

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

Heavenly Minded



But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes 5:4-5). For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (Heb 10:37)

*Spoken For – Mercy Me
Take this world from me
I don't need it anymore
I am finally free
My heart is spoken for
Oh and I praise You
Oh and I worship You*

*Covered by a love divine
Child of the risen Lord
To hear You say,
"This one's mine"
My heart is spoken for*

*Now I have a peace
That I've never known before
I find myself complete
My heart is spoken for*

*By the power of the cross
You've taken what was lost
And made it fully Yours
And I have been redeemed
By You who spoke to me
Now I am spoken for*



Dear Friends,

**He is coming soon!
What we have waited for
now these nearly two thousand years is
an absolute commitment from our Lord.**

Let us run with the message of the Gospel; let us lay aside every weight of sin "... while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:13-14) God bless and keep you all in the 'Eden' of His presence and eternally good will.

Love in Christ, John and Darlene

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

All Muddied Up

“Ouch! Wha-what are you doing?! Hey, I didn’t ask for this! Man, that stings!”

Here’s this guy, born blind. He’s never seen anything, anytime, anywhere. He’s probably been parked there on the street by parents or friends to beg for coins or handouts. But he’s not complaining; he knows nothing else really. And, then comes his time... an appointment with his Creator.

Along comes Jesus with His disciples and before you know it, they’re pursuing a perplexing issue – why was this man born blind?

Now, either they knew him or someone filled them in because there’s no record of this fellow explaining his state of being born that way. In any event, the situation was theologically a ‘hot button’ for the rabbis taught that if such was the case, either the man sinned in the womb and thus deserved blindness or else his parents sinned such that the fruit of their folly was to pass blindness on to their child.

So the disciples asked, “*Rabbi* (a title used by the Jews to address their teachers), *who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” (See John 9) You see, just as the only thing this blind fellow knew was darkness, all the disciples could fathom was what the rabbis opined. Either the man sinned or his parents – that’s all they knew, and it was darkness as well – spiritual darkness. Now, they were curious, what would rabbi Jesus say?

So what Christ Jesus replied must have just zapped them.

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.”

‘Whoa, no one sinned!?’ Lord, you mean this guy’s been blind for his whole life, he’s begged in the streets, he’s been unwelcome in the synagogue ... so God’s works can be seen??’ If I were there, that’s probably what I would have thought; ‘You mean his pitiful state is somehow God’s work? That doesn’t add up, rabbi.’ What about cause and effect??

In some ways, the disciples were just as blind as this man but perhaps at a disadvantage for at least the blind man knew he was blind.

Now, the Old Testament scriptures contain promises that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind and Jesus did that numerous times. But I submit that as great a miracle as it is to physically heal, spiritual blindness is far more consequential and to be healed of the same far more noteworthy. Typically though, we are so blind to the spiritual world, that we undervalue it and tend to interpret God’s ways, His works and His wonders in the context of the here and now; it’s all we know. We were born into it after all. In this way, we were born blind as well.

When God’s word says, “...*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...*” our minds tend first to consider temporal blessings. When we read, “... *Who heals all our diseases...*” we first figure that it means now -- here in this life. We sometimes hear the pragmatists among us lightly referring to eternity as “the sweet by and by” or as “pie in the sky.” Frankly, many of us only

understand the Word of God in the context of the temporal – that is until we get mud in our eyes. And that’s just what Christ did.

Like you, I’ve heard a lot of good guesses as to why Jesus made mud with His spit and rubbed it into this man’s eyes. He could have spoken the command, “Now see.” Or gently touched him or used any other more ‘dignified’ way to do this miracle but no – for this guy, He made mud -- spit and dirt. Wow, that must have stung something awful! I mean, I get one speck of dust in my contacts and I know it right away.

But two points jump out – first, it was certainly a pragmatic way to ensure that this man who might not have done so otherwise would obey the command to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

And why spit? I’ll suggest that as the spit came from Christ’s mouth, so too do the situations that sometimes ‘muddy our own eyes’. Now, I’m not talking about the situations that come to us solely as a consequence of our sin, but rather the troubles and difficulties He Himself has ordained for our ultimate benefit. Sometimes dirty deals, muddy messes yet spoken forth by His mouth.

(Prophetically, this is interesting for Jesus made “pelos” – mud or clay, which speaks expressly in the Bible of the Jewish people (Isa 64:8, Jer 18:6). You could say this pictures God using the Jews as an ‘irritation’ in the eyes of the blind world in order that they might come to see Christ.) Anyway, this man has got mud in his eyes.

And washing is just what the ‘doctor’ ordered in such a case – washing by the water of God’s

Word! (Eph 5:26) For His Word is truly enlightening (Psa 119:130). But such washing is not just the result of scholarship – rather, receptivity and obedience. Let me repeat that – washing isn’t simply looking at the water, it isn’t just learning about the water, it isn’t even in just listening to the water – it is in contact with the water, emersion in the water – that is, receptivity and obedience.

Some folks think that because they simply read or listen to the Word, that, in and of itself, is taking care of this cleansing and that’s not necessarily so. Oh, reading the scriptures diligently and listening to those speaking it are absolutely critical in the life of a believer! But, it doesn’t stop there. Whether in the pew or the pulpit, the heart that pleases God is the one that trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:2) and that takes heed to it (Psa 119:9).

Second, this gives us a wonderful illustration of how God gives sight to the eyes of our heart – spiritual sight. This fellow was the subject of God’s attention; Christ came to him. Not the other way around. Jesus knew his condition and his situation. In like manner, whether you’ve considered yourself a ‘seeker’ or no, if you’re saved and a member of God’s family, it’s because God found you. And...

Mud works. It’s God’s way so often with those of us who are not only blind but satisfied with that blindness. Mud is not a healing balm, it’s an irritant! So are the situations God puts us in sometimes to eventually open our eyes. Heartaches, heartbreaks, tribulation and sorrow – so often, they’re ‘mud in the eye’.

But in obedience to Jesus, this guy went to the pool of Siloam to wash. It was southeast of the old city, but who

knows how far it was; perhaps he wondered along the way why this man Jesus did it this way. Have you wandered and wondered in tribulation? Seem like you're just feeling your way along sometimes? Impossible situation? Recall, no one had ever healed a person who'd been born blind before, and this guy knew it. He knew his situation was impossible. (John 9:32)

But he went, he washed, and he returned seeing. Dear friend, if you're in such a state, take courage that your Siloam is reachable. God wouldn't send you there if it weren't. How far away is it? Not far. You'll make it. Wash in the water of His Word. Not only will you be clean, but you will see for the first time what you never saw before – not just physically but spiritually.

You see, as if to punctuate the point, the Holy Spirit demonstrates to us that this man who first only knew his Maker as someone called Jesus (John 9:11), came to see Him as a healer (John 9:15), then a prophet (John 9:17), then as the Son of God (John 9:38). The true healing was his salvation. He saw Christ for who He is and believed.

While the disciples were still calling Jesus "rabbi" (John 9:2), this man, once doubly blind, now called Him Lord. He became 'heavenly minded' so to speak. One dear pastor friend of mine told me that since becoming devastatingly ill, he recognized the context of heaven and eternity in so much more of the scripture than ever before.

Mud does that. It leads to new eyesight as God opens our eyes to behold wondrous things (Psa 119:18), to recognize our Messiah, to better know our Father, to discern

His Spirit, to set our minds on things above and thus to bear truly good fruit.

Can you relate to this guy? Stumbling in the darkness of grief and sorrow, I came to my own Siloam and began to wash and wash and wash and wash and wash. Gradually, my smoldering ember of hope re-ignited and then as if by the nape of the neck, the Lord took me out of the pit and set my feet once again upon the Rock (Psa 40:2)

In the 'trembling' study of His Word, you will see Him and be reminded of what you know – God is good. Heaven is real. His promises are sure. Your heart will recognize your Savior afresh and much more clearly. You'll realize that it was His hand that gently applied the mud if you would.

Certainly, we can appreciate the application of this passage to those who don't know the Lord. But, we as Christians can also have much more to see concerning our triune Lord. By salvation, we know Him as Savior, we know Him as our Lord, our King, our Maker, our Bridegroom, our Father, our Comforter, our ... but can we still see more? Yes, resoundingly, yes. In fact, I'm convinced that we will spend eternity doing so.

In heaven the four living creatures (full of eyes) around God's throne keep saying, "Holy, holy, holy!" each time they see Him. Clearly, they are continually astounded and awed!

But here in these Shadowlands, while we're still in a tent of flesh, He will often muddy us up for that very same purpose – to see Him more clearly.

World News



Middle East

Iraq urges Arabs to follow N. Korea
1/2/03

Iraq urged the Arab world yesterday to take inspiration from fellow "axis of evil" member North Korea, as the U.S. military ordered more than 11,000 desert-trained troops to begin heading to the Persian Gulf.

"We Arabs need to revise our behavior towards the United States, as North Korea has done, to be respected," said the daily Babel,

owned by President Saddam Hussein's elder son, Uday. The paper was referring to Pyongyang's relaunching of its nuclear program in the face of stiff U.S. criticism.

"Arabs need to learn the lesson from the Korean example to mobilize in order to stop an attack on Iraq and prevent a U.S.-Zionist crusade in the Arab world."

Turkey sends convoy of 100 tanks, APCs to northern Iraq

World Tribune 1/2/03

ANKARA — Turkey has sent an additional 100 main battle tanks and armored personnel carriers into northern Iraq.

The military convoy began moving over the weekend as armored vehicles crossed the Khabour Gate on the Iraqi-Turkish border. Turkey is said to have already sent more than 15,000 troops in northern Iraq in preparation for a U.S.-led war against the regime of President Saddam Hussein.

Turkish government sources said Ankara has also sent a range of helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, artillery and combat vehicles to northern Iraq, Middle East Newsline reported. They said the military has also flown military equipment to southern Turkish air bases at Baker and Batman.

Ankara has agreed in principle to cooperate with the United States to topple the Saddam regime. But Turkey has not formally relayed such a decision to Washington until parliament votes on the issue.

453 killed in terror attacks in 2002

Jerusalem Post 1/2/03

Palestinian terrorism claimed 453 Israeli lives in 2002, including 156 soldiers, border policemen, and policemen, making 2002 the deadliest year in the 27-month-long intifada.

According to a report appearing on the IDF's official Web site on Thursday, another 2,344 Israelis were wounded in terror attacks this past year, including 604 security forces.

(Editor's Note: This would be as if the US sustained over 20,000 deaths and more than 100,000 wounded based upon population.)

Al Qaeda prepares bio-terror for US and Israel

Debkafile 1/4/03

DEBKA-Net-Weekly's intelligence sources report mounting fears within US and Israeli counter-terrorism agencies that al Qaeda's three command centers are preparing mega-terror attacks for US and Israeli targets.

They believe that, for the time being, al Qaeda has foregone a nuclear, radiological or chemical option in favor of biological warfare, because of the weapons systems believed to have been made available by Iraqi military intelligence and already in the hands of three al Qaeda commanders: Abu Musaab al Zarqawi, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, nicknamed "the Mukhtar".

Baghdad believes that a biological attack on Israel will act as an appropriate reprisal for the threatening US offensive and a possible deterrent.

To be ready in case Iraq launches its F-1 or L-29 warplanes, or Polish-made drones - all armed with spray canisters loaded with toxic chemicals or germs -

over Eilat or Aqaba, the Americans have in the past week been shipping to southern Israel improved, re-engineered PAC-3 anti-missile batteries together with thousands of US Marines.

However, in the view of our intelligence and military sources, the more immediate danger to Israel comes not directly from Iraq but from al Qaeda and its biological weapons arsenal.

They say the Islamic fundamentalist group has established a headquarters at Bayara in the radical Kurdish Ansar al-Islam enclave of northern Iraq, as one of its three main planning centers.

Turkey and Egypt's peace pact

BBC 1/5/03

The Turkish Prime Minister, Abdullah Gul, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak have said they will work to prevent a possible American-led war against Iraq.

Speaking after the talks in Egypt, Mr Gul was quoted by Turkey's Anatolia news agency as saying: "We will endeavour to prevent this war up until the end."

US officials are engaged in discussions with Turkey over financial compensation if there is a conflict.

Turkey says it could face losses of \$28bn in the event of an attack, but the US has so far only offered a package worth \$3-4bn.

The Turkish Government is aware of its isolation from other Muslim countries in the region, highlighted this week by joint exercises its military carried out with Israel and the US in the Mediterranean.

The government does not want to be seen to be used as what another senior adviser described as "Muslim cover" for America. At the same time, it values its relationship with the US in particular, and the West in general.

Iraq strike clock ticks

WND 1/4/03

WASHINGTON – Sources in Israel and the U.S. military suggest the most likely time frame for an attack on Iraq is between Jan. 27 and Feb. 26.

School children are being instructed on use of gas masks during missile attacks. One Israeli newspaper published two pages of instructions recently on civil-defense procedures including how and when to use syringes with anti-nerve gas antibodies. Israel has already inoculated 15,000 emergency workers with the smallpox vaccine, and the general public is preparing for a wider vaccination program.

U.S. forces are expected to begin their attack with a major air offensive directed largely at potential missile launch targets. Ground forces will lay siege to large cities, including Baghdad.

Sharon: After we end this era of terror, we will bring in an era of peace

Jerusalem Post 1/6/03

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon Monday afternoon visited victims of Sunday's twin terror attacks hospitalized at Ichelov Hospital in Tel Aviv, Israel Radio reports.

He said Israel is again seeing a wave of terror. This terror is not new, said Sharon in statement rebroadcast on Israel Radio, Israel has faced these things in the past.

Sharon said he is confident that Israel will triumph against terror again this time, despite it not being easy. "After Israel ends this era of terror," the PM said, "it will bring in a era of peace."

Israel in Secret Statehood Talks

NY Post 1/4/03

Israel is secretly negotiating with the top deputy of Yasser Arafat, and has discussed the creation of a Palestinian state on most of the West Bank, it was

reported yesterday. There was no confirmation or denial by Israel or Palestinian officials of the report in the influential Saudi newspaper al-Wattan, which was based on sources in Washington. An Israeli official, questioned by The Post about the state of secret talks, would only say, "Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon has been making contacts with the Palestinians all the time."

But emissaries of Sharon and Arafat deputy Abu Mazen are believed to have discussed the outlines of a peace accord - and President Bush has been kept



Iraqi nuclear scientist visibly upset at being questioned

abreast of their progress. The Saudi report said Sharon was willing to accept a Palestinian state on 53 percent of the West Bank, and a substantial portion of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli land turnover would be phased in

over 10 years, according to the report. The Palestinians were seeking a temporary state on 65 percent of the West Bank and Gaza territory.

Road to Baghdad Goes Through Tel Aviv

Debkafile 1/7/03

Large American contingents, airborne and heavy mechanized divisions, Marine task forces, aircraft carriers, helicopter fleets and hospital ships are speeding to jumping-off positions around Baghdad.

The US is expected to launch the coming war against Iraq with parachute drops on Baghdad, together with commando landings in the city from the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

A large-scale force will meanwhile encircle the Iraqi capital, while a mighty tank force dashes north from Kuwait and

Qatar, bypassing the southern Iraqi Shiite cities of Najef and Karbala and circumventing the Iraqi army defending Baghdad. Those tanks will join the encircling force.

The object of this colossal movement of military strength is to lay Baghdad to siege.

SYRIA REGARDED AS 2nd LARGEST TERRORIST SPONSOR

MENL 1/9/03

Syria has been deemed as the second biggest sponsor of terrorism in the world, a report commissioned by Congress says.

A report by the Gilmore Commission on the weapons of mass destruction capabilities that could be used against the United States classified Syria as the largest sponsor of terrorism after Iran. The commission's fourth annual report addresses the U.S. requirements to thwart any attack deemed as terrorist.

'After Iran, Syria is the most active state sponsor of terrorism and is included in the U.S. State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism,' the report said. 'Libya is another country that has a history of supporting terrorism and is known to possess chemical weapons.'

Israel joining the 'War on terror': Will begin staging targeted killings in US, other friendly countries

UPI 1/16/03

Israel is embarking upon a more aggressive approach to the war on terror that will include staging targeted killings in the United States and other friendly countries, former Israeli intelligence officials told United Press International.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has forbidden the practice until now, these sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Israeli statements were confirmed by more than a half dozen U.S. foreign policy and intelligence officials in interviews with UPI.

Does this mean assassinations on the soil of allies?

"It does," he said.

Israeli hit teams, which consist of units or squadrons of the Kidon, a sub-unit for Mossad's highly secret Metsada department, would stage the operations, former Israeli intelligence sources said. Kidon is a Hebrew word meaning "bayonet," one former Israeli intelligence source said.

Iraq 'preparing for chemical war'

BBC 1/24/03

Documents smuggled out of Iraq by an opposition group appear to indicate that Baghdad is equipping key units with protection against chemical weapons.

The hand-written papers, said to have been smuggled out by the Iraqi opposition, refer to new chemical warfare suits to protect soldiers and distribution of the drug atropine to counter the effects of nerve gas.

Baghdad embassies closing in weeks

All foreign diplomats expected to leave by Feb. 15

WND 1/27/03

Most foreign diplomatic officials are planning to clear out of Baghdad and close down embassies and consulates by Feb. 15, a senior Indian official tells Dubai's Gulf News.

The paper quoted the official as saying "the decision has been taken by the diplomats, keeping in mind the safety and security of the diplomatic staff and their families," after receiving mixed signals on when the war is likely to start.

The official, who was in Baghdad earlier this week, said diplomats in the Iraqi capital believed that with the U.S. bombing of Iraq likely to begin by Feb. 15, it would be best for the missions to close.

Sharon to rabbis: Jews will be allowed back on Temple Mount

Ha' aretz 1/24/03

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon held a secret meeting several weeks ago with rabbis from the Council of West Bank

Settlements (Yesha Council), where there were discussion over reopening the Temple Mount to Jewish worshippers.

Sharon told the rabbis that he was still determined to allow Jews to enter the Temple Mount compound. The meeting lasted around three hours, and was attended by Rabbis Elyakim Lebanon, Shlomo Aviner, Yigal Kaminsky, Daniel Shilo and Moredechai Rabinovic, who told the prime minister that antiquities on the Temple Mount were being destroyed by works being carried out.

Russia/Asia

US Action Against Iraq Without UN Would Be "ILLEGITIMATE": Russia

Agency France-Press 1/5/03

Russia will consider any military action by the United States and its allies against Iraq without UN approval as illegitimate and unjustified, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said.

'If military actions begin against Iraq without the approval of the UN, we will consider them as illegitimate and unjustified,' Interfax-AVN news agency quoted him as saying.

Russia is opposed to US unilateral military intervention in Iraq, threatened by Washington if it considers Baghdad to be in material breach of UN Security Council resolution 1441, which orders it to completely give up weapons of mass destruction.

Russia's navy faces huge cutbacks

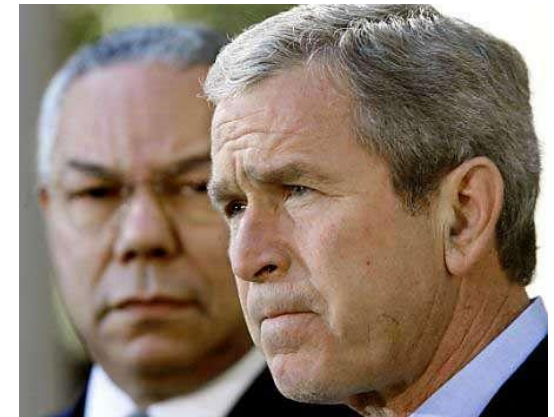
BBC 1/5/03

The Russian navy is to scrap one-fifth of its fleet because of a chronic shortage of funds.

Under the proposals, dozens of ships will be decommissioned to free up money to use on the navy's best vessels.

A senior Russian naval officer, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, said the state simply could not afford to maintain its historic fleet.

In an interview with the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda, Admiral Kuroyedov said the navy was receiving just 12% of the budget it needed to keep its ships afloat.



The President is briefed as Powell looks on

But despite the cuts, the navy has continued to commission new ships. Admiral Kuroyedov said it would be receiving several nuclear and diesel submarines, and surface ships, over the next few years.

N. Korea Threatens 'Third World War'

Fox News 1/10/03

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea warned the United States on Friday that a "new Korean War will finally lead to the Third World War" and dared the Americans to engage it in a "fire-to-fire standoff."

The inflammatory comments, not uncommon for state-sponsored North Korean media, came from newspaper article carried by the North's official news agency, KCNA.

Just hours earlier, North Korea announced that it was withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty amid an intensifying standoff with the United States over the North's nuclear programs.

Inside the Ring

Notes from the Pentagon -- Russia-Iraq ties

Washington Times 1/10/03

U.S. intelligence agencies recently uncovered information indicating Russia's foreign intelligence service is covertly cooperating with Iraq's spy agencies.

The cooperation involves unspecified intelligence sharing between the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, known as the SVR, and Iraq's Mukhabarat.

The discovery has raised alarms in some U.S. spy agencies. There are concerns that intelligence information shared with the United Nations on Iraq will be leaked to Saddam's agents from Russia.

Putin vows to restore Soviet-era ties with SYRIA

Yahoo News 1/16/03

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to restore close diplomatic ties with Moscow's Soviet-era ally Syria at a meeting with Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam. Putin and Khaddam promised to defend each other's interests as military confrontation loomed over Iraq, and to work together to help calm Israeli-Palestinian violence. "Russian-Syrian relations are very important. We must hold dialogue and hold to a line that answers our interests," Putin said.

Putin said Moscow and Damascus had to draft joint policies, both on the looming confrontation over Iraq and on ways to solve Israeli-Palestinian violence. Russia and Syria were "united by long-standing close ties," he said. "I expect that your visit will serve as a good impetus for our relations to develop on all fronts," he told Khaddam.

European Union

Greece Surprises Other EU Members

Reuters 1/9/03

As the world watched for clues on how close fingers were to triggers for war, EU president Greece said on Wednesday it would launch a peace mission, President Bush met his top general and Iraq fired new salvos of defiant words.

Greece's announcement that it would lead a European Union mission to Arab states surprised other members of the bloc whose attitudes on Iraq vary widely -- from staunch British support for Washington to Germany's refusal to get involved in combat.

Solana's 'Theory of Relativity'

WND Commentary by Hal Lindsey 1/9/03

I was fascinated to read a report in the London Financial Times explaining why it is that our erstwhile European allies seem to be on the opposite side of any equation in which the United States is a factor.

Like most Americans, I am perplexed by the inexplicably predictable opposition most of our European allies have to all things American -- even if opposing the U.S. runs contrary to their own best national interests.

According to Javier Solana, Europe's foreign policy chief, Europe's fight is with the individual al-Qaida network, and only to the extent necessary to hold them at bay.

Solana told the Financial Times that the shared values of America and Europe are really little more than a political myth.

In point of fact, Solana says the two sides are growing further apart. And the reason isn't political differences, but rather the result of what he calls the "cultural phenomenon" of religion.

Specifically, he feels, America has "far too much religion." And the American view of religion is just too rigid. In this day and age when America is a post-Christian society, that is truly an amazing point of view. But it does show that America is living with at least a memory of Christian ethics.

Solana believes that in the American religiously shaped worldview, "It is all or nothing. For us Europeans, it is difficult to

deal with because we are secular. We do not see the world in such black and white terms."

In Solana's "more sophisticated European view of morality," what the U.S. sees as a war against terrorism and the religious ideology that spawned it, he sees as simply a fight against "politically misguided terrorists."

What is the difference? To Europeans, those who hijack airplanes filled with innocent people for the express purpose of using them as living weapons to kill thousands of other innocent people were not acting out "evil."

But to "the superstitious Americans," such activities *are* evil. In Solana's view of European morality, there are no absolutes because God is irrelevant, if he exists at all. Therefore, there is no good or evil. Everything is relative. The notions of "good" and "evil" are simply religious superstitions that the "mature societies" of Europe have long since abandoned.

It isn't *all* religion that Solana finds offensive. Only the superstitious American Christians and the evil Zionist Jews.

Just as the Bible prophets predicted would happen, Europe is perfectly prepared for the Antichrist to come and take them over.

Reform of EU presidency

BBC 1/15/03

France and Germany are to propose a plan for a new dual presidency for the European Union.

The EU would be led by a European Commission president and the head of the Council of Ministers.

French President Jacques Chirac made the announcement after talks in

Paris with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

One of the co-presidents would be elected by the European Parliament, and the other by European Union ministers, said Mr Chirac.



British commando takes aim in Cyprus training exercise

Correspondents say that the plan could have a decisive effect on efforts by

the EU's Convention on the Future of Europe to prepare a constitutional treaty for the EU.

The proposal for reforms to the EU's top job was first put forward by Mr Chirac, who has already won broad support from the UK, Spain, Italy and Sweden.

It is unpopular with some of the smaller EU states, and with members of the European Commission.

TOP MILITARY OFFICIAL PREDICTS EU MERGE WITH NATO

EU Observer 1/19/03

The European pillar in NATO and European security and defense policy (ESDP) will be merged, according to Gustav Häggglund, chairman of the Military Committee of the European Union.

Speaking at the University of Helsinki, the European Union's highest military official added that if Finland does not decide in favor of NATO membership by the end of this decade it really makes no difference. By that time EU security and defense policy and the European pillar in NATO will all be the same.

Mr. Häggglund expressed deep concern about America neglecting the importance of NATO and Europe. He referred to the new security strategy presented by US President, George Bush, in September which barely mentioned NATO and Europe. "The new goal for Europe is to

maintain the relevance of NATO in American security thinking', Mr. Hägglund said.

France and Germany dream of EU embassies around the world

The Times 1/21/03

THE European Union would have its own diplomatic corps with embassies throughout the world under new plans to strengthen its international image.

The idea is part of the political package France and Germany presented yesterday to the convention, under the chairmanship of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French President, that is drawing up a constitutional blueprint for the EU.

The bedrock of the service would be European Commission representations already established in about 130 countries. Under the Franco-German plan, their remit would be broadened to represent the whole EU. They would work closely with national diplomats and be answerable to a European Minister for Foreign Affairs. Britain also supports the Franco-German idea of EU heads of government electing a powerful, long-term President.

Britain Sending 26,000 More Troops to Gulf

New York Times 1/20/03

Britain announced today that it was sending 26,000 troops to the Persian Gulf for possible action against Iraq, joining the 5,000 British military personnel en route or already there. The increase will put more than 1/4 of Britain's 109,000-member army in position for combat with Iraq. It's the most significant military step yet taken by Britain, the principal ally of the United States, and greatly exceeded predictions by military experts. The troops are expected to be in the region by mid-February.

Germany Joins France In Refusing To Support War In Iraq

CNS 1/22/03

London - Germany will refuse to back any U.N. resolution authorizing military strikes against Iraq and instead will try to prevent a war - along with France, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said Wednesday. France, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, has veto power, while Germany does not.

"I have told our French friends, and the others as well, and I'll say it here, going a bit further in this question than I have in the past: Do not expect that Germany will agree to a resolution that legitimizes war," Schroeder told the rally.

"It is important that Europe speaks on this issue with a single voice," he said.

German and French officials planned to further strengthen diplomatic ties in Paris on Wednesday at a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Elysee friendship treaty.

Reports suggest the two nations will pen an agreement to authorize regular joint cabinet meetings. Delegates will also begin moves to create a unified system of citizenship and law for the two countries, which already share a currency, the euro.

United States

U.S. BEGINS PULLOUT OF NON-ESSENTIAL STAFF FROM MIDEAST MENL 1/15/03

The United States has launched an effort to withdraw non-essential government personnel from the Middle East.

Officials said the effort is meant to avoid Arab or Islamic reprisals on U.S. personnel over the next few months amid tension in the Persian Gulf and Middle East region. They said U.S. intelligence agencies have warned that Al Qaida and Iraq could intensify attacks on U.S. nationals to foil any Washington-led war against Baghdad.

So far, officials said, the State Department is quietly pulling out non-essential embassy staffers and families in such countries as Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Powell reaffirms U.S. support for Middle East 'Quartet'

Reuters 1/21/03

The United States on Monday reaffirmed its support for the quartet of international peace envoys whose Middle East peace efforts were

dismissed as "nothing" by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and said that the United States plans to push ahead vigorously with the "Quartet" road map.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said Washington remained committed to the peace plan developed by the group - composed of the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States - and hoped to revive the peace process after the January 28 elections.

"We have worked very hard to develop a road map that we believe will give us a way forward and will lead us on to a path that will result ultimately in the creation of a Palestinian state," he told reporters after attending a high-level meeting of the 15-nation UN Security Council.

Religion

Arab cleric praises suicide bombers

Greek Orthodox priest says Christians should join Muslims

WND 1/15/03

A Palestinian Greek Orthodox archimandrite is urging Arab Christians to join forces with Islam and take part in suicide attacks against Israel, reports ASSIST News Service.

Attallah Hanna, former spokesman of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, called for the creation of

an Islamic-Christian union that would foil the "American offensive" against Iraq and "release Palestine from the river to the sea."

"The suicide bombers who carry out their activities in the name of religion are national [Islamic] heroes and we're proud

of them," he said on the Internet website of the militant group Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for several attacks.

Mel Gibson under attack for Jesus film?

Actor-director

believes enemies are trying to discredit him

WND 1/15/03

Actor-director Mel Gibson said tonight he's under attack for making a realistic movie about the suffering, sacrificial death of Jesus.

On Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor," Gibson said a reporter was dispatched by a "reputable" but unnamed publication to "dig up dirt" on him.

"Whenever you take up a subject like this it does bring out a lot of enemies," he said. His private life, his banking records, charities he supports, friends, business associates and family members have all undergone scrutiny in this investigation, he said.

Asked if he believed there was a direct correlation between this investigation and his work on "The Passion," a film he is making in Aramaic and Latin for authenticity, Gibson said: "I think there is."

"This is a movie about love, faith, hope and forgiveness," Gibson said. "He died for all mankind. He (Jesus) suffered for all of us. It's time to get back to that basic message. The world has gone nuts. We



Hamas spiritual leader observes rally

could all use a little more love, faith, hope and forgiveness."

British Jury Watches Video of Muslim Cleric Promising Benefits to Religious Martyrs; Inciting Followers to Murder "nonbelievers"

ABC 1/23/03

A Muslim cleric (religious leader) accused of inciting followers to murder "nonbelievers" was shown on tape Thursday promising an audience that religious martyrs would be rewarded with 72 virgins in paradise. The tape played in a London courtroom also showed Abdullah el-Faisal urging British Muslim boys to spend their school vacations learning how to use Kalashnikov rifles.

El-Faisal is heard telling the gathering that it is the duty of Muslim women to bring up their sons "with a Jihad (holy war) mentality not to be wimps." Boys should train as soldiers for Islam from the age of 15, he said, adding, "Democracy is not the way forward. The only way to liberate land and man is Jihad. The way forward is the bullet. Our motto is, 'Might is right.'"

Sunni Muslims: Having modern nukes 'a religious obligation'

World Tribune 1/25/03

CAIRO — Sunni Muslim leaders have authorized Islamic states to acquire nuclear weapons.

The Islamic Ruling Committee in Al Azhar, based in Cairo, ruled that Islamic states must acquire nuclear weapons for their defense. The committee is regarded as the highest authority for Sunni Muslims in the Middle East, according to Middle East Newsline.

"The acquisition of modern nuclear weaponry is a religious obligation," the committee said in a statement on Dec. 23.

"All Islamic nations are required to seize nuclear weaponry, giving the nation the utmost respect," A-Shanawi said. "We see how far behind our nation is as a result of not being prepared as

well as it should be, while the enemy has equipped itself with the best weaponry there is, which it will use to harm and destroy Muslims."

"Getting to know the enemy and realizing the different ways to deal with it is a religious obligation," Hassan said in an interview with Islam On-Line website. "If a neighboring country is known to possess a nuclear weapon, then we must do all in our power to do the same."

Science

Ex-abortionists expose America's greatest scandal

Doctors, staffers tell electrifying story of corruption, greed, betrayal, death
WND WhistleBlower 1/3/03

"Safe and legal abortion is every woman's right." That's what Americans have been told since the Supreme Court's momentous Roe v. Wade decision – 30 years ago this month – that opened up the floodgates of abortion in the U.S.A.

But behind the slick marketing campaign, beyond the slogans and public posturing of abortion-rights activists, is what can only be described as the wretched reality of the abortion industry.

- Human babies, at or near full-term, are regularly butchered as they are being born, their intact body parts sold for profit.
- The link between abortion and breast cancer is now undeniable, proven by the vast majority of medical studies. Yet, while physicians recognize the risk factor and admit it to each other, most are fearful of telling their patients because the issue is "too political."

- Millions of women suffer other profound physical and psychological effects of abortion, but despite at least five peer-reviewed studies published just within the last year – all showing clearly the negative aftershocks for women who abort – the mainstream press has ignored the subject.
- Young women are being raped and sexually assaulted with alarming frequency in America's abortion clinics.
- The abortion industry itself is in severe distress and contraction because, after 43

million abortions since 1973, the doctors and clinic staffers are self-destructing from the long-term effects of their grisly business – or else they are getting out and telling their story.

Leading off is Norma McCorvey, the real-life "Jane Roe" of Roe v. Wade – the unmarried, pregnant young woman who 30 years ago was the abortion-seeking plaintiff and focal point of the fight for legalized abortion in America.

Today, having experienced a profound change of heart, McCorvey tells: how the Roe v. Wade case was fraudulent because she fabricated her story of being raped and thus impregnated, how she was callously used by heartless pro-abortion attorneys, and how she never actually had the abortion. She also relates the incredible story of how she turned around and came to be a Christian and a pro-life activist, working tirelessly to undo the results of Roe v. Wade.

One of the principal architects and strategists of the abortion movement in the United States, Dr. Bernard Nathanson (co-founder of the fiercely pro-abortion NARAL (The National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League)) tells an astonishing story.

"We persuaded the media that the cause of permissive abortion was a liberal, enlightened, sophisticated one. Knowing that if a true poll were taken, we would be soundly defeated, we simply fabricated the results of fictional polls," he confesses. "We announced to the media that we had taken polls and that 60 percent of Americans were in favor of permissive abortion. ... We aroused enough sympathy to sell our program of permissive abortion by fabricating the number of illegal abortions done annually in the U.S. The actual figure was approaching 100,000, but the figure we gave to the media repeatedly was 1,000,000."

Noting that "repeating the big lie often enough convinces the public," Nathanson adds: "The number of

women dying from illegal abortions was around 200-250 annually. The figure we constantly fed to the media was 10,000. These false figures took root in the consciousness of Americans, convincing many that we needed to crack the abortion law."

Ultimately, however, although he performed some 5,000 abortions with his own hands and supervised another 10,000 in his clinic, Nathanson also changed. Something profound happened to him – and today, like McCorvey, he is a tireless pro-life advocate and speaker, laboring to stuff the abortion genie back into the bottle.

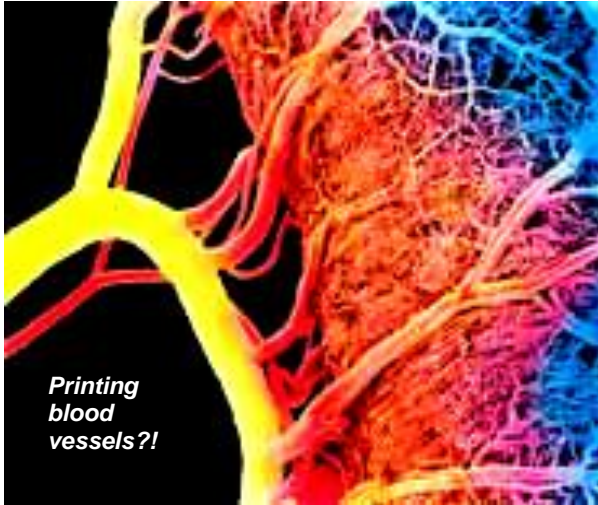
Digital Angel Corp. Unveils First in Series of Miniaturized GPS System Bloomberg News 1/13/03

Digital Angel Corporation today unveiled the first in a series of new miniaturized GPS locator products for mobile connectivity to people, pets and assets at the annual Consumer Electronics Show. The new unit is considered an important development in the emerging market for small, portable devices that provide wireless, mobile connectivity between people, or between people and their pets or assets. The device enables the location of a person, pet or asset to be tracked by authorized people via GPS mapping software over dial-up or high-speed Internet connections at a special website, or by simply calling the Digital Angel AlertCall Center.

Scientists Create Brand New Organism ENS 1/14/03

WASHINGTONDC - A group of scientists has created an organism that produces an amino acid that no other living thing has ever used.

All living things use the same 20 amino acids to build all of the proteins that make up all living cells. Now, scientists led by Scripps Research Institute chemistry professor Dr. Peter Schultz have engineered a version of the E. coli bacteria that can produce a 21st amino acid.



Printing blood vessels?!

Ink-jet printing creates tubes of living tissue

New Scientist 1/23/03

Three-dimensional tubes of living tissue have been printed using modified desktop printers filled with suspensions of cells instead of ink. The work is a first step towards printing complex tissues or even entire organs.

"This could have the same kind of impact that Gutenberg's press did," claims tissue engineer Vladimir Mironov of the Medical University of

South Carolina.

Many labs can now print arrays of DNA, proteins or even cells. But for tissue engineers, the big challenge is creating three-dimensional structures. Mironov became interested when Thomas Boland of Clemson University, also in South Carolina, told Mironov how he could print biomaterials using modified ink-jet printers.

Unprecedented Nightmare of Scorpions

Earthweek 1/20/03

It was a dark and stormy night in southern Africa's Kalahari Desert — and for countless thousands of scorpions, it was time to eat. "They were everywhere," says German research biologist Ann Rasa of the unprecedented night of December 23 when the desert, came alive under her feet. "Nothing like this has ever happened before," Rasa told the Cape Times. "It was as if the whole scorpion population of the Kalahari suddenly said to themselves, 'Tonight's the night.'" It forced campers into their cars, and sent professor Rasa running to her home where she closed all the windows and doors. "There were scorpions everywhere, all over the ground wherever you looked, and climbing the walls," she said.

The scientists managed, though genetic engineering techniques, to create a bacterium that can make the new amino acid by itself, as opposed to being fed the unnatural amino acid from an outside source.

E. coli is notorious for its ability to reproduce fast, so the researchers took careful steps aimed at preventing the bacteria from escaping the laboratory.

BARCODES 'STOP BABY MIX-UPS'

BBC 1/23/03

Barcodes containing newborn babies' fingerprints are being used to prevent mix-ups over identification.

The system has been introduced in the maternity unit of La Zarzuela Hospital in Madrid, Spain.

As soon as babies are born their fingerprints, and those of their mothers, are stored in electronic barcodes which mother and baby wear on their wrists.

The barcodes also contain other information, including the mother's details and information about the doctors present at the birth. In effect, they act as an ID card for the child.

If there is any doubt about a baby's identity, the barcodes can be scanned by a machine which matches the child with its mother

The Aroma of Sacrifice

The daily sacrifice in Jerusalem will be interrupted and it will mark the beginning of the great tribulation — three and a half years described by scripture as the worst time that ever has or ever will come upon the world. Why is this sacrifice such a big deal? What is it about this practice that makes it such a catalyst and hot button in the last days? When did it start and why? Does it mean anything to us as believers or is it only a Jewish concern? What will make this practice one that must be stopped?

All about sacrifice

The principle of sacrifice is absolutely contrary to the principle of sin. From the earliest days, all the way back to Abel the son of Adam, offering a sacrifice was understood to be pleasing to God. Before the giving of the Old Testament law, sacrifices were made to Him as a means of demonstrating dedication. After Moses, sacrifice took on the additional role of covering sin. Sadly, the last days church has strayed so far from this crucial understanding — that is, to live for God, to please Him and to follow Christ involves daily sacrifice!

And just as the Antichrist will hate the sacrificial worship of the temple, Satan hates the daily sacrifice evident in the life of any ardent believer — he wants it to stop also. For that reason, he has worked hard

to eliminate it from the character and conscience of the church. You see, the things we tend to esteem so highly -- big churches, so-called mega-ministries — are not necessarily a threat to his kingdom — but sacrifice is.

And by definition, it's costly. You only sacrifice for what you believe. *"Ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence? Five were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor."*

"What kind of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in rags. Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward. Vandals or soldiers or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton."

"At the Battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis, had taken over the Nelson home for his

headquarters. The owner quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt. Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his grist mill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart. Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates." – Chris Talton

The 'flashy' and so-called 'relevant' spiritual hype we hear so much of today is simply worthless to the soul. Teaching that fosters the me-centered material prosperity often misrepresents the gospel. As sacrifice becomes less and less 'in vogue', less appealing to today's spiritual seeker so to speak, it simply isn't dealt with from the pulpit let alone in our daily lives. We can go through all the religious motions and still miss the target.

You know, the church is always healthiest when under persecution. Why? Daily sacrifice. The great apostle Paul said, "I die daily." (1 Cor 15:31) Christ said the children of the kingdom are sown in this world as good seed (Mat 13:38) and Paul, picking up on that theme wrote, "...what is sown is not made alive unless it dies." (1 Cor 15:36)

We want to hear about grace and we should; we long to hear about love and we should; yet for those of us who truly desire to follow Christ, we strangely yearn for and respond

to this notion of sacrifice when we understand it. Sacrifice is not just some Old Testament or Jewish deal. It is a fundamental part of the character of every true Christian. And so, let's consider both the OT and NT practices of sacrifice and the pictures in them. (But, beware, reading further may have serious consequences!)

We'll begin with the Levitical offerings for they were specified exactly by the Lord. There were five basic sacrifices or offerings therein – the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering (which was treated much the same as the sin offering). Each had its special practice, purpose and illustrated a powerful point.

For each practice a purpose

The *whole burnt offering* was a voluntary sacrifice (Lev.1). The animal was to be a male from the herd or flock that had no physical blemish. What set this offering apart was that the entire animal, not just part of it, was to be consumed by fire.

This clearly points to the Garden of Gethsemane as well as Calvary. Jesus showed us the fulfillment of this sacrifice in His complete dedication to the Father. For the worshiper of God, it is an expression of thanks, an indication of the worshiper's desire for fellowship with the LORD. The shedding of blood in it speaks of the need though for atonement, that is, a covering for sin, for this dedication and fellowship to be realizable. Like Cain, many people want to come to God with a bloodless offering so to speak. They want fellowship with God but on their terms. They like the love and peace and joy and all but don't want to deal with their sin.

For you and I too, dedication is voluntary. Paul was probably thinking of the Old Testament whole burnt offering when he wrote in Romans 12:1, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship."

The *grain offering* was to be ground fine, not whole or coarse. And it was to be mixed with salt which speaks of grace (Col 4:6), incense which speaks of prayer (Rev 8:4) and olive oil which speaks of the Spirit of God, crushed from the fruit of the olive tree (Lev. 2). It could not contain any leaven, a symbol of sin, nor any honey.

It points to the crushing Jesus experienced under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said He was the bread of life (John 6:32,33); sinless and gracious, He endured the bitterness of the cross and hell for us.

For the worshipper, it shows that following Him will mean times of brokenness as well (Mat 21:44)

The "shelem" or *peace offering* is all about fellowship (Lev. 3). As such, it points to the fellowship Jesus enjoyed with the Father from eternity past and which He invites us to share with Him for eternity future. In it, God reserved the "fat upon the inwards" for Himself which pictures that the best part of us – the inner man – is His.

The family of the worshiper ate parts of the sacrificed animal together. The symbolism is powerful, picturing the family as guests at God's table. You see, to be served food in the Middle East was an honor and a mark of friendship. By serving food, the host

became obligated to protect his guests. Thus the fellowship offering reminds us how complete God's welcome is. We find wholeness and well-being – "shalom" -- in the presence of our God. And He fully commits Himself to those who approach Him with faith.

The *sin offering* was not voluntary (Lev. 4). Whoever sinned—an anointed priest, the whole community, a leader, or an ordinary member of the community—the same procedure had to be followed. As with the other offerings, the sacrificed animal was to be without blemish. Its blood, however, was to be sprinkled seven times (seven being the Bible's number of completion) before the veil which speaks of a complete covering of sin.

As with the previous offering, the fat upon the inwards and the kidneys were God's but the rest of the animal was to be taken outside the camp to the place where ashes were dumped and be burned. This points clearly to Calvary. Jesus was crucified "outside the camp" both of Jerusalem and figuratively the Jewish people for they rejected Him.

We as believers are told to come to Him "outside the camp" (Heb 13:13). This is so powerful – He's outside our comfort zone, we must leave the world behind.

The *trespass (unintended sin) offering* was treated with the same law as the sin offering (Lev. 7). It goes to illustrate that all sin has to be dealt with whether intentional or not.

Fulfilled in Christ Jesus

"Try to imagine yourself at Golgotha Hill on Good Friday. The cross is placed on the ground and you are thrown backward with your shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire

feels for the depression at the front of your wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through your wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull your arms too tightly, allowing you some flex and movement. The cross is then lifted into place and fastened onto the upright set into the hill.”

“Your left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving your knees flexed.

You are now crucified. As you slowly sag down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in your brain. You push yourself upward to avoid this stretching torment. But now you feel the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves of your feet.”

“As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through your muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push yourself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. You fight to raise yourself in order to get even one small breath.”

“What follows is hours of limitless pain: cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from your lacerated back as you move up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain within the chest as your heart cavity fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.”

“It is now almost over: the loss of

fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. Finally, you feel the chill of death creeping through your tissues. You welcome its approach. Such was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for you and for me.” –Chris Talton

Here was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices and the first of the New. Jesus said, “whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27) And so, what do we observe of our Lord in His sacrifice?

1. After being beaten, scourged and nailed to the cross, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Forgiveness flows out of sacrifice. Christ’s attitude was absolutely contrary to the sin nature in us that wants to get even for suffering or get bitter in the bitterness. When we sacrifice, we usually want glory or at least appreciation. We want to receive rather than to give. But in Jesus -- “... we have redemption through His blood (sacrifice), the forgiveness of sins,” (Eph 1:7)

2. Upon the cross, responding to the thief next to him who plead, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,” Jesus said, “Verily I say unto thee, Today, you shall be with Me in paradise.” Faith flows out of sacrifice. Jesus could exult in the offering of Himself through faith in His Father. This is contrary to the common notion today that sacrifice indicates failure and a lack of faith. We say, “God’s really in this!” when things go well

but can stumble in doubt when He leads us into sacrifice. In fact, God leads those into sacrifice who are faithful.

3. In painful agony, when Jesus “saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’” Family flows out of sacrifice. Christ’s compassion for his mother in the midst of His agony is the essence of God’s family. It is this kind of love in the midst of sacrifice that builds the eternal relationships between us – and it’s so contrary to our nature which is to be considerate and kind when all is well but difficult and self-centered in times of sacrifice. (Ouch, that one hurts!)
4. “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst’.” Fulfillment flows out of sacrifice. Jesus had earlier rejected a drink intended to numb His pain. He wanted the full measure of suffering in the midst of His sacrifice and then later He knew when “all things were now accomplished”. Fulfillment is not found in pleasure; it’s not in the satisfying of my ego or in the numbing to the pain ordained by God. We find fulfilling purpose flowing out of sacrifice.
5. Near the end, Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” Forsakenness flows out of sacrifice. This may seem like a real negative twist, but apart from this ‘aloneness’ Christ could not

have redeemed us. Sacrifice will sometimes put you in the place of feeling alone and forsaken. Clearly, this is contrary to our natural desire for acceptance and popularity. And though God is truly the Maker of relationships and community, He is also the Maker of our forsakenness. It’s here in solitude that we deal with what we truly believe. Every great character of the scripture experienced a sense of abandonment. It will look like the valley of the shadow of death and we all will walk it alone. And yet we’re not alone for when all others forsake us, Christ is there – always and forever.

6. Finally, Jesus said, “It is finished.” Finishing flows from sacrifice. And what a glorious finish! Jesus didn’t stop, never quit. The faithful will finish through sacrifice. And apart from sacrifice, there is no finish, not in the sense of completion. We naturally find it easy to start, easier to run the race when we’re fresh but we must not falter or quit to avoid sacrifice! We must finish in sacrifice. At the conclusion of a incredibly sacrificial life, Paul wrote, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7)

7. His last words upon the cross – when “He had cried again with a loud voice, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit, He yielded up the ghost.” Fearlessness flows out of sacrifice. Jesus died in only about six hours whereas many if not most healthy men lasted up to two and even three days. That’s why it was normal to break the legs of the victims in order speed up their dying through strangulation. However,

Jesus' legs weren't broken because He was already dead. He was already dead because He didn't fear death. He embraced it fearlessly. He committed Himself unto His Father. Sacrifice kills the natural man but we need not fear. Fearless confidence in God is the result. Paul said confidently, "*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*"

He led the way

"Then said Jesus to his disciples, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" (Mat 16:24) "*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*" (Luke 9:23) What clearer terms could Christ have used to make it plain that following Him included a daily sacrifice??

But the devil hates it. Recall that the first murder way back in Genesis 4 was prompted by a snit over sacrifice. Here's a guarantee – your sin-centered natural man will eschew godly sacrifice at every opportunity and make every logical, reasonable, rational, sensible excuse to stop it even if you dare to start. Yes, the Antichrist will stop the daily ritual of sacrifice and here's the practical application for us as believers -- as with the last days temple in Jerusalem, when godly sacrifice stops, devilish desolation of the holy place begins. Now, it may be wrapped in an attractive package but in any pretty wrapper, it's still an abomination and it stinks.

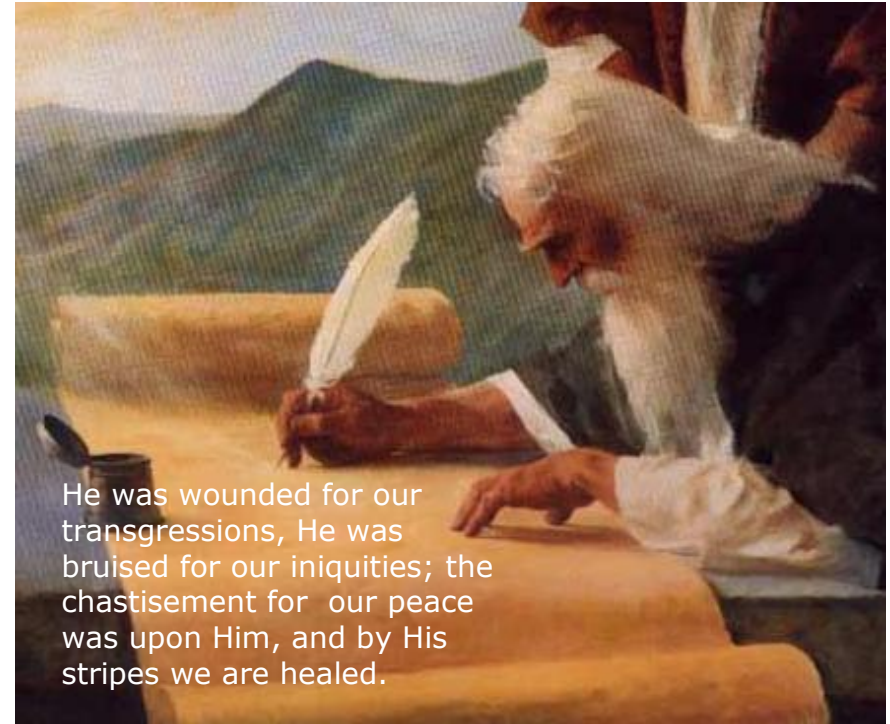
The desolation of false religiosity and ease smells like death while godly sacrifice has the scent of life. Wow – that's totally counter to the

natural man isn't it? But it's absolutely true. And you need a heavenly perspective to understand it. "*Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.*" (2Cor 2:14-16)

You want to put up a stink in hell? Daily sacrifice. You want to follow in the steps of Christ? Daily sacrifice. You want to please God with a beautiful fragrance? Daily sacrifice. It's heavenly minded perfume -- "*a sweet aroma to the LORD.*"

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 on the third day following.

If you've never done so, why not pray right now and ask God to forgive you, ask Jesus to come into your heart and for the power of His Holy Spirit to live a life that's pleasing to Him. Your eternity depends on it!



He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.