enemies over retaliation (Matt. 5:38-48). Peacemaking Christians, I submit, would be less likely to provide military support to the conflict.

In the long term, the best possible situation would be neither a Jewish state nor an Islamic state, but a bi-national, secular democratic state with equal rights and representation for both Jews and non-Jews. That is not likely to happen in the near future, however. A more achievable scenario for now is a two-state solution, an Israeli state within its pre-1967 borders and a Palestinian state made up of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Key issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, the return of Palestinian refugees,

and the fate of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories will also have to be worked out equitably.

There is no other option for deescalating the conflict. Until at least a two-state solution can be worked out, the conflict will continue. Our Father in Heaven cannot possibly be pleased about that. ☩

(1) From Sen. Inhofe's web page at <http://inhofe.senate.gov/floorspeeches.htm>.

(2) "The Honest Broker: U.S. Arms Transfers to Israel, January 2001-March 2002." ANTIFA INFO-BULLETIN, No. 344, Palestine Solidarity Issue, April 11, 2002, at <http://lists.antifa.net/pipermail/antifanetint/2002-April/000013.html>.

(3) Ramzy Baroud, "America, We Feel Your Pain, Do You Feel Ours?" Middle East News Online, September 15, 2001, at <http://www.lbbs.org/baroudcalam.htm>

(4) Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press), 1999, p. 90.

(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 92ff.

(6) *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.

(7) John Pilger, "John Pilger sees Israel denying its past." *New Statesman*, June 3, 2002.

(8) Associated Press, February 21, 2002.



A Hard Look at Islam

Author Unknown

Islam: Lies and violence comprise the foundation of this "religion." Islam is built on an edifice of deception. And, in the unashamed words of many of its followers, it feeds and grows on a diet of human misery and blood. As such it IS intent on forcing the world into submission . . . no matter how much pain and fear it inflicts. No one suffers more under it than those who are caught in its grip. It is working to devour Israel . . . it is softening the West for the kill.

The Muslim religion is both a religion as well as a society: religion and state as one. Whoever is not a member of this religion is considered a foreigner and an outsider. According to Islam, at least for the foreseeable future, no pluralistic or democratic society can exist. Islam cannot and must not agree to any non-Islamic rule. Just as Islam is considered citizenship, it is also the HOUSE OF ISLAM: all lands on which Muslims live, or which were ever conquered by Muslims, are considered part of the

House of Islam forever.

Allah. In Muhammad's time, Allah was not a concept of God but the name of one tribal Djinn he chose to elevate above hundreds of others.

Quote: Islam's big lie, which underpins all the falsehoods upon which it stands, holds that the source of the "revelation" imparted to Muhammad is the God of the Bible worshipped by Christians and Jews.

In fact, Allah was the name of the pagan moon god to whom temples were built across the Middle East. When Muhammad was born, Allah's statue stood, with over 300 others, in the pagan Ka'bah shrine. Perpetuating the lie, Islam calls itself "one of the three great monotheistic faiths." In fact, it is simply refined idolatry. The "prophet" merely abolished the worship of the other gods, and elevated the moon god, also known as the Lord of the Ka'bah, to "one true god" status. To deceive non-Muslims, Muslims back up the claim that they

worship God by pointing out that the word "Allah" appears in the Arabic-language Bible. BUT . . . while the noun "allah" does mean "god," as a proper noun it has no connection to the name of the God of Israel, the One who calls Himself YHWH. Writes a former Muslim, now a Christian,

"the spirit who calls himself Allah is a spirit full of lies, who took upon himself the old Arabic name of God, wearing it over his face like a mask and claiming to be God. Allah in Islam is an unclean spirit of Satan, who rules with great power in a religious disguise to this very day."✠

Quoted from *Middle East Digest*, March 1996

Isaiah 14:2: "They shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors."



Inheritance

Pastor Don Ward

This article is an excerpt from the "Something to Think About" series.

A German writer, Erich Sauer, in his book *Triumph of the Crucified* (1952) wrote, "Belief in the visible kingdom of God on the old earth was originally the common spiritual property of all Christians. Only with the start of the growing Catholicism was it lost, as by Clement, Origen and Augustine."

The kingdom of God makes sense out of the Bible from beginning to end — from the heavens and earth created new in Genesis to the glorious "new heavens and earth" of Revelation 21.

Did God pronounce His creation "good and very good" only to finally destroy it (Gen. 1:31)? Was His original purpose completely thwarted beyond redemption by the fall? "For this is what the LORD says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18).

Daniel describes God's kingdom as the last and lasting kingdom. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever" (Daniel 2:44).

Sin and God's subsequent curse have taken their toll. But Jesus is returning to restore and make improvements. "He [Jesus] must remain in heaven

until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:21).

The primary purpose of inheritance was land. God selected Abraham to be the father of His chosen race and made a covenant with Abraham that he and his descendants would inherit land as an everlasting possession (Gen. 13:14-15; 17:7-8). The land of Canaan was only a shadow of a greater, future fulfillment which includes the whole world (Rom. 4:13). But from that time the promised inheritance of land ("the earth," KJV) was reiterated to the faithful of that race (consider just Psalms alone: 25:13; 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34). Even as Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

Yet the promised inheritance made to Abraham and his faithful descendants was never fulfilled, again pointing to a future fulfillment — the coming kingdom of God. "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised" (Heb. 11:39).

So far the promised inheritance appears to be only for the faithful national Israel. And it would be except for Jesus. Through Christ, Gentile peoples can also share in the same promised inheritance made to Abraham and his descendants! "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's*

seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29). Salvation no longer has any national distinctions.

Still, many think salvation comes in two varieties: one for Israel and one for Gentile Christians. No. Salvation is the same and our opportunities are the same through expressed faith in Christ Jesus. Romans 11:17-22 explains that where Israel was broken off because of faith, Gentiles are grafted in to the same plan of salvation.

Chapters 2 and 3 of Ephesians are very helpful here. We quote only Ephesians 3:6: "This mystery is that through the gospel the *Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise* in Christ Jesus."

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory . . . Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; *take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world*'" (Matt. 25:31, 34).

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

Have you responded to this "good news"? Now is the day of salvation. We can be among those who will "inherit the earth." You know the saying, "God made only so much real estate." And I'm afraid without an inheritance we are not going to have any of it. ☩



Seven Ways a Father Can Improve Leadership in the Family

Hans and Donna Finzel



Cover Story

1. Pray!

Above all, my dad is a man of prayer. He and Mom prayed for each of us and our future mates, even before our births. Every problem was prayed about, every need brought before God.

2. Listen!

From the time your children are young, make time to give them your undivided attention. This should be on a regular basis so they feel you truly care. I still treasure the breakfasts out with Daddy when I had time with him alone, and I continue to enjoy those rare occasions we can be together.

3. Put your family first.

Learn how to set aside your work — leave it at the office, and build a relationship with your family. That will establish important memories for each child.

4. Love them unconditionally.

Encourage your children to be who God wants them to be. Ask the Lord to show you the special needs of each child, and then be creative in leading them to grow.

5. Live what you believe.

That does not mean you have to be perfect. Just be willing to walk according to God's Word, and *ask* forgiveness from your kids or wife if you blow it by your words or actions. Then start over again.

6. Seize the moment.

Make the time, and tune into those teachable moments with your kids. Share your heart. Be sure to tell your kids your own spiritual journey, and explain why you choose to do what you do (go to church, not go certain places, etc.)

7. Take time *alone* with each child to focus on him or her.

Talk through with your spouse each of your visions of the needs and gifts of each child, and get alone with each one on a regular basis. If possible, schedule one or two of your business trips a year to include one of your children.

Relief Tips for Guilty Fathers:

- Lower your expectations and do what you can do.
- Think bite-size pieces: start with having family devotions, maybe just once or twice a week. Use a creative devotional book to help you, and pray together. Today's Christian bookstores are filled with great family devotional aids. Then come up with a list of annual minimal goals for what you would like to do with the children to provide spiritual influence.
- Be honest with your children about your struggles, and ask them for their input. Confession is good for not only your soul, but theirs.
- Make this area a part of your accountability group.
- Beg, borrow, and steal any good ideas you can find from other fathers who seem to make this work.
- If you fail, just start over. The future is a blank check that you can invest however you decide.

(continued on back cover)



Seven Ways a Father Can Improve Leadership in the Family

Hans and Donna Finzel

(continued from page 19)

Support Tips for Wives and Mothers

- Learn to back off. Work at allowing your husband the freedom and room to lead.
- Learn to back up. Pray for your husband, for the Lord to help him lead spiritually, and remember

to support him when he does take the initiative.

- When you both fail (not if you fail), get back up and give it another try. Don't feel defeated. Starting over is always better than giving up. †

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Hans and Donna Finzel have been married for 25 years. Dr.

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Excerpted from *The Top Ten Ways to Love Your Wife*, Cook Communications Ministries. Used by permission.

Upcoming Articles

Look for these articles in future issues of THE RESTITUTION HERALD:

- Hell is the Grave
- The Glory
- I Will Come Again

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The Restitution Herald

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Volume 91 Number 7



His Return!
How close
are we?

Also in this Issue:

I Will Come Again

Now and Hereafter

One Step Nearer to the Restitution of All Things

Why I'm a Restitutionist

The Gifts Money Can't Buy



Editorial

According to baseball great Yogi Berra, “The future just ain’t what it used to be.” And so it seems. Life in the 21st century seems bleaker than it was during the prosperous 90s. Unemployment is increasing, the terrorism threat is menacing, the stock market continues to perform anemically, and corporate scandals reverberate across the financial landscape.

Bleak as the outlook may seem today, the future has never been brighter for the citizen of the Coming Kingdom. Throughout its history, this magazine — *The Restitution Herald* — has served as a beacon and a messenger of the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Amidst the historic storms of World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, and other major events, *The Restitution Herald* has joyously and enthusiastically proclaimed the Age to Come — the age of perfect peace, prosperity, and health under the direct leadership of Jesus Christ. Against the bleak background of the tragic and cataclysmic events of this present age is the bright beacon of hope that *The Restitution Herald* proclaims.

In this issue you will find articles of Kingdom hope that have been published through the years, even dating back to the very first issue of *The Restitution Herald*. It is especially interesting to note that at least one article spoke of the future regathering of Israel as a nation — some 37 years before this significant event actually took place. Keen Bible scholars at that time were noting what many other Bible scholars had neglected. Such is the heritage handed down to us.

As you read these challenging and timeless articles it is our hope that this edition of *The Restitution Herald* will rekindle your excitement and enthusiasm for the coming Kingdom of God. Never has the need been greater for the world to hear this vital message and never has there been a greater opportunity to take this great message out. Our publications, television, radio and the Internet are rich with opportunities to take this gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world “as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

I want to take this opportunity to mention that editor Jeff Fletcher is temporarily away from his duties while on a brief sabbatical. Those of us involved in the publication of *The Restitution Herald* in the interim consider it a privilege.

May you be blessed and motivated as you read these timeless articles.

Steve Taylor
Director of Communications
Church of God General Conference



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 THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16) AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.



Christ Will Soon Return

Frank H. Hemphill, M.D.

THE RESTITUTION HERALD. Vol. 1, No. 1. October 12, 1911

Christ's return with his reward to the faithful is without doubt the greatest thought in the life of a Christian. But as we go along through life's battles, what I consider of the greatest interest to me in this life, and what reminds me more often than anything else that our Savior is to return, is to watch the signs of the times.

As I read articles in newspapers of the world's daily routine with the daily inventions, etc., and especially the preparations for warfare, I feel so sure that Christ's return cannot be far off. It does not look possible that it could be but a few years more, probably during this century.

The Jews are so rapidly returning to Jerusalem, the perfection of travel on earth is surely almost complete, and next comes the machinery for carrying on warfare in the air which is now being perfected at a rapid rate.

At the rate the improvements and inventions are going on I might safely say a few months or possibly years until that is completed. The world is to grow worse and worse until Christ's return.

How can it be much worse unless it is during the last great

battle? We are almost where Sodom and Gomorrah were at the time of their destruction, especially in what is termed the higher class of society. Also, politically, a great percent of our law-making bodies are rotten and degraded — can be bought and sold.

We are fast coming to the time spoken of in Revelation 13 where the mark of the beast holds sway. Within the last few years we see the beast crawling into politics and the labor question.

It is now beginning to be necessary to have the mark of the beast to hold a position or to buy or sell. A man must belong to the union, or to the lodge, to the society, or to the church to get a job. They are all gradually working toward the mark of the beast.

Some day now, right soon, we must stand up for Christ probably to be killed as the Revelator says or to wear the mark of the beast. Perilous times are coming.

The union of the Protestant churches is being talked of, which many people think means great good, but it is where the faithful are to be tested. That union of churches, if formed, will surely lead us astray if we join them. They are to lead to one point — the beast.

Someday soon we are going to be asked the question that was asked of Peter (when he denied Jesus), but it will be too near the end to take chances on denying Him. Peter had a chance to be forgiven, but we may not have another chance as time draws to a close. In Peter's time the gospel was just being spread, in fact, just started, and Jesus was ready to excuse Peter, but now after all these years the message has been carried to the corners of the world and there will be no excuse, especially if we delay too long.

The day is far spent. Twilight is coming on. According to the signs of the times we are traveling along the road where there are by-roads which branch off and easily lead us astray. The by-roads of popular, modern doctrines lead us out into the marshy land where we mire.

It is easy to get into the mire but hard to get out. The Church of God is going to have perilous times to keep the straight road against modern theology. Times are to get worse and worse and we will need all the strength possible to overcome. May we stay close together in the faith.

Jesus will soon be here and settle all our troubles and shortcomings. ☩



Why I'm a Restitutionist

John Remer

THE RESTITUTION HERALD,
12/14/1911

Some time ago I told the editor of *The Restitution Herald* that I would write an article for the paper telling the readers why I am a believer in the doctrine of a restitution of everything lost in father Adam's disobedience to be restored through our Lord Jesus Christ's obedience.

Why should I believe this?

I will just say that God's Word teaches me this from Genesis to Revelation. In the type set forth in the first lamb that Abel killed to make an offering to God is set forth the Redeemer and Restorer's blood, and I am praising God and His Son Jesus Christ for the wonderful plan of redemption and restitution.

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11-12).

Glory to His name, I say, from the whole heart. Redemption from what? From the curse, from sin, and from the grave. The curse that was put upon the earth will disappear when Christ comes again to make a restoration.

See the promises by the prophet Isaiah (55:13): "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Why do I believe it? Because God has spoken it by His holy prophets and I could not be called a believer and not believe what God has said in His blessed book, the Bible.

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up from now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward, for all the land thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever" (Gen. 15:4).

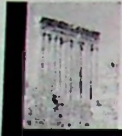
Take notice that there is not a word said about Abraham's receiving a foot of space in heaven. It was the land he could see from where he was standing. I imagine that he was kneeling down praying when the angel spoke to him. Now we learn that this promise has not been fulfilled yet, but will be when the Christ, the seed mentioned, appears. See also Genesis 22:16-18 and 48:3-4. Hear what Jacob said to Joseph. Read the promise that God made to Jacob after Abraham had died, that He would give this land to "thy seed after thee" for an everlasting possession.

Heaven is not mentioned here, either. Now to the restitution of

God's people back to their own land again and for the last time see Ezekiel 37:12-14: "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people; I will open your graves and bring you into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My spirit in you; and ye shall live and I shall place you in your own land, then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord."

When this is done, there will not be a disbelieving Jew living, for this will convince them all. Amen. Jeremiah says that when this is done, they will never be plucked up nor thrown down any more forever (Jer. 31:40). See also Jeremiah 23:5-6: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness. Glory to his name. This is why Paul says Christ has become wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. This is redemption from the power of the grave (1 Cor. 1:30). "Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall



Why I'm a Restitutionist

John Remer

come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life everlasting, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 1:9).

When? When he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe,

when he shall be sent from heaven by the Father for the restoring of all things spoken by all the holy prophets since the world began.

In Acts 19:36, Peter says, "and it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hear this prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." So you see by Paul and Peter that the ungodly and

unbeliever that will not hear are to be destroyed from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

Even so come Lord Jesus and come quickly (Rev. 22:20). I am so glad that our Father in Heaven has told of His love to all of His children. He so loved the world that whosoever believeth should have everlasting life. ☩



Israel's Woe and Coming Joy

Reprinted from 1928 RH

J. E. Hatch

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" (Ps. 137:1-4).

David here pictured the woe and sorrow of God's chosen people in the land of their captivity, Babylon. Their captors asked of them music and the joyful songs of Zion, but their hearts were too heavy and their sorrow too great. They wept and mournfully hung their harps up on the willows.

Israel had tried God's patience and longsuffering by repeatedly transgressing His statutes and ordinances. Hoshea, the last of the kings of the ten

tribes (all of whom did evil in the sight of God), and his people were carried captive into the land of the Assyrians about 721 years before Christ (2 Kings 17:23). The last king of Judah (Zedekiah) was wicked, as many before him had been, and he, with his people, was carried away captive to Babylon about 610 BC (2 Kings 24:15-18). Thus was all Israel scattered among the nations. "Such as are for the captivity, to the captivity" (Jer. 15:2).

God had thus fulfilled His word and all Israel was scattered. Judah and Benjamin returned to Jerusalem for a time, but at the destruction of Jerusalem, about 70 AD, their final banishment occurred.

But what say the prophets? "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger... And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever... And I will make

an everlasting covenant with them. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land" (Jer. 32:37, 39-41; Amos 9:15). Other prophets also verify these promises to Israel.

A blessed time awaits all Israel, and also all who follow the Lord, out of every nation and kindred and tongue, for with God there is no respect of persons. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. 60:3). ☩



Now and Hereafter

FROM the archives of THE RESTITUTION HERALD

The Restitution Herald

It is a very common thing today to find persons honestly questioning whether or not Christianity is a practical, worthwhile thing. And it is good to consider this carefully. A large percentage of our businessmen are looking at religion from a distance, and are really feeling that they, as people of the world, not of the Church, have the better side of life.

Christianity to our understanding is not so much an emotional thing — it is a business proposition. No business is worthy of our effort and investment, which will not pay legitimate dividends in one way or another. Therefore, we know of but one proper way to get at this matter and we wish you to carefully consider the following brief outline. The object of this outline is to compare or contrast the conditions that we must deal with at present with those which Christianity presents the opportunity of dealing with in the future.

1. First let us consider the literal earth upon which we live. Genesis 3:17, 18 shows how the ground was affected by the curse, and we see that evidence around us today upon every hand. No part of the earth's surface is free from imperfections, and a large percentage of it is absolutely worthless. In contrast to that condition of the present, read Isaiah 41:19, 20, and see how some of these things shall be changed when Christ's kingdom is established. Add to that Isaiah 55:13 and 35:1, 2, and you have a complete picture of the earth with the curse removed, and with the

solitary, worthless places made useful and beautiful for man.

2. But in addition to living upon an imperfect earth today, we find ourselves under jurisdiction of imperfect governments. This is necessarily true because our governments are manmade, and imperfect man cannot make a perfect government, nor can he establish a righteous system of judgment. Hence, the poor today are oppressed, and no person feels satisfied. Now we read Isaiah 11:2-4 and Isaiah 2:2-4, and behold the picture of the future kingdom. There is a Ruler and government in which all persons shall have confidence, for his judgment will be righteous — based upon divine wisdom. Not only, then, does the Bible hold out a picture and promise of a perfected earth, but those dwelling there shall enjoy a perfect government.

3. There are other things, however, which help to mar the present. None of us are satisfied with our surroundings or environment. We have some neighbor we should like to be rid of, or some social condition does not suit us. Possibly someone has offended us, or we feel that certain others are being treated better than we are. Please read and carefully consider Jeremiah 31:34. Oh, what a contrast to the present, when all our neighbors as well as ourselves shall have come to know the Lord — and to know Him is to serve Him. This can never be until the other prophecy of Scripture comes true: "The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." The environment then will be ideal. No one will have any complaints. Add

this contrast to the others listed above.

4. But even with the changes referred to there still would not be perfect happiness. If you placed man upon a perfect earth and gave him a perfect government, and surrounded him with an ideal environment, he still could not enjoy those blessings with perfect freedom if his life were as it is now. Death stares us in the face. No matter how beautiful other things may be, the brevity of life throws a shadow over all. How comforting, then, the many promises concerning the gift of God, eternal life. Read, for example, Romans 2:7, 8.

Here then, is your contrast. Draw your own conclusion. This age furnishes an imperfect earth to live upon and an imperfect government to live under, while our environment is not the best to say the least. Furthermore, we have only a brief span of years to live here, and to make what we can out of life. Christianity as a business investment offers us a perfect earth, ruled over by a perfect government, ideal surroundings or environment, and eternity in which to enjoy these matchless blessings. Is it a good investment? Is it worth your while and mine? If so let's put all we have into it.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" — Apostle Paul. ☩



The Reality of God

FROM the archives of THE RESTITUTION HERALD

William Olney

There is nothing more needed today throughout the world, civilized and uncivilized, than a consciousness of THE LIVING GOD. If we can help to increase or foster that consciousness in any small degree, we shall do few better services for mankind. The first chapter of Genesis is the charter of natural religion. When once the mind is guided by it, God Himself is in daily evidence. The morning light; the star-lit sky; the autumn gold; the spring's new life; intelligent thought and will; the life which science reveals as moving, even in the dust at our feet; the startling stores of power in the atmosphere around us, now being unlocked by scientific discovery from day to day; all speak of the reality of God.

God's purpose in the call of Abraham, and the promises given to him concerning his innumerable descendants, are fulfilled before our eyes. Old though the illustration may be, it can never fail of force, that when Charles V of Spain asked his chaplain for the most powerful evidence of Christianity, the latter answered: "The Jews, your Majesty." But Abraham's spiritual descendants are not to be forgotten in the assurance of blessing God gave to his servant of old. Like the stars

of heaven, innumerable for human calculation, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Abraham's seed in both lines, natural and spiritual, declare the existence of the faithful Promise, i.e., *the reality of God.*

The Promised One

Someone has said that the distinctive characteristic of Christianity, marking it off from all false religions, is the historicity of Christ's earthly life, as witnessed to by early authors, both Christian and heathen. But that historicity has another value; the older documents of our faith, which are proved by the Jews to be antecedent to the New Testament writings, contain foretellings of the coming Messiah — in clear prophecy, in types, and in symbols of the most various description. One might almost say the eyes of the nation, following the pointer of inspiration, were ever directed to the Coming One; and in a perfectly divine and miraculous manner, the details of those foreshadowings were fulfilled in Christ, in His birth, life, character, teachings, works, death, resurrection and results of His mission to earth. The Bible readings which Christ gave to His disciples after His resurrection have been echoed

all down the centuries since. He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Herein again we see *the reality of God.*

The divine power which, since Christ's ascension, has accomplished the preaching of His Cross, is undiminished. Although that Cross was related to the execution of a common slave, yet the glorious energy of the gospel message, of which it is the center, is unrivalled in its extraordinary results. The miracle of the new birth; the maintenance of faith in years of persecution; the spiritual morality which marks the true followers of the Lamb; these are reflected in the ordinary expectation of the world, that Christians should manifest a righteousness beyond its reach. The separateness of the church from the world, and its mysterious and divine life, declare *the reality of God.* ☩



Peace on Earth

Reprinted from RH Dec. 16, 1941



Almost two thousand years ago a group of shepherds on the hills near Bethlehem were privileged to hear a chorus of angels from heaven announce in song the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior. The content of this message is very interesting to us at this time. The message was, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord! Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:10, 11, 14). Yes, at the birth of Christ, tidings of peace on earth were sung, but we realize that it was not yet time for these tidings to fully come to pass. It is true that Jesus has given us, through the Word, the Holy Spirit, the "peace that passeth understanding," but there has not yet appeared "peace on earth."

Man has ever strived for peace, and most of the wars have been fought under the guise that the warring nations were seeking peace. At the conclusion of the first World War, one that was proclaimed to be "a war to end all wars," the Versailles Treaty was formulated. While it was not considered to be what the world

needed at that time, it was the only thing upon which the men who were formulating it could agree. We know how futile it has been. As early as 1935, Adolf Hitler denounced it, and now it is only a forgotten document. From time to time during the last twenty years, there have been attempts, honest attempts, to bring about permanent world peace. The League of Nations was the most prominent of these efforts, but as early as 1931, Japan repudiated the League when it attacked China for no justifiable reason and appropriated a large slice of that country. In rapid succession, Italy and Germany also ignored any effort that the League made to hold their conquests, and the great League of Nations, upon which men pinned such great hope, is also a bitter memory. More recently do we member the famous Munich farce at which Hitler promised that he would refrain from taking any more land from his neighbors, and Prime Minister Chamberlain uttered those words that will be forever associated with his name: "This means peace in our time." A merciful God has spared him the knowledge of how wrong he was by taking him in death, 'ere Hitler could scarcely get started to conquer the world.

What is the meaning of all these peace efforts and their failures? This is difficult for the ordinary person who has no knowledge of the Scripture to understand, but to a student of the Bible it is no mystery. We are fully warned in I Thessalonians 5 that we are to expect these things. Verse 3 of this chapter has been quoted by writers and ministers many times, but

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never before in our history have the words, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them," meant more to us. As this article is written (December 8, 1941) the declaration of war on Japan will go down in history as one of the greatest betrayals ever connected with human events. Even as our President was negotiating with two of their representatives, that enemy nation was silently preparing for war against us.

As citizens of the United States, we are angry and resentful at such cowardly tactics, but as citizens of the Kingdom, we should be watchful and prayerful, for Paul continued in his letter to the Thessalonians: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Our Savior also warned us about these things and gave us these words for our consideration: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Yes, we have been duly warned. The coming of our Lord cannot be very far away. It behooves each one of us to watch, pray, and above all, to work, that many will be brought to Christ before it is too late. When He comes the song the angels sang to the shepherds will at last be fulfilled, for the "Prince of Peace" will surely bring "peace on earth, good will toward men." May God hasten that day! ✠



Clippings and Comments

Reprinted from RH Jan 20, 1942

Grover Gordon

The following is part of a 1936 clipping from *The Jewish Era* which may be of interest to students of prophecy: "What Mussolini Promised the Jews"

"Lord Rothermere, who owns the *London Daily Mail*, the paper that has the largest circulation in Great Britain, writes: 'Morally we are under no obligation to remain (in Palestine). Financially, we incur a heavy loss in doing so. Politically, our futile efforts to make Palestine an almshouse for Jews expose us to dangerous hostility from all the 8,500,000 Arabs in the Middle East.' It is of immense significance that when Signor Mussolini some years ago applied to the League of Nations for the mandate of Palestine and Abyssinia, and was refused, he simultaneously promised the Jews, immediately on receipt of the mandate, to give them the Mosque of Omar and the Temple area."

Another clipping (I do not recall its source) which is informative and interesting to students of prophecy, follows:

Communism and Fascism

"The rival of Communism is Fascism, and like its great opponent, it demands nothing less than world domination. Herein is the Gentile world divided between two vital

forces, the former defying God, the church, and the Jews; the latter claiming to represent God, friendly with the professing church, and planning alliance with the Jews. Rome is also planning to secure the mandate for Palestine. Mussolini has declared that the mandate to Britain is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, that what is required is an autonomous Jewish State of 80,000,000 Jews, self-governing, but under the mandate of Italy. Roman Catholicism has been formally recognized as the religion of Fascism."

Another news item which I saw, but do not seem to have, was to the effect that Mussolini had promised he would put a million Jews in Palestine in a year, in case the mandate were given to him.

Back in 1921, Mussolini startled the world with this statement: "I would enter into alliance at this moment with the Devil himself, with Antichrist, if that would give this poor country five years of tranquility, of restoration, or peace."

It seems to me to be in the realm of possibility that Mussolini may quit his Axis partner since the failure to overthrow Communism, and even join the Allies, if, of course, some concessions were made in the Mediterranean. In that case, Germany and Russia

might be drawn together, though Russia has agreed not to make a separate peace — she did in the last war. France said she would not make a separate peace in this war, but in a few days she did. We seem to be living when nations do not cleave to one another. Treaties are made one day and broken the next.

The present alignment of nations does not fit the picture which Ezekiel gives to us, so we must look to some future time for development along that line.

Regardless of who wins the present conflict, it seems evident the outcome will be a "New Order" in Europe, Asia, and perhaps the whole world. I am wondering if it will not be the federation of ten kings who give their power to the Beast (whoever or whatever it is), until the words of God shall be fulfilled (Rev. 17:12-17).

As we are watching history rapidly flowing into the mold of prophecy, we may differ in our ideas as to just how these things are coming about, but at the same time be open-minded enough to accept the facts as they appear, and be ready to change our opinions (if we have any) to fit the ever-changing scenes. We have already witnessed several changes that were not expected, and we should not be surprised if more unexpected developments



Clippings and Comments

Grover Gordon

should come, for Daniel was inspired to write concerning the “days of these kings” (the ten-toe kingdom): “They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (Dan. 2:42-44). Notice the seeming two stages of development in verses 41 and 42: the “feet and toes,” part potter’s clay, which is “miry” (“muddy,” C.B.), and the “toes of the feet,” part iron and part clay. So, the kingdom shall be partly (Heb. *kezath* is translated in Daniel 4:29 and other places, “*at the end*”) strong (“hard,” C.B.), and partly broken (“brittle,” marg.) — a good condition for the Stone to strike!

In looking over the clippings in my scrapbook, I see these headlines dated 1926: “League Lays Plan for Control of Beaten Powers,” “Commission Meets at Geneva to Formulate Supervision of Armaments,” and Ten Nations to Rule.” If that last headline has any meaning in the light of Daniel’s prophecy, we may have witnessed the first stage of development of the “toe” kingdoms. It is said of the League, that it was too soft. It had no power to enforce its mandates, being possibly in the “miry” stage. We are told, however, that the present conflict will result in a “new and stronger League of Nations” — probably harder, yet when clay hardens it

becomes brittle. Another headline of about the same time reads: “Europe and Japan to Make or Break Arms Conference,” and “Ten Nations, or Fourth World, Will Decide the Future of All.” Each group of the nations fears the other group. We are now witnessing these groups, with a few changes in each, battling to an all-out decision. It is interesting to know the names of the nations that are listed in each group. Of those who were listed on the council of the League, France, Italy, and Japan are on the other side at present. On the other hand, all those who are listed in the other group as military nations are either on the side of the Axis or have been taken by them, except Russia and Turkey.

Here is another clipping from *Our Sunday Visitor* of August 24, 1941:

The Only Mediator
“With the author of the article featured in this issue of our paper, the editor of the *Detroit News* believes that Pope Pius XII is the only person in the world today who can work effectively towards the restoration of peace. Declaring that all hope for successful mediation rests with him, the editor says: ‘No nation having any influence can qualify to mediate as a neutral. Yet there is an international authority

whose influence encircles the world, and that influence from the beginning has consistently been exercised on behalf of peace. Pope Pius XII is spiritual head of vast groups of the population of Great Britain and Germany...Renewal of peace appeals repeatedly made by the pope would offer better prospects of results than could be expected of any other attempts at mediation.”
Another article in the same (Catholic) paper headlines: “Pope Pius as Peacemaker” — “As He Has Won Peace Between Peru and Ecuador, He Could Stop World War” — “Vatican Is Only International Power Capable of Dealing Justly with All Nations” — “Is Historic Force for Peace.”
Quoting from this article: “This is the opportune time for the Pope to be called in as peacemaker. This is the solution which would be acceptable to a majority of the citizens of this country. It would be approved by 350,000,000.” †



The Gifts Money Can't Buy

Susan Lapp

Reprinted from The Children's Page, Dec. 91- Jan. 92

Jeff groaned as he plopped down on the bed and rolled over, staring at the ceiling, hands propped behind his head. "What am I going to do?" he thought, puckering his brow. "Mom told me I could budget my own money and do all of my own Christmas shopping this year. I felt so grown up, making my own choices. And now I've gone and blown all my money and I haven't even gotten anything for Dad! I can just see his face Christmas morning when everyone else opens their gifts from me. Ohhhh — I shouldn't have used up the last of my money on those stupid video games!

"Tom and Mike kept egging me on to play just one more game. I shouldn't have listened to them. What am I going to do? I can't tell Mom yet; I don't want to disappoint her if I don't have to... I know what I can do; I can talk it over with Grandpa. Maybe he can loan me some money or help me figure some way out of this mess."

Briskly walking down the sidewalk, Jeff jammed his hands deep into his pockets. He was glad he'd taken his mother's advice to wear a cap. He watched the cloud of moisture as he blew the breath out of his mouth. "Pretty soon it'll probably snow," he thought.

It wasn't long before Jeff was pouring out his troubles to his grandfather over a hot cup of cocoa his grandmother had fixed for him. "So what am I going to do, Grandpa? Do you have any

ideas? Can I borrow some money from you?"

Jeff's grandfather always took his time answering, carefully choosing his words. Gently stirring his coffee, he asked Jeff, "Do you think I'd be doing right giving you the money when your mother said you were to budget 'your own' money?"

Jeff thought a moment and responded quietly, "I guess not. But then what am I going to do?"

Grandfather took the spoon out of his coffee cup and set it on his saucer. "Well, I remember when we didn't have any money during the depression, and we had kind of a similar problem. We either made something out of something we already had, or we gave gifts money couldn't buy."

"I don't understand," said Jeff with a puzzled look on his face.

"Well, sometimes there were chores my daddy had to do that were kind of a burden to him, not that he ever complained. When I got big enough, I'd decorate a paper, making it like an official certificate saying how I'd take over a certain responsibility for him for the next year, so he wouldn't even have to think of it. It was a gift of love that kept on giving throughout the year. It really pleased my daddy and taught me a lesson about pleasing my heavenly Father too.

"God wants us to keep on trying to please Him every day, not just once in a while or on special occasions. It's our actions and

attitudes from day to day that show if we really love Him or not."

"Thanks for the talk, Grandpa," said Jeff. "I've got to get home for supper. And thanks for the cocoa, Grandma," he said, kissing her on the cheek.

Jeff thought about what his grandfather had said as he briskly walked home. He quickened his pace, the air temperature dropping as the light faded from the sky.

Later as Jeff looked out of the window at the frosty grass below, he decided what he'd do. He took out his markers and made a large official-looking document stating that he would take responsibility for shoveling all the snow from the sidewalk and driveway for the next year, without being reminded.

He remembered how his father had had to nag him to get any shoveling done last year. This year it would be different. He would show that he was growing up and could handle this responsibility himself.

After Christmas, there were a few times when Jeff just wanted to roll over and go back to sleep instead of facing the six inches of snow in the driveway — but then he'd remember his father and the gift that money couldn't buy. By the time spring arrived, Jeff realized that the gift he had given his father had also been of benefit to himself. He was proud of being grown up enough to successfully take on some of his own responsibilities. And he knew that his new responsible behavior had pleased his heavenly Father too. ☩



One Step Nearer to the Restitution of all Things

Reprinted from RH Dec '93-Jan '94

Mark Mattison

The recent televised images of Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the PLO's Yasser Arafat shaking hands have vividly illustrated the beginning of a process few have thought possible: the prospect of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. There is of course no guarantee that a meaningful peace is on the horizon, as Jewish and Palestinian protesters are seeking to thwart the process and as much more remains to be resolved between these peoples. Yet, doubtless many are asking: What should be our response to this unexpected news? Can these events be illuminated in the light of biblical prophecy? What precisely does the Bible predict about the Middle East?

Peace in the Middle East

Sooner or later (probably later than sooner) peace will abound in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs. This may be a tenuous peace indeed, but it will be peace nonetheless. This is illustrated by Daniel 9:27, which states that a "ruler who will come" (9:26, NIV) "will confirm a covenant with many," i.e., with Israel. This "ruler who will come" is elsewhere described symbolically as a "little horn" (7:8, 11, 20-22, 24-26; 8:9-12, 23-25) and "the king of the North" (11:21-45), a Middle Eastern ruler known to Isaiah as the "Assyrian" and to the Apostle John as "the beast" (cp. Isa. 30:31-33 with Rev. 19:19, 20). This ruler is the "Antichrist" who will promise peace and prosperity, but "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not

escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). This false "Messiah" will defile the Jerusalem Temple which will have been rebuilt (probably during this time of peace) and will initiate "a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then" (Dan. 12:1).

Jesus' Interpretation

This scheme is reiterated by our Lord in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). In response to His disciples' questions about the fall of the temple and the end of the age, Jesus draws on the Old Testament prophecies, particularly Daniel. In Matthew 24:15, 16 He states: "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that cause desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

The "abomination" of which Jesus spoke is found in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11, and it is implied in 8:13. This abomination, Daniel prophesied, was to be "set up" by the armed forces of "the king of the North." Significantly, Mark 13:14 describes the "abomination" in masculine terms: "You will see 'The Awful Horror' standing where *he* should not be" (GNB; cp. NIV text note, emphasis mine). This suggests that the "abomination" may actually be the king of the North himself, opposing and exalting "himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thess. 2:4).

Partial Fulfillment in AD 70

Luke's parallel account of this sermon emphasizes a fulfillment of the prophecy by the Romans in AD 70 during the Jewish revolt. In Luke, the "abomination that causes desolation" is replaced by "Jerusalem being surrounded by armies," and this is a sign that "its desolation is near." The inhabitants of Jerusalem, it was predicted, "will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (v. 24).

The Jewish historian Josephus recorded the terrorism unleashed by the Romans as they conquered a divided city. He also records the horrible carnage following the burning of the temple: "While the temple was in flames, the victors stole everything they could lay their hands on, and slaughtered all who were caught. No pity was shown to age or rank, old men or children, the laity or priests — all were massacred. As the flames roared up, and since the temple stood on a hill, it seemed as if the whole city were ablaze. The noise was deafening, with war cries of the legions, howls of the rebels surrounded by fire and sword, and the shrieks of the people. The ground was hidden by corpses, and the soldiers had to climb over the heaps of bodies in pursuit of the fugitives" (*The Jewish War*, VI, 271ff). He also records the activities of numerous false prophets (281ff), also predicted by Jesus (cf. Matt. 24:11, 24).

This vivid fulfillment has tempted many Bible students to regard the



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Mark Mattison

AD 70 destruction as the final fulfillment of Jesus' Olivet prophecy. Not all of the prophecy, however, found fulfillment in that destruction. The Temple was then defiled by the Romans, not "the king of the North." Furthermore, Jesus linked the destruction of the Temple with His return: "Immediately after the distress of those days" (Matt. 24:29), He taught, He would return (cp. Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-29). Of course He did not return in AD 70. Therefore, we should expect another "abomination" in another Jerusalem Temple.

It is not hard to believe that this will happen yet again. It has already happened twice; in the second century BC a Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, defiled the Temple and rendered it unfit for use. In the first century AD this was accomplished by the Romans. Just before the return of Christ, it will happen yet again. The principle that a prophecy can be fulfilled more than once is clearly demonstrated in other passages of Scripture. For example, 2 Samuel 7:12-14 predicted that David's son, Solomon, would be a mighty king and would build the Jerusalem Temple. The prophecy was fulfilled. According to Luke, however, this promise made to David is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 1:32, 33). Thus, God fulfilled His promise to King David twice.

A Question of Timing

Having said this, we must resist undue speculation about when these events are to happen. A popular timetable is sometimes read out of Jesus' parable of the fig

tree in Matthew 24:32, 33 (cp. Mark 13:28, 20; Luke 21: 29-31). There Jesus said: "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door." This is immediately followed by His statement that "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."

It is sometimes asserted that the budding of the fig tree represents the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Within one generation of that event, it is taught, the Olivet prophecy will be finally fulfilled and Christ will return. Then one can easily set — not a date, but a deadline — of Christ's return.

Before we speculate on the meaning of this saying, we must ask ourselves how Jesus applied this symbol. He is very clear in interpreting the parable (Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:29; Luke 21:31). As the budding fig tree points to the coming of summer, so do "all these things," i.e., the prophecies of Matthew 24:4-24, Mark 13:5-23, and Luke 21:8-24, point to His return.

What, then, of the "generation" which shall not pass away "until all these things have happened"? It is noteworthy that the Greek word for "generation," *genea*, can also mean "age." Jesus spoke of "this adulterous and sinful generation" (Mark 8:38), meaning not only the people living in His day but this whole "present evil age." Interpreted in this way, saying that "this age will certainly not pass away until all these things

have happened" becomes synonymous with the following statement that "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Conclusion

Jesus taught that prior to the end of the age, the Jerusalem Temple will be defiled by the abominating presence of a Middle Eastern Antichrist. This event will trigger the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; cp. Dan. 12:1) which will culminate in His return to destroy the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8). These events will be preceded by some sort of peace in the Middle East, but we have no way of knowing how near (or how far away) these events are. They may begin to transpire next year or they may transpire hundreds of years from now; we have no way of telling.

In the meantime, it is appropriate that we should celebrate and support any and all efforts to see peace realized in the nations around us. Lives are spared and improved when the threat of war and violence is diminished. Of course the human race will not be able to achieve peace before Christ returns, and in fact the world will grow much less peaceful before He does, but that does not nullify our obligation to "live at peace with everyone" if "it is possible" and "as far as it depends on" us (Rom. 12:18). ☩

¹ Paul L. Maier, trans., *Josephus: The Essential Writings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), 1988, p. 361.



I Will Come Again

Pastor Don Ward



This article is an excerpt from the "Something to Think About" series.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Is Jesus saying that He is going into heaven to fix up one of God’s big houses (inside His bigger house) for us to live in and then coming back when we die to take us there? Or is Jesus saying that He is going to heaven and then coming a second time for all the faithful at the end of the age? Actually, Jesus is saying neither.

Among other difficulties, the first scenario would have Jesus physically returning to earth many times while the Bible teaches that Jesus will come only a second time (Heb. 9:29).

The second is true but not the subject here. The words “come again” do not convey the strong sense of “return” which Jesus used to depict His second coming (Lk. 19:12). John’s “again” “has the idea of oscillatory repetition, once more, furthermore or on the other hand” (*Strong’s*). It is never used in relation to Jesus’ second coming. The meaning is more: “If I go, on the other hand, I will come and receive you unto myself.”

John 14:2-3 is part of a continuing theme throughout chapters 14-16, the theme of Jesus’ abiding presence. While Jesus is preparing the disciples for His physical absence He is introducing them to a new kind of presence. While He is leaving them physically He will be coming to them spiritually. He said, “I will not leave you comfortless [literally, “orphans,” NIV]: *I will come to you*” (John 14:18). Through the promised Spirit, both Father and Son are with us.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we will come* unto him, and make *our abode* with him” (John 14:23). In this way, although Jesus would

leave them physically, He would not be forsaking them (Heb. 13:5). It is an intimate relationship with the Father and with the Son on a new level. The spiritual proximity is so close we can even approach God’s throne.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14, 16).

It was a difficult concept for the apostles (and us) to grasp. Jesus explained the gift of the Spirit coming to them in several ways: as the spirit of truth, as the comforter and as the abiding presence of the Father and the Son.

What is Jesus doing in heaven? He is our High Priest, representing us before the Father, and so is *providing* a place for us in God’s *household*. (The word “prepare” in John 14:2 can also mean “provide” and the word “house” can also mean “household.”)

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself,

(continued on page 19)



Familiar With the Truth or in Love With It

Pastor Steve Taylor

One of the most sobering Bible passages is 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

“The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness!” (RSV)

A time is coming when an end-time world dictator will come to power. His ascent to power will occur amidst a frenzy of “spiritual” signs and wonders originating not from God, but from Satan. These “miraculous” events will have the effect of deceiving those who are perishing.

Now, here’s the really terrifying aspect of all of this: they perish “because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

What is so disturbing is the key condition listed here to avoid deception: loving the truth. Notice that it is not those who are “familiar” with the truth who will be saved from this deception; it will only be those who “love” the truth. Let me challenge you for a few moments to consider the vital difference between these two concepts.

We do well to remember that the enemy is familiar with the truth. When tempting Jesus in the wilderness he quoted Scripture:

“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” (Matthew 4:6, NIV).

Amazing! The enemy is familiar enough with the Bible to quote Psalm 91. And yet his knowledge of the Bible is anything but saving knowledge. He uses the Bible to create confusion rather than

understanding and salvation.

I find it interesting that some of the most insightful testimonies about Jesus while he was on earth came from demonic sources:

“He shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!...My name is Legion...for we are many’” (Mark 5:7, 9).

“A man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit... cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!’” (Mark 1:23, 24).

Even more astonishing is this insight from James 2:19:

“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”

This is a remarkable fact: demonic forces believe in



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the oneness of God, but knowledge of this truth causes them tremendous fear rather than rejoicing.

It is amazing that the demonic world understands and is fearful of a truth that the majority of churchgoers do not even understand. While the Christian community embraces the doctrine of the Trinity (3 gods in one), the forces of evil quake in fear at the truth of the oneness of God. Could it be that much of the church today poses little threat to the enemy's realm because it espouses a non-biblical belief of God and Jesus? This is a challenging question for every truth seeker — "lover of the truth" — to come to terms with.

It becomes very apparent that there is a vast difference between loving the truth and being familiar with it. Demonic beings are familiar enough with the truth to fear it and oppose it at every turn. That alone should cause every follower of Christ to be very discerning about what is presented in the name of

truth — "truth" may actually be a cleverly disguised lie.

A time is coming in which lovers of truth will be separated from those who are only familiar with truth. That time will be when a coming end-time world dictator will arise on the world scene. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 tells us he will come to power amidst miraculous power, signs and false wonders.

We live in such a time as this today. Many "miraculous" events are commonplace in certain Christian circles today. Countless numbers of people blindly accept these miracles as originating from God without ever considering the possibility that they might originate, not from God, but from the enemy. And these are the very people who are vulnerable to the great end-time deception of antichrist. A familiarity with the truth will not provide a solid anchor when one is assailed with the tricky emotional experiences of the "miraculous." It becomes

very easy for experience to take precedence over truth when one is only familiar with truth. Only a love for truth will prevent deception.

Do you love the truth or are you merely familiar with it? Do you carefully check out everything that you hear by the standard of God's Word? Are you learning truth firsthand from the Bible, or are you depending on others to tell you what it says? Your answer to these questions determines whether you are a lover of the truth or not.

Perhaps the one Bible verse that best exemplifies a truth-lover is Acts 17:11 —

"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

My prayer is for you to truly be a "Berean" who daily, on a firsthand basis, checks out everything from Scripture. This is truly the mark of a truth-lover. †



Connection: Getting Students Attached to Christ and His Church

Pastor Jon Cheatwood



You've heard it before: the church is losing young people. Kids who have grown up in the church are leaving it when they reach adulthood. Even the most active, ministry-oriented youth groups report that many students graduate from youth ministry and find that they have no connection with the church.

Some have grown up with parents who are church leaders. They spent their lives in church, but never grew a faith of their own. Their faith came second hand. These students often struggle with their faith more than we (or they) are willing to acknowledge. This is, unfortunately, not a new problem. It is one of the great challenges facing the church.

What are we going to do to stop this exodus from the church? What can we do to connect students to Christ and His church for a lifetime?

Youth ministry should aim to produce contemplative, Christian adults who are active in ministry, evangelism, fellowship, worship, and discipleship. These are not Christians who have merely heard of and been in contact with faith, but Christians who process what they hear and see, consider its impact on them and on their faith, and continue to seek God throughout their lives. The programs offered by the church should focus on bringing about changes, or turning points, in the lives of students and youth workers.

One way to stem the tide of departing students is to choose to minister with a personal vulnerability. We do a great disservice to students if we pretend that we have no struggles, no doubts, or no sin. We create an image in their heads that they later realize they cannot live up to, and this leads many to walk away from the church and from God. What they do not know is that we cannot live up to that image either.

We have struggles, and we should face them honestly. The church should work to create

an atmosphere in which a student's struggles are embraced, explored, and resolved. Doing so allows students to see that a Christian can have a living faith even while they are dealing with questions and doubts. Just spend time helping students see that doubts and struggles exist in all Christians, and those struggles do not have to negate our faith.

Personal vulnerability should be exercised with some care, however. Leaders should be careful not to be transparent as exhibitionists, just seeking to make known everything they do or have ever done. Testimonies can break down into times to talk about just how bad a person was before really knowing Christ and it can border on bragging. This is generally counter-productive.

Another step toward changing the situation is to emphasize the application of truth rather than mere content. Don't pick up rocks just yet; this isn't necessarily a call to change what you teach. Many times we teach on topics of great importance, but we fail to point out how to apply those truths to our attitudes, our priorities, our relationships, and our lifestyle. These truths of Scripture must be shown to be relevant, and that means students will need to talk about what is being



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taught. This needs to take place in an atmosphere that allows for questions and doubt, or students may not take the time to incorporate the teachings into their lives.

One more place to address this situation is in the area of outlets. The church must provide challenging outlets for worship, ministry, and service. I have found at times that I am better at challenging someone to minister than I am at providing them with the opportunity to minister. This has to change. Too often we only offer minor opportunities, and we get minor response. Many students jump at the opportunity to do something that will challenge and stretch them. These types of outlets help to cement a relationship with Christ and His church.

There is great promise in this generation. I have seen examples of faith that at times dwarf my own faith, and it is encouraging to see students take hold of all that God has called Christians to do. If you are already addressing the need for student attachment to the church, keep up the good work. If you have not yet looked at this issue, I encourage you to begin to examine the ministry of your church and see where it can better address the needs of students. The generation that follows will benefit from your

work, and I believe the church as a whole will feel the blessing.

(Some thoughts presented here originated from a presentation by Marv Penner at a Youth Specialties National Youth Workers' Convention. Marv chairs the youth and family ministry department and directs the Canadian Center for Adolescent Research at Briercrest Bible College and Seminary in Saskatchewan, Canada).

The New Testament Purposes for the Church and for Christians

- Ministry — Students should learn to see ministry as their responsibility
- Evangelism — Students should be able to illustrate their faith in words and actions
- Fellowship — Students should become fully connected to a church and accountable to other Christians
- Worship — Students should give glory to God with all that they are and all that they do
- Discipleship — Students should become committed to growth for the long journey

I Will Come Again (continued from page 15)

now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

Jesus said, "I will come again and *receive* you unto myself." *Strong's Concordance* defines the word "receive" as "to receive near, to associate oneself (in any familiar or intimate act or relation)." He will be closer than ever to His followers as He will abide in them. He can be close to each one regardless of the number or their location. Christians should practice His presence.

His physical absence has obvious drawbacks. Yet for now, it was actually beneficial that He leave (John 16:7).

Is there enough room for you in God's household? "In my Father's house are many *rooms*" (NIV; literally "places of abode"). We sing, "There's room at the cross for you." And that is true. It is good to know there is plenty of room in God's house (hold) for whoever wants to join. Not only is there room, you are invited.

The theme is abiding. The Greek word for "abide/abode" is used 14 times in chapters 14-16. Hence, Jesus was not talking about His literal coming or our literal going but of a new relationship, power and presence that would now be available to His dear followers. ±



Prelude to the Kingdom

Tom Colburn

As I reviewed and helped to select and prepare the various articles in this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD, articles reprinted from as far back as 1911, one thing stood out — everyone spoke as if we were at the very door of the Kingdom. Many of those authors are long deceased, yet Christ tarries.

Were they not spiritually in tune? If that were the case then Paul was equally out of sync as he spoke of Jesus' imminent return. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, Paul speaks of the coming of the Lord as if he expects himself and those with him to witness it personally. Not even Jesus knew the day and hour of his return so there is nothing wrong with Christians holding an expectant view.

I think it was Ayn Rand who said, "Live as if you expected to live a hundred years but might die tomorrow." Think what you will of

the writer, it's a thought-provoking line. We in the Church of God might alter it a bit to say something like: "Live as if you expected to live forever in the Age to Come, but might die tomorrow from this life."

The message of God as articulated by Jesus was not about death, but about life, forever as a new creature, ultimately on a recreated earth with the Father as our only God and Jesus as our King. And that "new life" starts here on earth.

The signs of the times spoken of so often in those old articles are signs pointing toward the Second Coming of Christ. But we shouldn't focus so much on preparing for the prelude of the second coming (signs of the times) as we should for what comes thereafter — life IN the Kingdom.

"Death comes unexpectedly!" So bellowed Kirk Douglas, portraying a fire and brimstone minister in an old

movie. We don't know the day we'll die. We pray to see Jesus' second coming in our lifetime — and that's fine as we pray the prayer Jesus gave us, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" — but our lifetime might conclude at noon tomorrow for all we know. So focusing on the Kingdom and less on (seeing) the coming seems a wise thing to do.

So were the authors of the old *Restitution Herald* articles wrong? Was Paul out of sync? No. Jesus' Second Coming will be soon for every one of us one way or another. So let's live as if we expected to have a long career for Christ spreading the Gospel here on earth, but all the while keeping in mind 1 Corinthians 9:27 in which Paul seeks to keep his own life under the control of God so "after I have preached to others, I myself won't be disqualified."Ⓢ

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