

You're of no earthly value unless you're ...

Heavenly Minded

Vol. 3 Issue 1



Dear Friends,

As we begin with volume three of this newsletter, we want to thank you for your continued prayers and encouragements. We love hearing from you! As the last days seem to get 'hotter' and 'hotter', we hope you are all seeing more and more how much God loves you and that He will always be very much your focus of attention. You know that your peace will ever be found in Him even when the world's peace is in short supply. Like you, we look to heaven and know that the reality of God's kingdom will soon be evident to all. In the meantime, may all we His ambassadors, be faithful representatives. God bless and keep you!

Love,

John and Darlene

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World News Fireworks Appointed Attitudes Clearly a Difference

Fireworks

Rummaging through the old filing cabinet, I discovered a real treasure. It was a letter from Dad – something that was incredibly rare in and of itself. But its treasure wasn't so much in its uniqueness as in its precious content. Dad was almost never expressive to me in person; however, his note said something that touched my heart in a very powerful way.

You see, some years before his missive, at the age of 19, I had come to know Jesus as my Savior. The circumstances of my conversion, though, were such that he was skeptical – and with just cause! I had subsequently dropped out of school, given away everything I had, raved about the Lord without real compassion or understanding – in short, behaved in a way that though sincere, would have 'short-circuited' nearly any Dad.

But our Father in heaven is oh so faithful to change us, isn't He? And it's one aspect of His gracious transforming process that we'll consider herein – that is, the fire.

Fire? Yes, fire, flames, furnaces – real heat! From very early on, fire has been a key concept and picture of God's character and method. In fact, there are more than 600 mentions of it in scripture. We find a flaming sword guarding the way into paradise after Adam and Eve were sent out. We read that Abraham was to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. We see God revealing Himself to Moses in a burning bush. We note that all the Old Testament

sacrifices pertaining to sin and utter devotion were made by fire.

The Bible even says that our God is Himself a consuming fire (Deut 4:24, Heb 12:29) and that His surroundings are fiery:

"Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace..." (Ex 19:18) and...

"I watched till thrones were put in place and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him..." (Dan 7: 9,10)

From Isaiah 43:2, we also see that it plays an important prophetic role for the Jewish people, *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."* In other words, God has brought them through the Red Sea, the Jordan River and soon, the fire of the seven year Tribulation period (literally and in type).

In fact, it is **these very fires** which will bring forth the believing remnant of Jews:

"So the Light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day...and it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again

depend on him who defeated (or smote) them (trust in the Antichrist?); but will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return; the destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land." (Isa 10:17, 20-23)

"I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zech 13:9)

In addition, fire is often a part of God's judgment (See Isa 66:15) – it rained down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah. It consumed Nadab and Abihu, the errant sons of Aaron. It came down upon the enemies of Elijah and will be the ultimate place of torment for Satan and his followers.

As for the coming of the LORD, the scripture says, *"For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to rend His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh..." (Isa 66:15, 16)*

So fire is somewhat of an enigma. It seems, at the same time, to be holy and yet terrible, a means of protection and of destruction, of inspiration and of perspiration. But then, as we look more closely, we realize that the fire is not really the one that is precocious – sometimes this way and sometimes that. Rather, it is we who are flippant,

disjoint and askew. We note that fire is a terror to the flesh, the carnal, the proud, the sinful. But to the pure in heart, fire is not threat; in fact, it is 'friendly'.

In a frightening foreign land, three young men found themselves face to face with the most powerful man on earth. Far from home and families, they were being tested before all – it was bow or burn. You know the story – they even made a 'Veggie-tale' on it (See Daniel 3).

The king had made a huge golden image and commanded all his subjects to bow and worship before it. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, though, were the only ones who refused to do so. At the sound of the band, everyone else put the preservation of their life first and punctually prostrated themselves. These three, however, would only worship Jehovah and stood alone, literally.

Then, in response to the king's angry threat to make them crispy-critters, they revealed a wonderful purity of heart. They said, *"...our God whom we serve is **able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver [us] from your hand, O king. **But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."*** (Dan 3:17, 18)

Of course, the king was furious and commanded the furnace to be made seven times hotter than usual. The three men were then bound in their clothing and cast into the flames.

This story is so rich in prophetic implication regarding the Jewish

people, Jesus Christ and the fires of "Jacob's trouble" (See Jeremiah 30:7) – the Tribulation which is fast approaching. But our topic herein is the fire's effect upon Christians.

The heat of the furnace instantly killed those who tossed the three Hebrew men into it – such is the work of the flame upon the flesh – it consumes. All that is of this earth is subject to its force. Nothing worldly survives it. Nothing.

And momentarily, the three were free in the fire – walking around unbound in the furnace -- that which bound them reduced to ashes. So it is for God's family, the faithful and pure in heart, redeemed not by works but by faith in Christ.

"It is precisely there, in the heat of the fire, we are to glorify Him. We do this by exercising perfect faith in His goodness and love that has permitted this trial to come upon us. Even more, we are to believe that out of the fire will arise something more worthy of praise to Him than had we never experienced it."

"This is the real triumph – triumphing over sickness in it, triumphing over death in dying, and triumphing over other adverse circumstances in them."

"Christ's triumph was in His humiliation. And perhaps our triumph will also be revealed through what others see as humiliation." – Margaret Bottome

Everyone's work will be tried by fire and the fire will reveal its true nature – what is carnal will be consumed, what is spiritual will be spared. If you are born again in Christ, you never need fear the furnace. Oh, the flame will come, it comes to all – both spiritually and

one day physically (See 2 Pet 3:10-12). But in truth, only that which binds you will be consumed.

Now, we can so easily be misled in our endeavors – sheep are not noted for their IQ's. This material world can become so important – even well meaning ministers can be bound by misguided ministries or ministeries. Much that we can think of as church just isn't, and some that we think isn't is. God knows and the fire is absolutely discerning.

And not only does it free, but it fascinates. The king was shocked – he was astonished. He said, *"Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? ...Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."* (Dan 3:25)

The effect of the fire upon God's children is mind-boggling to the world. The freedom is obvious and they can perceive that although some things are burned up, we are not hurt. For right there with us is the Son of God; it is, after all, His fire – not the world's.

"Isn't there something captivating about the sight of a person burdened with many trials, yet who is as lighthearted as the sound of a bell? Isn't there something contagious and valiant in seeing others who are greatly tempted but are "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37)? Isn't it heartening to see a fellow traveler whose body is broken, yet who retains the splendor of unbroken patience?" -- John Henry Jowett

"Glorify ye the Lord in the fires..." (Isa 24:15)

Yes, the fire frees, it fascinates, and it fashions our fellowship for there in

that furnace, when all that binds is burned, we find contentment – not resentment. You see, the king had to command them to come out – they were in no hurry to leave! When the flames unveil the ultimate friendship – Jesus Christ – no one wants the old dead world again. And sometimes it takes the fire to open our eyes.

Are you fighting fires? Let them burn! Oh, there's no need to 'fan the flames', but do let them burn.

'Oh, I can't stand to lose this or that, him or her,' you may think. (swat, swat, swat) Let it burn. Let God's fire burn. And yet, that's not to say do nothing. On the contrary, do all you know to do that is good – stand up to the king so to speak. Just don't bow down to anything in this world in order to preserve that which is going to burn anyway. Don't try to put out God's fire.

Now the enemy of your soul has some fiery darts (See Eph 6:16) that he lobbs at you from a distance but the difference is obvious for his odorous hell-fire only serves to empower the flesh – to enflame with hatred, bitterness, passion and pride. But faith extinguishes his pettiness and is itself purified unto praise by the fire God sends.

Anyway, Dad's letter read, *"In your search for the more important and meaningful things in life, you were most sorely tried and tested. Many weakened and lost touch with the true reality of the love of God and His Son, Jesus. And even though you had an experience that was truly a nightmare in many ways, you and Darlene won out in the end with great victories, both personally and through the Lord... [now] you live in the confidence of a renewed and more*

substantial commitment to the Lord Jesus... God grant that you can hold on this wonderful course... Always, you will have our love and prayers..."

Wow. Even now, 20 years later, thanks, Dad.

Yes, let God's fire burn. Consider that burning a blessing. You need not fear it nor fight it for God uses it only for His good purposes – to free you and to transform you in it (See Psalm 104:4). True, the way back into 'Eden' involves a flaming sword, but there is fellowship in the fire like no other and joy is set before you.

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet 4:12,13)

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" -- Jesus (Luke 12:49)

"...each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is." (1 Cor 3:13)

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet 1:6,7)

WORLD NEWS

with an eye on Biblical prophecy

Middle East

Israel Plans to Capture Territory

MENL 12/2/02

Israel's military is preparing for an offensive war against its Arab adversaries that would involve the capture of territory to ensure victory in any future regional conflict.

Israeli military planners have been discussing and drafting strategies in response for a regional war that could take place in 2003. They said such a war is likely to begin with a Hizbullah rocket barrage from southern Lebanon in an attack supported by Syria.

Such a war, military officials said, would be fought differently from the more than two-year-old campaign against Palestinian insurgents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They said Israeli aircraft, armor and troops would move rapidly to establish the battlefield outside of the Jewish state and capture territory required to achieve victory.

'In the next war, we will be required to be decisive in a way that will include the capture of territory,' Maj. Gen. Yiftah Ron-Tal, head of the Ground Forces Command, said. 'So, we must preserve our offensive capability in the Israeli Defense Forces. Our maneuvers must take place outside the border of Israel and the ingredients of a decisive victory will be the ground forces. The burden will be placed on them.'

Saudis tighten hold on world oil market - leverage of war

Washington Post 12/2/02

Saudi Arabia has quietly taken steps to protect or even increase its already dominant influence in the world oil market, amid growing uncertainty about the effect of a war in Iraq on global

energy supplies and prices, according to US and Middle Eastern officials and experts. It has reclaimed its position as No. 1 foreign supplier of crude oil to the US in recent months and offered to further increase sales in December.

At the same time, the Saudi government has amassed a foreign exchange war chest in the range of US\$90 billion (S\$152 billion) to US\$100 billion, enabling its economy to weather a prolonged period of low oil prices if Iraq's production surges in the event that President Saddam Hussein was ousted in a US-led military campaign. If US military action in Iraq goes awry, causing the hoarding of higher-priced oil, only Saudi Arabia has sufficient spare capacity to calm markets, US officials acknowledge. Within 30 days, according to the Energy Department, it could flood the market with up to 2 million barrels a day from wells it is not now using.

Hezbollah calls for global attacks

Washington Times 12/4/02

LONDON — The leader of the Lebanese Muslim group Hezbollah is urging a global suicide bombing campaign, increasing the prospect that the regional conflict between Arabs and Israelis will expand to mimic or even merge with al Qaeda's war against the West.

Two recent speeches by the Lebanon-based Hezbollah leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, have raised the specter of attacks outside the region by a powerful and well-organized military force — a force that successfully pushed the Israeli army out of southern Lebanon two years ago.

TURKEY APPROVES USE OF MILITARY BASES BY U.S.

MENL 12/5/02

ANKARA -- Turkey has approved a U.S. request of use of military bases in the

NATO ally amid a promise of more than \$3 billion in aid from Washington.

Turkish leaders are said to have agreed to U.S. use of Turkey's air space and military bases in any offensive against the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The leaders said Washington would first require United Nations endorsement, but officials said this condition appears flexible.

"If it comes to that, then of course, we will cooperate with the United States because it's a big ally and we have excellent relations with the United States," Turkish Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis said on Tuesday. "What we mean by cooperation is opening air bases and opening facilities to use. The military authorities of the two countries are consulting on the assumption that such a cooperation may be necessary one day."

Al Qaeda Web Site Says Israel New Target -Post

Reuters 12/6/02

WASHINGTON - Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network plans to launch suicide attacks against Israel, according to a Web site that U.S. officials believe speaks for the organization, the Washington Post reported in its Friday edition.

Intelligence officials believe the Web site (<http://www.mojahedoon.net>) provides further proof of al Qaeda's determination to target Israel, the Post said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said on Thursday that al Qaeda had established a presence in the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip and in Lebanon and that Israel was a target for al Qaeda attacks.

SADDAM GROWING 'SUPER SMALLPOX'

New York Post 12/9/02

Iraq is developing a vaccine-resistant smallpox virus, a nerve gas that can penetrate protective gear and may be just



Father and brothers of slain Israeli teen mourn.

months away from becoming a nuclear power.

Those are the disturbing highlights of numerous dossiers compiled over the last decade by the CIA, British intelligence services, former U.N. arms inspectors and prominent arms-control think tanks that will be used in the coming weeks to counter Iraq's defiant claim that it no longer has weapons of mass destruction.

But U.S. intelligence officials and other experts say there is a mountain of evidence that Iraqi president Saddam Hussein has ordered the secret development of massive amounts of super-lethal poisons and bacterial agents and has hidden them away in secret laboratories underneath hospitals, mosques, ordinary homes and even mobile vehicles disguised as milk trucks - most probably in Iraq's Sunni heartland

TURKEY MOVES TROOPS TO IRAQI BORDER

MENL 12/10/02

ANKARA -- Turkey has once again moved troops to its southern border with Iraq.

Turkish sources said thousands of military and paramilitary forces were deployed around the Iraqi border over the weekend. They said the forces

were comprised of mostly infantry as well as support units.

The military has also transported communications and logistics to the Iraqi border. The sources said the supplies and troops arrived from southern and southeastern Turkey.

Turkey was already said to have more than 10,000 troops along the Iraqi border. Many of the troops were deployed in northern Iraq and operate in coordination with the United States.

Terror count

According to statistics compiled by the IDF, as of Nov. 17, 2002, there had been a total of 15,298 Palestinian terror attacks against Israel since the intifada began in September 2000. —Hal Lindsey

Iran Hides Two Big Nuclear Facilities – Subcontracts for North Korea

Debkafile 12/13/02

On October 25, 2002, DEBKA-Net-Weekly reported in its No. 82 issue the suspicion in Washington that one of the two bombs allegedly hidden in Kim Jong Il's war chest was not North Korean at all, but Iranian. Our sources revealed that the Iranian bomb was delivered to North Korea in the third week of September under a secret agreement Kim-Jung Nan, the North Korean president's overseer of his country's military and nuclear relations, concluded in Tehran on July 24.

Last week, DEBKA-Net-Weekly received fresh and surprising information on how this deal is being implemented. The information came from intelligence sources who checked out a detailed report on Iran's clandestine nuclear program brought to Washington in early August by an Iranian exile in flight from the hard-line regime. That report found no willing listeners in the US government, which was busy at the time with its bid to rope Iran into the war against Iraq.

On August 14, the exile called a select news conference and presented his

report again. He still failed to attract serious official attention – until the North Koreans admitted to a secret nuclear program. Then, the powers that be in Washington began connecting nuclear dots. Intelligence agencies went to work and established that the Iranian exile's report, gathering dust for three months, was spot on target, accurate in every detail.

That report reveals that the two bombs smuggled to North Korea from Iran last September were the property of North Korea. However, they were manufactured and assembled in Iran under the secret Tehran-Pyongyang contract of last July.

This means that North Korea secretly transferred its nuclear manufacturing facilities to the Islamic Republic. Specifically, North Korean plant for the production of all the essential components of the North Korean bombs, including equipment for uranium enrichment, was shifted lock, stock and barrel to Iran, where production has been taking place at two secret sites, both supervised by the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization. This state body is controlled by the National Security Council that defers only to Iran's radical spiritual leader Ali Khamenei.

The most important site, where nuclear fuel (enriched uranium) is produced, is located at Natanz, 100 miles north of Isfahan on the old Natanz-Kashan highway. A huge facility, big enough to employ hundreds of workers, it is buried many feet underground and set in layers of concrete.

Intelligence experts are still pondering the following missing information:

--- After the two bombs were completed, did North Korea leave its nuclear equipment and manufacturing facilities behind in Iran?

Our sources suggest it did - which means Iran is now equipped to manufacture bombs unaided, whether by Russia or anyone else - depending, of course, on the Iranian scientists having acquired the necessary proficiency to work independently.



Hamas gunman watches rally in Gaza City.

--- How much uranium was enriched? And what proportion, if any, stayed in Iran?

The presumption is that Iran was left with enough to make between 8-12 bombs.

DEBKA-Net-Weekly's Washington sources add that the Bush administration is considering placing this information before Russian president Vladimir Putin as leverage to persuade him to come aboard, should the US decide on military action against Iran, during or after the Iraq campaign.

Iraqi Scientists Killed or Held Hostage

Oracle 12/13/02
According to intelligence reports picked up by Debka-Net-Weekly, "Eleven scientists working on illegal weapons programs—biological weapons experts, virologists, chemists and nuclear engineers, possibly three heads of projects—were put to death last weekend with some 12 of their close relatives, to ensure their silence, both to the weapons inspectors and for the eventuality of a war ending in American victory."

This information was received by the Debka-Net-Weekly military and intelligence sources from a number of Iraqi exiles that are related to the disappearing scientists. The Debka report went on to say, "Our sources estimate that

Iraqi intelligence is holding a second group of high-risk scientists, estimated at 20 senior project directors and 60 of their relatives, in a special detention camp. Staff members who are still free have been warned that their superiors' wellbeing depends on their keeping mum about their work in interviews with UN inspectors. They were cautioned that if they tried to escape the country, Iraqi intelligence would catch up with them wherever they hid.

To ensure their obedience, their families were taken from home and scattered around intelligence installations and army camps across the country. Under military guard, they are not allowed visitors."

Report: U.S. preparing to deploy 90,000 troops to Turkey

World Tribune 12/16/02

ANKARA — The United States has informed Turkey it wants to begin the deployment of 90,000 American troops to six Turkish bases for a war against Iraq.

Earlier this month, Turkey agreed in principle to allow the United States to use its bases for a possible military campaign against Iraq after being promised \$3.4 billion in aid.

On Friday, the authoritative Ankara-based Hurriyet daily provided extensive details of the U.S. request from Turkey for the use of its military bases. The newspaper said U.S. intelligence and military teams have already been deployed along the Iraqi-Turkish border to train members of the Iraqi opposition for a war against Baghdad.

The newspaper said the United States wants to use six military bases in Turkey, Middle East Newline reported. A U.S. team intends to arrive in Turkey over the next week to begin



Iraq invasion timetable set

Earliest U.S. strike late this month, deadline for move comes in March
WND 12/18/02

WASHINGTON – A decision to strike Iraq has been postponed until at least the end of this month to give United Nations weapons inspectors a chance to make their report, according to U.S. military sources.

The U.S. military has intercepted communications

from Iraqi officials discussing the hiding of weapons of mass destruction and their components, sources told WorldNetDaily. The weapons are being hidden, the sources say, in steel mills, parts factories and even in weapons and ammunition plants.

While the earliest date for a strike is the end of December, there is also a deadline for a decision about 90 days later in March, say sources close to the planning.

The 90-day window is necessary because of the massive military buildup in the area. Hundreds of thousands of tons of vehicles, armor and other equipment continue to pour into the region in support of the invasion. It all moves at night through airports and seaports, and the planes and ships are often gone before daylight.

Turkish Troops Set to Advance on N. Iraqi oil cities – Ahead of US Attack

Debkafile 12/25/02

The conference held in Turkey on Tuesday, December 24, between Israel's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon and Turkish army chief Gen. Hilimi Ozkok, wrapped up the arrangements made by the US, Israel and Turkey for concerted action in the approaching war with Iraq. The operations of their air and missile defenses, as well as their air and naval

forces, will be closely synchronized under arrangements that have also made provision against Syria and the Hizballah joining the conflict.

In advance of this conference, the Turkish army was placed Tuesday, December 24, on a high state of preparedness and the 2nd and 3d corps deployed along the Iraqi border in battle array.

Our military sources draw attention to the secret military pact between Syria and Iraq, first revealed by **DEBKAFfile** in 2001, which permits Iraqi military units in the event of war crossing into Syria and using it as a base for striking at Israel. The information Sharon revealed indicates that Baghdad has invoked that treaty by sending units across into Syria to hide some of its unconventional weapons.

U.S. expects Iraq to hit Israel hard

Missiles aimed at Tel Aviv likely to carry deadly warheads, say intelligence sources
WND 12/30/02

WASHINGTON – During the early stages of a U.S.-led attack on Iraq, Israeli population centers in Tel Aviv and elsewhere are expected to be targeted by Iraq's missiles – some of which are likely to be armed with chemical, biological or even nuclear warheads, say WorldNetDaily's U.S. military and intelligence sources.

The missile attacks on Israel are expected during the air-war phase of the Iraq attack – before U.S. troops can occupy much of the country and secure or destroy hidden missile bases.

In addition to lashing out at Israel, Saddam Hussein is expected to blow up many of his oil wells. Already, sources say, he has begun mining them in ways that will make it most difficult to extinguish the fires and cap the wells.

U.S. military planners believe Iraq will target Israel early – before U.S. forces have a chance to destroy the regime's missiles. Destroying the wells will be Hussein's second priority, and using any

remaining missiles on U.S. forces will be his third priority.

The intelligence sources also say the Iraqi government is kidnapping and arresting its own top scientists – those involved in developing weapons of mass destruction – to keep them away from U.N. weapons inspectors. In addition, more than 1,000 high-level Iraqi officials have defected in recent months. Much of the information about plans and capabilities is coming from those officials.

'Post' exclusive: The revised road map

Jerusalem Post 12/30/02

Contrary to news reports, there is little substantive difference in the overall outline of the road map agreed upon by the Quartet in Washington earlier this month, and the plan's previous two drafts, judging by a summary of the revised road map obtained by The Jerusalem Post.

The third draft of the three-stage road map - a plan intended to bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2005 - is expected to be approved by the Quartet and publicized after its next meeting in early February.

According to the summary, released to the Post by a senior Quartet diplomat, the first stage of the plan is to run from January to June 2003, and makes explicit reference to the Tenet plan, Mitchell plan, and Saudi peace initiative.

The first stage also gives a role to the Quartet - the US, EU, Russia, and UN - as referee, determining whether the sides have lived up to their commitments and when they can move from one stage to the next.

The first stage includes the following:

- Both Israel and the Palestinians are to call for an end to violence and both promise to stop incitement.
- Israel-Palestinian security cooperation is to be renewed.

USS Harry S Truman leaves Marseilles for stand-by on Iraq war.

technical and logistics preparations for the deployment.

Intelligence official: Saddam would go to 'scorched-earth policy' if cornered

Stars and Stripes 12/19/02

ARLINGTON, Va. — Saddam Hussein will use weapons of mass destruction if U.S. troops attack Iraq, possibly as early as the first day of the campaign, U.S. intelligence officials said Wednesday.

"Saddam is preparing a scorched-earth policy," a U.S. intelligence officer told Pentagon reporters. "He believes that whatever we say at this point, [the U.S. military] is coming to kill him.

"Whenever he believes he's about to die, he'll use [weapons of mass destruction, or WMD]," the official said. "If that's on Day 1 [of a war], if he believes he's going to fall, he's going to use it."

Not only will Hussein use WMD inside Iraq, "we believe he may use them against Israel and other Arab States, with Kuwait as a very likely target," the official said. "He hates Kuwait, and this is not only about defending his regime, it's about revenge."

- Israel is to enact a total settlement freeze including natural growth and dismantle settlement outposts set up since March 2000.
- Israel is to stop "attacks on civilians, deportation, building demolition," and is to return to positions held before September 28, 2000.
- The Palestinians are to hold elections as soon as possible.
- The Palestinians are to undertake "visible efforts to arrest, disrupt, and restrain terrorists." The PA security apparatus is to "begin sustained targeted operations against terror and commence confiscation of weapons."
- The Palestinians are to undertake security and political reforms. The political reforms are to include the appointment of an interim prime minister or "empowered cabinet with executive authority," and the start of formulating a constitution.

Under this road map, the second stage is to start in June and end in December 2003. It is to begin after elections in the PA and end with the creation of a Palestinian state with provisional borders.

Movement to the third stage is again to be determined by the Quartet, and is to run from January 2004 to 2005.

In this stage the sides are to attend a second international conference. This conference is to be for final status talks on borders, settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem, based on UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338, and 1397.

The talks are to find an "agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue," as well as a "negotiated resolution to Jerusalem."

Israel: Syria stashing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction

World Tribune 12/26/02

JERUSALEM — Israel has accused Syria of harboring Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Israeli officials said Syria has agreed to store Iraqi biological and chemical weapons over the last few months. They said the regime of President Bashar Assad responded to an Iraqi request that sought to hide the WMD assets from United Nations inspectors.

The Iraqi assets were said to have included mobile biological facilities as well as chemical munitions. Officials said some of the assets are located along the Iraqi-Syrian frontier, Middle East Newsline reported.

Russia

The Future of AIDS

Foreign Affairs Nov/December

HIV/AIDS is a disease at once amazingly virulent and shockingly new. Only a generation ago, it lay undetected. Yet in the past two decades, by the reckoning of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), about 65 million people have contracted the illness, and perhaps 25 million of them have already died. The affliction is almost invariably lethal: scientists do not consider a cure to be even on the horizon. For now, it looks as if AIDS could end up as the coming century's top infectious killer.

By all accounts, Russia's HIV/AIDS epidemic has exploded in recent years; the only dispute is over how much. Over the past 15 years, Russian medical authorities have registered a cumulative total of about 200,000 HIV-positive patients. Independent estimates, however, are much higher -- ranging from a UNAIDS figure of 700,000 carriers in 2001 to the Russian Academy of Medicine's total of one million in mid-2002, to U.S. intelligence sources' approximation of one to two million carriers today. These latter figures imply an infection rate two to three times that of the United States.

Russia has also experienced an explosive increase in the incidence of curable sexually transmitted infections: official figures point to a 33-fold jump over the course of the 1990s. Currently Russia incarcerates almost one million convicts at any given moment.

Public health care, however, is notably absent in the Russian penal system; prison camps are consequently virtual incubation dishes for diseases such as drug-resistant tuberculosis and HIV. Unlike under the communist-era gulag, moreover, nowadays prisoners are released on a regular basis: in 2000, about 300,000 convicts were granted liberty. Most of them head back to their native towns, and a significant proportion of these former convicts are HIV positive.

Russia's prison system, in other words, functions like a carburetor for HIV -- pumping a highly concentrated variant of the infection back through the general population.

Russia ups stakes over Iraq

The Age 12/26/02

Russia widened a rift on the UN Security Council over Iraq when it openly disputed Washington's claim of having proof that Baghdad is hiding weapons of mass destruction from UN inspectors and is in "material breach" of UN resolutions.

"No-one can provide the slightest evidence" that Iraq represented a terrorist threat, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister

Yury Fedotov was quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency as saying.

European Union

EU Enlargement Official – Prodi quote

"Accession of 10 new member states will bring an end to the divisions in Europe. For the first time in history, Europe will become one because unification is the free will of its people," European Commission President Romano Prodi said in a statement.

Analysis: Europe rising - the new colossus

UPI 12/15/02

WASHINGTON -- The European Union took a vast visionary leap into the future at its Copenhagen summit Friday. It took on a lot of challenges it is not remotely

equipped to handle. But don't bet against it yet.

Leaders of the vast and ramshackle, yet steadily consolidating EU took the landmark decision in the beautiful Danish capital of following the lead of NATO in launching their "rich man's club" on the most rapid, complex expansion in its 45 year history.

Currently, the EU includes 15 countries with total population of 350 million, creating a larger internal free market than the United States and Canada combined -- though not when Mexico is included in the North American Free Trade Agreement area.



Pakistani Christians gather after two girls were killed by terrorists.

The EU is already a complex and colossal structure, and the problems with regulating it and developing flexible and credible political accountability within it are legion. The European Union has also been plagued for decades with miserably low growth rates and steadily rising rates of unemployment. Its economic locomotive, Germany, is in the doldrums and the economic policies of current Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder look like making things for it -- and the rest of the EU -- far worse.

But the EU leaders meeting in Copenhagen agreed to allow no less than 10 more nations in Southern and Central Europe to join them within the next two years. That means the EU will have to absorb 75 million more people speaking eight additional languages and that it will grow into a conglomeration of 25 sovereign nations with a total population of 450 million. The combined current gross national product of all the nations that will be involved is more than \$9 trillion, close to that of the United States.

That will give the EU a larger population and more ethnic complexity than either the United States or the old, Soviet Union ever had. Only China and India in the entire world will have larger populations.

The new European colossus will be comparable in diplomatic and economic clout with the United States and China, even if unable to compete with them militarily. It will, after all, have 25 different votes in the United Nations and two of its members -- Britain and France -- continue to hold permanent seats and veto powers on the U.N. Security Council. It could be a global colossus indeed, and in deed.

Alarm at 'EU Pentagon' plan

The Telegraph 12/18/02

The European Union is drawing up plans for a "Euro-Pentagon" in Brussels commanded by a defence chief able to

launch military operations anywhere in the world.

The proposals call for an EU defence secretary with responsibility for running operations.

His staff would be able to draw on an autonomous EU command and control nexus and an intelligence agency with satellite capability.

They are to be published today by the defence working group of the Convention on the Future of Europe. They will form the basis of the military section in the EU's draft constitution next June.

The group was chaired by the French commissioner Michel Barnier, who has been accused of playing down contributions from those opposed to a European army.

British objections appear to have been ignored in the final draft, though footnotes allude to intense disagreements among the group's members.

The document says the world has changed so dramatically since September 11, 2001, that national defence is "no longer sufficient".

The plans go far beyond the EU's 60,000-man rapid reaction force, which is to take on its first peacekeeping mission in the Balkans early next year.

Britain Ready To Go To War Without UN Approval

CNS News 12/18/02

London - Britain would be prepared to wage war against Iraq without the approval of the U.N. Security Council, if the 15-nation panel is not able to come to an agreement on another resolution against Saddam Hussein's regime, Prime Minister Tony Blair said Wednesday.

Speaking to the House of Commons, Blair described himself as "skeptical" about Iraq's recent declaration on weapons of mass destruction.

Blair indicated that Britain would prefer to go through the United Nations in advance of any military action, but said, "We must be prepared to take action."

"If there is a breach and, for whatever

reason, there is a block in the U.N. Security Council, we would not want that breach to go unpunished," he said.

"The bottom line has got to be that the U.N. route has to be the way of dealing with this issue, not avoiding dealing with it," Blair said.

EU to deploy troops after deal with Nato

Financial Times 12/15/02

The European Union will for the first time deploy its own soldiers, in the Balkan republic of Macedonia, possibly by February, following a landmark agreement at the weekend between Nato and the EU.

EU leaders agreed three years ago to establish a 60,000-strong rapid-reaction force by mid-2003, capable of deployment within 60 days, of remaining on the ground for up to a year, and of carrying out tasks including humanitarian missions and armed peacekeeping.

United States

U.S. troops get in place in the Gulf

CNN 12/6/02

DOHA, Qatar -- The U.S. military is methodically putting the finishing touches in place for a possible war with Iraq.

A dozen years ago, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, it took the Pentagon and its coalition partners six months to deploy 500,000 forces in the Persian Gulf. This time the process is moving along much more quickly -- in part because current U.S. war plans call for far fewer troops.

More sophisticated, higher-tech firepower has made the large number of troops deployed during the first Gulf War unnecessary.

The planning is currently at an advanced stage -- with commanding Gen. Tommy Franks preparing in the coming days to lead a simulated war game code-named Internal Look. By all accounts, it's a rehearsal for the real thing.

Bush, Blair warned of bin Laden nukes

Al-Qaida purchased 20 suitcase arms from former KGB agents, says report

WND 12/15/02

President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have been warned Osama bin Laden has 20 suitcase nuclear weapons obtained for cash from former KGB agents, the London Sunday Express reports.

Last October, WorldNetDaily broke the story of bin Laden's suitcase nukes, detailed in a new book by an FBI consultant on international terrorism.

The book, "Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror," by Paul L. Williams, says bin Laden purchased 20 suitcase nuclear weapons in 1998 from former KGB agents for \$30 million. The deal is reportedly one of three in the last decade in which al-Qaida purchased small nuclear weapons or weapons-grade nuclear uranium.

Though the devices were designed only to be operated by Soviet SPETZNAZ personnel, or special forces, al-Qaida scientists came up with a way of hot-wiring the bombs to the bodies of would-be martyrs, according to the book.

Suitcase nukes are not really suitcases at all, but suitcase-size nuclear devices. The weapons can be fired from grenade or rocket launchers or detonated by timers. A bomb placed in the center of a metropolitan area would be capable of instantly killing hundreds of thousands and exposing millions of others to lethal radiation.

The Russian government immediately denied the weapons ever existed, but Alexei Yablokov, a former senior adviser to Yeltsin, told a U.S. congressional hearing that the weapons had been developed by the KGB in a project kept secret from the Russian military.

U.S. SAYS LIBYA, SYRIA PURSUE WMD PROGRAMS

MENL 12/18/02

WASHINGTON -- U.S. officials said Libya and Syria are developing biological weapons and are amassing chemical weapons as well. They said the two countries are also seeking to procure missiles to deliver WMD warheads.

Undersecretary of State John Bolton told a Washington audience that Libya and Syria are in a second tier of countries of concern.

"The United States believes that Libya has an offensive BW program in the research-and-development stage, and it may currently be capable of producing small quantities of biological agent," Bolton said. "It continues efforts to obtain ballistic missile-related equipment, materials, technology, and expertise from foreign sources."

Military Coalition Begins Forming Against Baghdad

Fox News 12/20/02

WASHINGTON — One day after the United States declared Iraq to be in "material breach" of a U.N. Security Council resolution, an international coalition began to take shape for a possible attack on the Baghdad regime.

In a Christmas message broadcast Friday to his country's armed forces, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told them it was time to prepare for war, according to Reuters.

"The key thing at the moment is to make all the preparations necessary," Blair said, "and to make sure that we are building up the capacity in the region — both the Americans and ourselves — and that we are able to undertake this mission if it falls to us to do so."

United Nations

U.S. Urges U.N. to Authorize War in Iraq

AP 12/20/02

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration, concluding that Saddam Hussein is not serious about disarmament, turned Friday to convincing the U.N. Security Council that it should declare Iraq in violation of world demands and authorize war.

At the same time, a senior administration official said Friday that President Bush has given the go-ahead to double the 50,000 U.S. troop deployment in the Persian Gulf region in early January. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is expected to sign the formal deployment order in the next week or two as part of what another official called "a ramping up on various fronts."

"This situation cannot continue," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Thursday in describing Iraq's weapons declaration, submitted two weeks ago, as 12,200 pages of lies, gaps and omissions.

Unless Iraq "comes clean" in the weeks ahead, "I'm afraid we should be very discouraged with respect to the prospects of finding a peaceful solution," Powell said.

Science

Brain cells victims of video violence

UPI 12/3/02

CHICAGO-- Hours of playing violent video games can affect the way the brain works on a cellular level, causing misfiring of signals between nerve cells or slowing brain activity, researchers reported Monday.

The researchers said the adverse effects are most apparent among teens that are diagnosed with a condition called disruptive behavior disorder or DBD. These kids, according to Dr. Vincent P. Mathews of the University of Indiana Medical School in Indianapolis, are the ones most likely to "act out by harming animals or property or fighting with other kids."

When he used a high tech scanning device called functional magnetic resonance imaging to track brain function in adolescents with DBD, he discovered "less activity in the frontal lobes." The

frontal lobe is the area of the brain that controls emotions and impulses as well as attention span. Moreover when the DBD kids were exposed to violent video games, "there was even less activity," Mathews said.

The study suggests repeated exposure to the violent video games is "desensitizing the brain ... the result is that the child can no longer understand the real effect of violence," said Dr. Carol Rumach, professor of radiology and pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver, who was not involved in the study.

Scientists put a bit of MAN into a MOUSE; ethics in cross-species brain mixing?

Mercury News 12/10/02

In a cross-species experiment between man and mouse that raises provocative ethical questions -- but offers potential therapeutic advances -- scientists at Stanford University have created a pint-sized hybrid: a healthy mouse with paws, whiskers and millions of human cells in its brain. The mouse acts like any other mouse, researchers say. But its brain contains a small yet significant number of injected human cells, which have taken up residence in several areas of the brain, including those that govern smell and coordination of movement

In the experiments, started about 1 1/2 years ago by Weissman, Fred Gage of the Salk Institute of La Jolla and colleagues at Palo Alto-based StemCells, neural stem cells from 10-week-old human fetuses survived when injected into a mouse brain. Stem cells are the cells from which all others evolve. Many of the human baby brain cells continue to thrive in the mouse brain, 14 months later. Even more remarkably, the stem cells traveled to various regions of the mouse brain, made themselves at home there and then matured into the type of adult human cell characteristic of that region of the brain.

The Specific Dye 'Tolaat HaShani' Needed For Biblical Israeli Temple Finally Found After 2,000 Years

Arutz Sheva/WENT 12/30/02

A Bar-Ilan University researcher and lecturer says he has discovered the 'Tolaat HaShani' referred to in the Bible, and successfully extracted its dye. Dr. Zohar Amar, of the University's Martin Szusz Department of Land of Israel Studies, recently announced his findings at a Bar Ilan conference. He explained to Arutz-7 today that Tolaat HaShani refers to the coccid (scale insect) used to produce the scarlet dye during the Biblical and Second Temple periods. "It is one of the most valued coloring materials of the ancient world," he explained, "often mentioned in the Bible together with the [more familiar] blue (tchelet) and purple (argaman).

He said that 'shani' was used in the Temple for the curtain over the Ark, the High Priest's clothes, in preparing the ashes of the Red Cow, and in other forms. "After 2,000 years, we have succeeded in rediscovering the Tolaat HaShani ..." concluded Dr. Ama.r.

HUMAN KIDNEYS GROWN IN MICE

BBC 12/24/02

Doctors have managed to make cells taken from human fetuses grow into fully-functional kidneys in a mouse.

The technique could offer a more practical way of helping patients who need organ transplants.

The advance, by doctors at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, was reported in the latest edition of Nature Medicine.

The technique works because cells were taken from the aborted fetuses aged between seven and eight weeks, and from pig fetuses which are only four weeks old.

Appointed with Attitudes

“Then the Lord answered me and said:

Write the vision

*And make [it] plain on tablets,
That he may run who reads it.*

For the vision is yet for an appointed time;

But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie,

Though it tarries, wait for it;

Because it will surely come,

It will not tarry.” -- Hab 2:2,3

We live in appointed times. After nearly 2000 years of waiting, we are in appointed times. Sometimes, that just stuns me. Consider what an awesome deal it is to be appointed for these days!

Israel has been reborn as a nation, Jerusalem is under Jewish control, the rapture and the tribulation are approaching, the EU is the emerging world power, knowledge is exploding, times are waxing worse and worse, an environment similar to the days of Noah and Lot (i.e. extreme violence, sexual perversion, self absorption, etc.) is becoming increasingly pervasive, Jerusalem is a ‘cup of trembling’ for all nations, on and on it goes, just as the scriptures foretold.

And here we are in the thick of it! What does that then mean? Unless our heads are stuck in the sand, we must ask, ‘What then are we called to?’ What attributes, what attitudes, what appointment must we hold? Fortunately, the Bible, as always, has the answers --

For nearly two thousand years, they had waited as a people – from Abraham’s time they had waited. In fact, if you went back to the first promise, the ‘proto-evangelicum’ in Gen 3:15, you could number perhaps as many as one and a half million days. Waiting for what? What promise? For the coming of the Messiah, specifically, his first coming.

And here was this young woman, probably in her early to mid teens – Mary. Think about it – how many millions of Hebrew women over nearly two thousand years had desired to bring forth the Anointed One? After so long, after so many, who in their right mind could dare to believe it would be her? Think of the cultural and mental pressure to reject such a notion as too special, too fantastic to be imparted to anyone ‘ordinary’.

Yet in Mary we can observe a character that I’ll suggest is worthy of our own special consideration for like her, we’ve waited nearly 2000 years and we are in great expectation of Christ’s coming.

Turning to Luke chapter one, let’s look at verses 34 to 53 and we’ll note eight specific attributes and attitudes on Mary’s part from which we can learn. First though, the angel Gabriel delivers the message of the immaculate conception – that is, the virgin birth, as well as the giving of the baby’s name – Jesus. He says, *“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”* (Luke 1:32,33)

Then Mary replies, *“How can this be since I do not know a man?”* Our first

observation is her **purity**. God is looking for such purity in his children – *“Blessed [are] the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God.”* (Mat 5:8)

However, as children of Adam, we are naturally impure in character. We are drawn by various lusts into vanity and depravity. But as Peter wrote, we should *“... gird up the loins of [our] mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning [ourselves] according to the former lusts in [our] ignorance: But as He which hath called [us] is holy, so [we should] be holy in all manner of conversation (conduct);”* (1Pet 1:13-15)

Yet, Satan is working overtime to push his filth our way and sad to say, it’s working. If in all honesty, you consider the moral climate of the community of believers even a generation ago, what is accepted as ‘not too bad’ today is clear testimony to our decline. God grant that we change our ways.

In verse 38, Gabriel asserts, *“For with God nothing will be impossible,”* to which she replies, *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”*

What beautiful **submission** to God! Now, we talk submission to the will of God, but Mary here is opting for a life of real hardship – what will her betrothed husband say? What will the family and neighbors think? The old saint Simeon, in the temple told her later, *“...and a sword shall pierce through your own soul also”*. Submitting to God is far more than church attendance and tithing; we all know that. The life of submission to God’s will is at times a life of suffering,

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;” (Phi 1:29) May we be likewise willing.

In verse 45, Mary’s cousin Elizabeth (who was pregnant at the same time with John The Baptist), in greeting her says, *“Blessed is she who **believed**, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”*

Mary had **faith in God’s word**. This is in contrast to the reaction of Elizabeth’s own husband Zacharias, a priest who, when given a similar message from Gabriel, stumbled in faith. Mary believed!

Now, you can try to explain away her faith by thinking that the appearance of Gabriel must have been just awe inspiring or some such notion, but perhaps that’s the very reason we see Zach’s failure earlier in this chapter. (Gabriel spoke to him also.) Angel or no, it had been nearly two millennia! Get this now, she actually believed in her own virginal conception and that her child would be the Messiah. She didn’t ‘work it up’ or ‘talk herself into it’. Apart from the resurrection, this is arguably the most exceptional faith in all of scripture.

Today, the concept of faith has been so twisted and abused that many are simply afraid of it. We’ve been told to have faith for that new Mercedes or other material things that in no way further the kingdom of God. Devastatingly, we can come to think that faith in faith is what we need or faith in some televangelist’s claims or faith in

some repetitious prayer. But the Bible simply says, *“So then faith comes by hearing the word of God.”* (Rom 10:17)

And God is looking for such faith – to simply take Him at His word. But with so much credence given today to knowledge and the myriad philosophies of man, to the politically correct and religiously aberrant, it’s no wonder Christ, in speaking of His coming for the church asked, *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:7,8) Oh, may we be found with faith!

In verse 46, Mary responds to Elizabeth, *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”* Here is the **worshipful heart** of the one who is in true relationship with God. Her focus is not on herself, but rather, she is just really into the goodness of God.

Today, Mary would be tempted to write a book (or a newsletter! Ha!) or to go on a speaking tour or appear on Focus on the Family. The church in general has become quite obsessed with self promotion – ‘success’ and size for the sake of size; being a stand-out as opposed to standing fast. But Mary magnified and rejoiced in her Savior, not her self. May God give us such a heart!

In verse 48, she says, *“For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”* Mary was **humble**. Humble. At the very time, under the very

circumstance in which our character usually shouts, “Whoopee, look at me, ain’t I somethin’!” she is resplendent in her humility. This is the great danger for all whom God uses – missionaries, ministers, misters and misses -- to slip into the notion that because God used me, I must now be something, someone just a bit more spiritual and special than others – to let spiritual pride rot the good fruit God wants to bear. We forget that ‘God’s way up is down’ and that ‘the greatest shall be servant of all’ in His kingdom. This is not just a cliché, it’s truth!

In verse 49, she exudes, *“For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.”* Contrary to our contemporary attitude of entitlement, Mary is genuinely **thankful and in awe** of God’s nature. You know, it just really kills the flesh to express thankfulness. Oh, we generally can render a “Thank you” when necessary, but to demonstrate on an on-going basis a true heart attitude of gratefulness is a fundamental part of godliness and it’s pretty rare.

Truth is, you and I are not entitled to anything good. The only reason any good comes into our lives is because God is good. For that reason alone, He causes all things to work together for our good, even the things we see as disastrous. God grant that we may recognize His hand at work in both our ‘hills and valleys’ and as a consequence be thankful.

In verse 50, she continues, *“and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.”* Wow! Here’s the most blessed woman of scripture expressing that she **needs mercy!** And God has given it to her. Mary wasn’t perfect and she knew it!

It’s one thing to accept God’s grace – that is, to get what you haven’t earned, what you don’t deserve. It’s all together another matter to acknowledge your need for mercy – to know that you’re not getting what you do deserve – judgment, death and hell. Does that sound harsh? The mature Christian is the one who knows his/her desperate need for mercy. It’s good to be a seeker of truth, but an accepter of the truth is the one whom God seeks. We need mercy. We need a healthy understanding of our depravity apart from Him.

This is again, completely contrary to our nature which defends itself against all, that thinks it’s always the other guy’s fault somehow, that rushes down the road yet hates the one who cuts in front, that rarely sees the hand of God in any difficulty. ‘Mercy? That’s for the guy in next pew!’ we can think.

In verse 53, she concludes, *“He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.”* Now we’re not talkin’ bacon-cheese burgers here! Nothing for the belly. This speaks of the Spirit of God – to be filled to overflowing with Him. Jesus added, *“Blessed are the **poor in spirit** for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (Mat 5:3) And, *“Blessed **[are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**”* (Mat 5:6)

Mary was **hungry**; she was **poor in spirit**. In contrast, the church of Revelation commonly known as typical of the last days church is criticized by the Lord for saying inwardly, *“... I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”* to which Christ warns, *“... and know not that you are wretched, and*

miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Rev 3:17)

In the book of Daniel, the Antichrist is said to destroy many through “peace” but the word is appropriately translated “prosperity” or “ease”. The attraction to this worldly ease and prosperity is the mortal enemy of spiritual hunger. May God grant us a healthy desire for the things of His kingdom over what the world offers.

So these are eight attributes and attitudes appropriate for the great appointment – the great appearing of our heavenly Bridegroom. Purity, submission to God’s will, faith in His word, sincere worship, humility, thankfulness and awe, acknowledging a need for mercy, and true spiritual hunger -- these are the ways worthy of our Savior.

May we each catch the vision of this appointed time and day. May we look to and hasten the coming of our Lord (2 Pet 3:12). May we be ready and found worthy when His trumpet sounds (Luke 21:36). May a Sword (the Word of God) pierce our own souls, and may we follow the wonderful example He’s given us in dear Mary.

Each one of us desperately needs forgiveness from God for our sins. Whether we’re religious or not, we need a relationship with Him that can only come through faith in Jesus Christ, that is, trusting in God’s gracious gift of forgiveness, eternal life and a restored soul because of Christ’s atoning death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead three days later. If you’ve never done so, why not pray right now and ask God to forgive you, ask Jesus to come in to your heart and for the power of His Holy Spirit to live a life that’s pleasing to Him.

The Rapture and 2nd Coming – Clearly a Difference

In the Old Testament, there are two different pictures painted of the Messiah—one suffering (Isa. 53:2-10, Ps. 22:6-8, 11-18) and one reigning as King (Ps. 2:6-12, Zech. 14:9,16). In these, we see predicted the two comings of the Messiah to earth. In the New Testament, we have two more pictures - descriptions of Jesus' coming in two separate events we call "The Rapture" and "The Second Coming." Listed below are differences between them.

Rapture	Second Coming
Jesus comes FOR His Church. John 14:1-3, 1 Thes 4:14-17	Jesus comes WITH His Church Col 3:4, Zech 14:5, Jude 14, Rev 19:14
Caught up with Him <u>in the air</u> 1 Thes 4:13-18	Jesus' feet <u>touch the earth</u> Zech 14:4, Rev:19:11-21
Christians taken first, unbelievers are left behind. 1 Thes 4:13-18	Wicked are taken first, the righteous (Tribulation saints) are left behind. Matt 13:28-30
Purpose: To present the Church to Himself and to the Father 2 Cor 11:2, Rev. 19:6-9	Purpose: To execute judgment on earth and set up His Kingdom Jude 14-15, Rev 19:11-21, Zech 14:3-4
MARRIAGE: Marriage of Lamb in <u>heaven</u> after the Rapture	WAR: Marriage is followed by war <u>on earth</u> at the 2nd coming
Happens in a <u>moment</u> , in the twinkling of an eye (too fast for eyes to see) 1 Cor 15:52	Slow coming, people will see Him come back. Zech 12:10 Matt 24:30, Rev 1:7
<u>Only Christians</u> will see Him 1 John 3:2, 1 Cor 15:52	<u>Every eye</u> will see Him Rev. 1:7
Jesus descends with a shout(for resurrection) 1 Thes 4:16	No shout mentioned Rev.19:11-21
A resurrection takes place 1 Thes 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-54	No resurrection mentioned Rev 1:7, 19:11-21, Zech 12:10, 14:4-5
Can happen at any time Rev 3:3, 1 Thes 5:4-6	Occurs at end of 7 years of Tribulation Dan 9:24-27, Matt 24:29-30, 2 Thes 2:3-8
No angels are sent to gather (resurrected people don't need angels to help them)	Angels sent forth to gather people together for judgment Matt 13:39, 41, 49, 24:31, 25:31, 2 Thes 1:7-10
Spirits of those dead in Christ return with Jesus to <u>receive</u> their resurrected bodies 1 Thes 4:14-16	Christians return with Jesus in <u>already resurrected</u> bodies riding on white horses. Rev 19:11-21
Jesus does not return on a white horse	Jesus returns on a white horse Rev 19:11
For the Church only (those in <u>Christ</u>) 1 Thes 4:14-17	For redeemed Israel & Gentiles Rom 11:25-27, Matt 25:31-46
A message of <u>hope</u> and <u>comfort</u> 1 Thes 4:18, Titus 2:13, 1 John 3:3	A message of <u>judgment</u> Joel 3:12-16, Rev 19:11-21, Mal 4:5

Author Unknown



"So when the LORD was that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush..."

The Bible indicates that the generation which witnesses the rebirth of the nation of Israel will also witness all the events leading up to Christ's 2nd coming. It says that in the last days Jerusalem will be a "cup of trembling" – the focus of attention of the whole world. It predicts a massive war with Russia leading an alliance of nations including Iran, Iraq, Libya, and many others against Israel. It is thought by many Bible scholars that this war will either immediately precede or be immediately subsequent to the rapture of the Church as mentioned in 1 Cor 15, 1 Thes 5 and several other scriptures.

In addition, there is the prediction of a revival of a major world power arising out of the former Roman Empire (the EU) and exerting a strong influence over Israel and in particular, Jerusalem. (Dan. 2) The leader of this coalition, a charismatic man, will be the ultimate false Messiah and lead the world to oppose Christ's return. He will insist upon a one world religion with ultimately himself as god. Punishment for not following this religion will be, as with Islam, death. And no man will be allowed to buy or sell without his "mark" in his hand or forehead. He will also confirm a significant covenant (i.e. treaty) with many (the UN?).

In addition, Daniel the prophet predicted man's knowledge would dramatically increase in this time.

Without a doubt, we are living in exciting and sobering times.

As we consider these things in light of God's eternal Word, we can take heart that all is moving toward His conclusion. Just a few scriptures to review:

Middle East -- Zech 12:2,3, Ez 37 **Church -- 2Tim3:1-5, 1Tim4:1,2**
Knowledge growth -- Dan 12:4 **Final Generation -- Mk 13:28-30**
Russia -- Ez 38, 39 **One World Religion -- Revelation 13**

*A devotional newsletter produced by Heavenly Minded Ministries.
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