

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

Heavenly Minded

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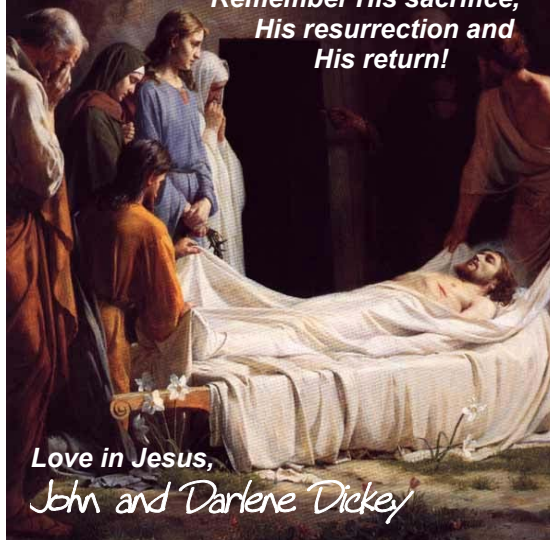
... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

**World News
Let's Get It Straight!
Stuck in the Muck?
Valley Song**

Dear Friends,

Our Lord Jesus was indeed laid in a tomb but He's not there anymore! He said that He'd rise again from the dead and on the third day, He did!

**Remember His sacrifice,
His resurrection and
His return!**



*Love in Jesus,
John and Darlene Dickey*

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The goal of HM is to encourage our readers to "Set your minds on things above..." and thereby to be the greater and more effective witness to Christ. Our news items are not meant to scoop anyone or to simply 'tickle the ear' but rather to show potentially meaningful prophetic trends. Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

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. Isaiah 17:1, 14 tells us of the coming utter destruction of Damascus.

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
Knowledge growth -- Dan 12:4
Russia -- Ez 38, 39**

**Church -- 2Tim3:1-5, 1Tim4:1,2
Final Generation -- Mk 13:28-30
One World Religion -- Revelation 13**

Lets Get it Straight

“...we should admit it: John was weird. Any man who preached like this, lived in the desert, wore funny clothes and lived on grasshoppers and wild honey was just plain weird. Praise God that Jesus didn't have a "slick" advance man with a thousand dollar suit and a two-hundred dollar haircut; praise God that He uses weird people.” – David Guzik

But can you identify with John? Do you WANT to identify with John?? Admittedly, my own lack of style in fashion and a diabetic diet (are grasshoppers high in carbs?) lead me to identify a little bit with him in the 'weird' category. But we should all identify with his mission. You see, John understood that he was preparing the way before his Lord. He understood his need to point others to Him. And he understood his need to decrease as Jesus increased.

This notion of preparing the way is fascinating! That's because no one prepares the way for someone they don't absolutely expect to come. John knew the first coming of the Messiah was at hand. He said, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worth to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy spirit and fire."* (Mat 3:11) Now, he may have suspected that it was Jesus of whom he spoke for when Christ came to be baptized, John told Him, *"I need to be baptized by You..."* (Mat 3:14) but he testified that he only knew for sure when he later saw the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ. He said, *"I did not know Him, but He who sent*

me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:33-35)

In like manner, we have been given a sign preceding the second coming of the Messiah (recall, this is not the same thing as the rapture but follows it) – the budding of the "fig tree". (See Mat 24:32-34) After describing in detail the events of the last days and tribulation period, Jesus told his disciples, *"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."*

Now the fig tree has been a type and 'fig'ure of the nation of Israel in scripture and many if not most conservative Bible scholars agree that the rebirth of the nation Israel in 1948 is clearly its re-budding so to speak after a long dormancy. What is not clear is how long a generation is from a prophetic standpoint.

One well known author proposed in the 1970's that it was possibly 40 years - most likely based upon the fact that it took 40 years for the older generation in the wilderness to pass away before the children of Israel could take the promised land. If the 40 years began in 1948 (and that's not an insignificant 'if') then the conclusion of the period would have been in 1988 – oops. Now, that suggestion was certainly not made to lead anyone astray but in honest expectation. It was also not made as a prediction though some took it as such.

Personally, I'm inclined to believe that the prophetic number for a generation is 70 years based upon Isa 23:15, Psa 90:10 and the first mention of 70 years

in Gen 5:12 separating two generations. I cannot be dogmatic on that however. Other Bible teachers are leaning toward other numbers or are simply unsure. Whatever the case, like John, we have been given a sign (see 1 Thes 5:1-9) and should be committed to preparing the way before our Lord. That's because, the lack of this expectation can lead to a life-style unworthy of our Savior. Jesus said, *"But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Mat 24:48-51)

So how do we prepare the way? All four gospels record the answer (Mat 3:3, Mk 1:3, Lk 3:4,5, Jn 1:23) – straightness. In both the Greek and Hebrew, it means making a way that is straight, true, upright and implies a way that is pleasing. John did this by preaching an uncompromising message of repentance. His behavior may have seemed strange but his message was plain and undiluted. What exactly did he say?

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mat 3:2) He did not toy around with a 'social gospel' or play to the 'seeker' crowd with an entertaining friendly message. The time was at hand. Many today claim that we are too sophisticated for this kind of message – that it is simply a 'turn-off' and will never win souls to the kingdom. They say we need a 'kinder, gentler' gospel to borrow a contemporary phrase. Hey, the gospel is kind and gentle to the repentant but it is tough on the rebellious and self-satisfied.

To the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism John said, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

I'll suggest that some of today's teachers are not giving people 'all the facts' such as their absolute need to forsake sin and humble themselves before God. It may be because they are more afraid of the reactions of their audience than they are of their Lord. The religious leaders of John's time tied their righteous standing before God to their association with Abraham. This led to the assumption that the fruit of their lives was immaterial – a delusion John clearly dashed to pieces. Some folks today are using their 'association' with Jesus in the same way. Now, those of you who have followed our writings know that we who are saved are unshakably covered in redemptive grace by the atoning blood of Christ. That's not the issue – bearing fruit in keeping with that salvation is the issue. That's the straightness our King is looking for – the straight path individually within our hearts and corporately within the church.

"A large part of the church at the present day have the same spirit, and every effort to open the eyes of the church, and to make Christians see that they live so low, so worldly, so much like hypocrites, that it is impossible the work of the Lord should go on, only excites ill will and occasions reproach. "O," they say,

"what a bad spirit he shows, so censorious, and so unkind, surely that is any thing but the meek, and kind, and loving spirit of the Son of God." They forget how Jesus Christ poured out his anathemas, enough to make the hills of Judea shake, against those that had the reputation of being the most pious people in that day. Just as if Jesus Christ never said any thing severe to any body, but just fawned over them, and soothed them into his kingdom. Who does not know that it was the hypocritical spirit exhibited by professors of religion, that roused his soul and moved his indignation, and called forth his burning torrents of denunciation. He was always complaining of the very people who were set up as patterns of piety, and called them hypocrites, and thundered over their heads the terrible words, 'HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL!'" – Charles Finney

Whoa! Finney didn't pull any punches, did he? He would add, *"And let me say to the impenitent sinners present--You see what it is to be a Christian. It is to be governed by the authority of God in all things, and not by public sentiment, to live not by hopes and fears, but by supreme consecration of yourself unto God. You see that if you mean to be religious, you must count the cost. I will not flatter you. I will never try to coax you to become religious, by keeping back the truth. If you mean to be Christians, you must give yourselves wholly up to Christ. You cannot float along to heaven on the waves of public sentiment. I will not deceive you on this point."*

Now, we should revel in the awesomeness of grace – the grace poured out upon us who believe by our immeasurably loving Father. But, too many of us today, including yours

truly, can subtly slip into the attitude that since so-and-so has this or that struggle going on in their life and I know they're a sincere Christian, that it must not be so bad that I'm playing with this sin or that I lack devotion.

Four preachers met for a friendly gathering. During the conversation one preacher said, "Our people come to us and pour out their hearts, confess certain sins and needs. Let's do the same. Confession is good for the soul." In due time all agreed. One confessed he liked to gamble and would sneak off when away from his church. The second confessed his struggle with lust and the third one confessed to materialism. When it came to the fourth one, he wouldn't confess. The others pressed him saying, "Come now, we confessed ours. What is your secret or vice?" Finally he answered, "It is gossiping and I can hardly wait to get out of here."

Please hear me on this, as dear and awesome as they probably are, neither your pastor nor your elder nor your Christian brother are your standard. There is certainly comfort in understanding that we are all prone to human weakness. However, their fruit or the lack of it is NOT your measure or justification. Jesus is our standard – He is the one we are to aspire to follow.

John appreciated that. He recognized the standard and expressed it when he said, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* This was also evident when Christ came to him at the Jordan and he said, *"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"* (Mat 3:15)

Do you believe He's coming? Really? If so, you'll be very much in tune with 'preparing His way'. Personally, you'll be concerned that you're pleasing to Him – like a bride preparing for her

bridegroom. You know, one of the greatest thrills in performing a wedding is to see up close the bridegroom's amazement as his bride approaches. Do you want to see that look on Christ's face? For the bride, to hear her bridegroom actually utter the words, "I do" makes her heart leap. Do you realize that someday soon He will say that to you? Wow! You know, by dieing on the cross, he said exactly that – "I do!" And in heaven, His "I do!" will fill eternity with bliss.

The scripture says, *"And every man that hath this hope in him (of Christ's appearance) purifies himself, even as He is pure."* (1Jn 3:3) Even as "a friend" of the Bridegroom, John rejoiced to hear His voice. *"He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."* (Jn 3:29)

As a part of the larger body of Christ, 'straightness' means you'll 'behave as you believe', doing what you know to be pleasing to Him – as a servant. With all your heart, you'll live in a way that reflects a compelling desire to hear, "Well, done!" from Him. *"Some think that 'readiness' for Jesus' return is a rather mystical thing; it really isn't - it is a matter of being about our business for the Lord ...we must ask ourselves: what have we done with our knowledge? Our time? Our money? Our abilities? The sins of omission often seem to be more damning than the sins of commission."* – David Guzik

Finally, not only is preparing the way a matter of personal repentance but of accepting others' repentance as well. *"You see, so many have 'unpardonable sins' for others. This is usually the result of a person's inability to deal with their own guilt. They develop a certain attitude toward people who have committed 'that' sin."*

Maybe it's adultery, or divorce, or homosexuality. And even though they repent, they are never quite good enough. That sin is always kept over their heads. Perhaps, in their opinion, it's all right for a non-Christian to have fallen; but if a Christian falls, then it's all over. "How could a Christian have done that?" "How could a Christian have fallen into adultery?" "How could a Christian have ever been involved in a divorce?" "How could a Christian have fallen into a homosexual encounter?" Let me answer that. I don't know how. But I do know that some have and some do. And I also know that if they turn to God in sincere faith and repentance, that He forgives them. And I know something else. He restores them. That is the point of the prodigal son. He was restored. God forgives and forgets. And if he forgives, who are you to do any less? You may say, "But God hates that sin." Yes, He does. But does God hate the sinner? You may say, "Well, God may forgive them, but they'll never be the same." No, not if you have anything to say about it, they won't. Don't you see? This is the very place where God desires for us to be like Him. God forgives. Let Him. God forgives. Be like Him. – J. David Hoke

Oh dear friends in Christ, let's prepare the way before Him! He's coming. He's coming at last! He's even at the door. Make straight paths for our King!

WORLD NEWS

With potential for prophetic importance

Middle East

US turns sights on Syria and Iran

Times 3/30/03

THE war in Iraq threatened to spill over into neighbouring countries yesterday when Washington warned Syria and Iran to stay out of the fight.

Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, accused Syria of arming President Saddam Hussein. He said the shipments, including nightvision goggles, were a direct threat to US and British forces and he added that Washington would hold Damascus accountable for "hostile acts" if the traffic continued.

Mr Rumsfeld also said that hundreds of revolutionaries of the Badr Corps, who are trained, equipped and directed by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard, were operating inside Iraq. He said American forces would be forced to treat them as enemy "combatants" and the Iranian Government would be held responsible for their actions.

Syria dismissed the US accusations. A statement from the Syrian Foreign Ministry said: "What Donald Rumsfeld said about the transportation of equipment from Syria to Iraq is an attempt to cover up what his forces have been committing against civilians in Iraq."

Moving on to Iran, Mr Rumsfeld said that any military forces, intelligence personnel or their proxies inside Iraq and not under the direct operational control of General Tommy Franks, the commander of US forces in the Gulf, would be taken as a potential threat to coalition forces.

Palestinian boy with suicide suitcase targeted orphanage

World Tribune 3/31/03

JERUSALEM — Israel has reported the capture of a Palestinian teenager sent on a suicide mission meant to kill hundreds of people.

Officials said the Palestinian target was a home for 180 orphans and homeless children in Jerusalem. They said a 17-year-old Palestinian from the Bethlehem area of the West Bank was sent with a suitcase filled with explosives to blow up the school.

"It was the kind of attack that we had been warning about for nearly a year and meant to change the strategic balance in the region," an official said.

The Palestinian was said to have been sent on his mission by the Fatah militia, led by Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat. It was the first suicide mission attributed to Fatah in more than a month.

Officials quoted the Palestinian as saying he had changed his mind when he realized that he was being ordered to kill an unprecedented number of people. So far, up to 30 people have died in any one Palestinian suicide mission.

Basra's Last Stand Militia Using Five-Year-Olds as Human Shields

The Scotsman 4/2/03

Pro-Saddam Hussein militia in Basra are using children as young as five as human shields and threatening men with death if they do not fight for them, British troops revealed yesterday.

Sergeant David Baird, a tank commander, told Martin Bentham, a journalist with the Sunday Telegraph newspaper, that he had seen at least four or five children, aged between five and eight, being grabbed by the scruff of the neck and held by Iraqi fighters as they crossed a road in front of his tank.

He said he was 'sickened' by the tactic adopted by the Iraqis who moments earlier

had been firing rocket-propelled grenades at him.

Syria: Israel will never be legitimate President Assad claims U.S. just doing Jewish state's bidding in Iraq

WND 4/2/03
In an interview in a Lebanese newspaper, Syrian President Bashar Assad has lashed out at Israel, saying as long as the Jewish state exists it will be a threat.

Assad, who has expressed support for Saddam Hussein's regime in the face of coalition action, gave the interview to the pro-Syrian daily Al-Safir. His comments



Iraqi girl welcomes American troops

were translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute.

The Syrian leader claimed the U.S. is doing Israel's bidding in the war on Iraq.

Assad says Israel could get its way in rearranging the region based on a "racial, religious or ethnic basis" because the "Israeli lobby" has clout with the United States.

Asked if Syria feels threatened, Assad again referred to Israel:

"As long as Israel exists, the threat exists. As long as there is aggression against an Arab country, and as long as

there is a war close to our borders, the danger continues. Anyone who does not worry in such circumstances does not see reality. Worry does not mean fear, but readiness for the confrontation. ..."

Jailed Iraqi Children Run Free as Marines Roll into Baghdad Suburbs

BAGHDAD (AFP 4/9/03) - More than 100 children held in a prison celebrated their freedom as US marines rolled into northeast Baghdad amid chaotic scenes which saw civilians loot weapons from an army compound, a US officer said.

Around 150 children spilled out of the jail after the gates were opened as a US military Humvee vehicle approached, Lieutenant Colonel Fred Padilla told an AFP correspondent travelling with the Marines 5th Regiment.

"Hundreds of kids were swarming us and kissing us," Padilla said.

"There were parents running up, so happy to have their kids back."

"The children had been imprisoned because they had not joined the youth branch of the Baath party," he alleged. "Some of these kids had been in there for five years."

The children, who were wearing threadbare clothes and looked undernourished, walked on the streets crossing their hands as if to mimic handcuffs, before giving the thumbs up sign and shouting their thanks.

It was not clear who had opened the doors of the prison.

Marines Find Underground Nuke Complex

WND 4/10/03

U.S. Marines have located an underground nuclear complex near Baghdad that apparently went unnoticed by U.N. weapons inspectors.

Hidden beneath the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission's Al-Tuwaitaha facility, 18 miles south of the capital, is a vast array of warehouses and bombproof offices that could contain the 'smoking gun' sought by intelligence

agencies, reported the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*.

'I've never seen anything like it, ever,' said Marine Capt. John Seegar. 'How did the world miss all of this? Why couldn't they see what was happening here?'

Marine nuclear and intelligence experts say that at least 14 buildings at Al-Tuwaitha indicate high levels of radiation and some show lethal amounts of nuclear residue, according to the *Pittsburgh daily*. The site was examined numerous times by U.N. weapons inspectors, who found no evidence of weapons of mass destruction

US tells Syria to co-operate or risk conflict

Bush accuses Damascus of developing chemical weapons

The Times 4/14/03

PRESIDENT BUSH yesterday accused Syria of having chemical weapons. In the clearest sign yet that Washington is turning its sights on Damascus' links to terrorism, two of his most senior Cabinet members also warned the country against harbouring Iraqi officials.

Mr Bush told Syria that it "must co-operate" with Washington as it continues its effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

"We believe there are chemical weapons in Syria," Mr Bush said. "We expect co-operation and I'm hopeful that we will receive co-operation."

Syria warns: Israel will pay

Ha' aretz 4/14/03

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara warned the U.S. yesterday that if it decided to attack Damascus, Israel would also pay.

Shara met yesterday with French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, to discuss the latest developments in Iraq. At a joint press conference with the French foreign minister, Shara denied reports and accusations that Syria has granted shelter to escaping Iraqi officials

from Saddam Hussein's regime.

"The Americans know very well that this is baseless," Shara said. He said Syria is not taking American "threats" seriously, because they "do not represent the prevailing view in America."

Group of Seven endorses U.N. on rebuilding Iraq

Washington Times 4/13/03

As President Bush declared that Saddam Hussein's regime is "passing into history," seven of the world's richest nations announced an agreement yesterday to support a new U.N. Security Council resolution to help finance the rebuilding of Iraq.

The nations also promised to begin talks on reducing Iraq's massive foreign debt burden, a major victory for the Bush administration, which is pressing Russia, France and Germany — all staunch war opponents — to forgive part of the debt, estimated at \$60 billion to \$100 billion.

The Group of Seven nations — France, Germany, Japan, Britain, Italy, Canada and the United States — endorsed the notion of a new U.N. resolution as part of a reconstruction plan that will involve the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Israeli military amazed, 'jealous' at U.S. war against Iraq

World Tribune 4/14/03

TEL AVIV — Israeli defense officials and military commanders have expressed amazement over the capture of one of the largest and most powerful Arab countries by what they say amounted to fewer than three U.S. Army divisions.

The officials said the U.S. strategy of avoiding enemy troop concentrations as well as exploiting combat air supremacy comprises methods far more advanced than those employed by the Israeli military.

"This has been a very strange and unprecedented war and it will take us awhile to learn what took place," Yuval Steinetz, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said. "We

will have to learn from this war and draw the conclusions."

"I am jealous of them [U.S. military]," Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, head of the Israel military's C4 directorate, said. "They have advanced in areas that we were leading in only a few years ago. They have the ability to put everything together in command and control. Our navy and air force have systems. but we have to integrate them."

Officials and military commanders agreed that the U.S. war in Iraq overshadowed the 1967 Israeli victory over four Arab countries, including Iraq. They said the United States sustained about 100 casualties in three weeks of fighting that resulted in the capture of Baghdad and most Iraqi cities. In contrast, about 600 Israeli soldiers were killed in the six days of the 1967 war, most of them in the ground battle with Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula.

Ultimatum for Assad as US Special Forces Land

Debkafile 4/15/03

Documents coming to light in Baghdad directly incriminate Syria as a full partner in the financing, development and concealment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. A source familiar with the new data reveals that Syria was not only a full partner but active in every stage of these programs to the point that they deserve to be called Iraqi-Syrian, not just Iraqi, undertakings.

Well before the UN weapons inspectors came on the scene last year, the Syrian

president Bashar Assad took it upon himself to conceal the banned weapons, one by one, as they came off the production line. Syria's support for Iraq in the UN Security Council and the attacks leveled by foreign minister Farouk a- Sharah against Washington, for venturing to accuse Iraq of concealing weapons of mass destruction, were staged to misdirect attention from the biggest political, intelligence and military fraud perpetrated since the Cold War ended.

Washington's indignation over these discoveries has been manifested in a torrent of warnings to, and charges

against Damascus in the last three days. Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld took the opportunity of the warm welcome he gave the visiting Kuwait ruler on Monday, April 14, to produce intelligence that Syria had conducted chemical weapons tests in the last year.

He could have said more. According to **DEBKAFfile's** Washington sources, the defense secretary was also informed



Palestinian gunmen march in Jenin

that in the same period Syria test-fired missiles fitted with chemical warheads from Aleppo in the north to Djebel Druze in the south near the Syrian-Iraqi-Jordan border junction. Damascus carried out the test on behalf of the Iraqi-Syrian partnership for developing unconventional weapons.

A brief anecdote indicates the deceptive nature of the Syrian-Iraqi alliance. Iraq's UN ambassador Mohammed Al-Douri, the first Saddam regime official to concede his country's

defeat ("The game is over"), aroused some sympathy when he burst into tears in New York and vowed to devote his life to a peaceful future for his people. He announced he would be going to Paris.

Well, **DEBKAFIle's** intelligence sources have discovered that the weeping ambassador stayed in Paris only long enough to catch the next plane to Damascus, where he joined his not exactly peace-loving brother, who turns out to be the deposed vice president Izzat Ibrahim Al-Douri.

Dozens of senior Iraqis flee to Syria Ha'aretz 4/15/03

Dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of Iraqi officials escaped to Syria, according to fresh assessments by intelligence organizations including the U.S., British and Israeli services, which were surprised by the large numbers involved after initial estimates that only a few dozen made their way to Syria during or prior to the war.

The large number of Iraqis who found refuge in Syria is why Washington and London have stepped up pressure on Damascus and the reason for U.S. warnings that it might take action against Damascus.

Iranian Hardliner: Tehran Won't Stand By If U.S. Attacks Syria Fox News 4/17/03

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran will not remain neutral if the United States attacks its ally Syria, but military strikes against U.S. forces are not an option, Iran's former Revolutionary Guards chief said Tuesday.

"We will not engage in military confrontation with the Americans, but will employ all our nonmilitary facilities to prevent such an attack or to support Syria," Mohsen Rezaei told a news conference.

Probe links Syria, al-Qaida *Italian authorities say country shuttled*

funds, recruits to Iraq WND 4/16/03

Italian authorities have concluded that Syria served as a hub for Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist organization, shuttling funds and recruits from Italy to training camps in northeastern Iraq, reports the Los Angeles Times.

Two weeks ago, Italian police arrested seven al-Qaida operatives, according to the paper. The men were charged with sending about 40 extremists through Syria to terrorist bases operated jointly by al-Qaida and Ansar al Islam, the Islamic terror group routed by a joint Kurdish-U.S. operation during the early phase of the war.

According to court documents obtained by the Times, the al-Qaida arrests are part of an investigation that began last year. Wiretaps of the operatives reveal overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money between Europe and Iraq.

The investigation provides backing for the recent accusations by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that Syria was "shipping killers into Iraq to try to kill Americans" by the "bus-loads."

Syria Won't Allow Inspection, Wants WMD-Free Region

Reuters 4/18/03

CAIRO - Syria said Thursday it would not allow arms inspections on its soil but would join forces with the world to rid the whole Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, in line with its proposal to the United Nations.

Washington accuses Syria of developing chemical weapons, a charge the Arab state denies. On Wednesday Damascus asked the U.N. Security Council to help transform the whole region into a zone free of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

Asked by reporters in Cairo whether Syria would allow inspections, Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara said: "No...After this initiative, this Syrian proposal (at the

United Nations)...Syria won't allow any inspection.

"It will only participate with its (Arab) brothers and all of the states of the world in turning the Middle East into an area free of weapons of mass destruction."

Syria has neither signed nor ratified a 1993 international agreement banning chemical weapons, which Washington has recently accused Damascus of developing. Israel has signed the convention but never ratified it.

Arafat rejects plan by Abu Mazen to disarm Fatah militia

Ha'aretz 4/22/03

The dispute between Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and Palestinian prime minister-designate Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) over the formation of a new government centers around the latter's plans to dismantle Fatah's Al Aqsa Brigades and his intentions to deal with the other armed factions in the territories.

Most reports have focused on Abu Mazen's plan to make Mohammed Dahlan, the Gazan strongman and former head of the Preventive Security Services in the Gaza Strip, head of the new government's security services. However, Palestinian sources said the dispute actually revolves around the premier-designate's plans for establishing a new PA security policy, and whether he must win Arafat's approval for every decision he makes.

The sources said Abu Mazen's plans to disarm the underground armed wing of Fatah, the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and how he will confront Hamas and Islamic Jihad are at the heart of the dispute.

Peace Plan Launched Despite Bombing in Israel

Reuters 4/30/03

JERUSALEM - International mediators launched a U.S.-led Middle East peace

initiative on Wednesday, undeterred by a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed three Israelis in a crowded Tel Aviv nightclub.

But Hamas, one of the militant groups behind the attack, quickly rejected the "road map" aimed at ending 31 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence and vowed to keep up its campaign of bombings in defiance of the new Palestinian prime minister.

The explosion just hours earlier on the Tel Aviv beachfront raised questions about the revamped Palestinian



Sarin antidote kit found by British soldiers in Iraq

government's ability to rein in militants, a crucial demand set out in the long-delayed peace plan.

Washington approved the release of the road map, which calls for the creation of a Palestinian state by 2005, shortly after Palestinians swore in new cabinet led by reformist Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, a leading moderate.

Dan Kurtzer, U.S. ambassador to Israel, presented a copy of the plan, hammered out by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at his Jerusalem residence.

Other members of the international "Quartet" were due to deliver the plan to Abbas in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Russia/Asia

North Korea to Buy Missiles From Russia

Washington Times 4/5/03

North Korea, locked in a nuclear standoff with the United States, plans to import leading-edge Russian missile and rocket systems via Syria to upgrade its ballistic missiles, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The Stalinist state is expected to use the hardware, including the high-tech tactical missile Iskandar-E and the multiple-launch rocket system Smerch, to upgrade the guidance system and other functions of its long-range missiles, the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun said.

North Korea and Syria have a secret deal on the trade, possibly based on an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation, the conservative daily quoted military sources as saying.

North Korean missile engineers are already in Syria to prepare for the arrival of the Russian hardware, the report said. They are expected to arrange the further undercover shipment of the hardware by sea to North Korea.

China steps up preparation for U.S. conflict

America's war in Iraq seen as precursor to Asia conquest

WND 4/9/03

China's leaders believe they must step up Beijing's efforts in preparation for eventual confrontation with the United States sooner rather than later because of America's overwhelming technological military success in the war in Iraq, according to Asia experts and analysts.

Willy Wo Lap Lam, senior China analyst for CNN, says Beijing also has begun to fine-tune its domestic and security policies to counter the perceived threat of U.S. "neo-imperialism."

Richard Fisher Jr., a senior fellow and China analyst with the Jamestown Foundation, agrees that the United States' demonstrable military technology advantage in both Gulf wars concerns Beijing and has led China to speed up weapons procurement and development.

Russian Merger Creates a New Oil Giant

YukosSibneft Will Be 4th-Largest Private Producer but Rank No. 1 in Proven Reserves

Washington Post 4/22/03

MOSCOW -- Russia's biggest oil company, Yukos, today announced a deal to buy another major Russian oil firm, Sibneft, a move they said would create the fourth-largest private oil producer in the world.

Yukos said the new company would produce 2.3 million barrels of crude oil a day, an amount surpassed only by British Petroleum PLC, Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch/Shell Group. If measured by the volume of proven oil reserves it controls in the ground, the new company would rank higher than any other private oil company.

Russia Says Iran Moving Toward Nukes

MENL 4/25/03

For the first time, Russia has acknowledged that its client Iran could be advancing toward the production of nuclear weapons.

Russian officials said the government in Moscow has been struck by reports relayed by the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency of two new nuclear facilities acknowledged by Teheran last year. The officials said at least one of the facilities could produce fuel for nuclear weapons.

Russian Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev pointed to the Iranian facility in the northwestern city of Natanz, where the IAEA found a large number of gas centrifuges. The number of centrifuges could point to an Iranian program to enrich uranium for the production of nuclear weapons.

'Such centrifuges are capable of enriching uranium to a high enough concentration for developing weapons,' Rumyantsev said on Tuesday. 'If the media reports are accurate, the situation is alarming.'

North Korea Admits Having Nuclear Arms

Washington Times 4/25/03

North Korea acknowledged for the first time yesterday that it has nuclear weapons, although it is still not clear whether it plans to perform any tests, a Bush administration source said after two days of talks with the North in Beijing.

U.S. intelligence agencies estimated years ago that North Korea had one or two nuclear weapons. But the admission is significant in terms of how the rest of the world views the North Korean threat, diplomats and arms-control analysts said.

'They said what we always knew: that they do have [nuclear] weapons,' said the administration source familiar with the discussions in Beijing. 'That doesn't shock us. We've been saying that. Now they said it.'

'New Cold War' in Putin's Ridicule of U.S. and Britain

Newsmax 4/30/03

"Tony Blair felt the icy blast of a new Cold War last night as the rift with Russia and France widened dramatically," the London Mirror reported today.

The brave British prime minister was in Moscow to try to repair ties with Putin. "But relations were soured as he was given a humiliating public dressing down over the war on Iraq."

The two leaders "had an extraordinary fallout after three hours of talks," the newspaper said.

At a news conference Putin, who like France's Jacques Chirac was a military,

business and political ally of dictator Saddam Hussein, mocked Britain and the United States.

He taunted: "Perhaps Saddam is hiding underground in his bunker, sitting on cases containing weapons of mass

destruction, and is preparing to blow the whole thing up, bringing down the lives of thousands of people. We simply don't know."

European Union

EU Parliament Clears Path for Enlargement
EU Observer 4/10/03

A majority of the EU

Parliament voted in favor of the enlargement process Wednesday in Strasbourg, giving the right for ten future member states to sign the Accession Treaty next week in Athens.

MEPs voted on the enlargement report of each future member, giving his or her assent country by country. The Czech Republic got the least votes in favor, with only 498 out of 565 MEPs voting positively, while Latvia, Hungary and Slovenia all got the best support, with 522 positive votes.

At the same time, Parliament also adopted MEP Elmar Brok's report recommending an enlargement of the EU with ten new countries in 2004. Mr. Brok received a clear majority of 458 votes in favor, out of a total of 567.

Blair Hints at New Role as EU President

The Scotsman 4/16/03

Tony Blair yesterday increased speculation that he wants to become the president of Europe when he claimed that the European Union must speak with a single voice on foreign policy.

The call was the clearest sign yet that Mr. Blair could pitch to become the



Tony Blair as EU Prez?

future president of Europe after stepping down as Prime Minister.

In the wake of the splits over the war in Iraq, Mr. Blair told an EU summit in Athens that an enlarged union of 25-member states needed a more powerful voice on the world stage.

He said that voice should be provided by a full-time EU president, responsible to the member governments, giving 'strategic direction'.

EU says Middle East peace plan to be published unchanged

Ha' aretz 4/17/03

The European Union said Thursday the "roadmap" plan for peace in the Middle East would be published without any changes as soon as the new Palestinian government is sworn in.

The road map, agreed upon by the EU, the United States, Russia and the United Nations, proposes the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2005.

After meeting Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat at his Ramallah headquarters, EU special envoy Miguel Moratinos told reporters that the roadmap would be published and implemented as it was in December 20, 2002 without any changes or modifications.

Moratinos reiterated this position saying the Quartet would listen to the parties but would not change the present plan.

EU tells Arafat to back Palestinian cabinet

Ha' aretz 4/17/03

EU leaders concluded their two-day summit Thursday with a call for a "successful conclusion" of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through the implementation of the "roadmap."

The EU also said Thursday the UN must play a "central" role in rebuilding Iraq and urged the United States to maintain law and order in the country.

In a one-page EU statement, the 15

leaders asked Arafat to give an "early endorsement" to a Cabinet being put together by the new Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, otherwise known as Abu Mazen.

The summit statement revealed a desire to find common ground in Europe after months of acrimony over the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Stage set for clash over job of EU president

Financial Times 4/17/03

Valery Giscard d'Estaing, president of the European Convention, on Wednesday set the scene for a struggle between the European Union's big and small member states over the future of Europe.

Mr Giscard d'Estaing made it clear he intended to brush aside the protests of at least 17 countries in an enlarged Europe of 25 by proposing the creation of a new EU president.

He dismissed some of their ideas as "extreme" and made it clear he paid more attention to the views of the large member states, which represent the majority of Europe's population.

Britain, France and Germany are pressing for the creation of a permanent president of the European Council, representing the interests of member states.

Brussels Rejects Giscard's Blueprint for EU

Daily Telegraph 4/24/03

The attempt to draw up a new European Union constitution suffered a serious setback yesterday when Brussels rejected the blueprint drawn up by the former French president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

The European Commission said plans by M Giscard's 105-member Convention on the Future of Europe failed to give any clear answer to the question of 'who does what?' Using language that in diplomatic terms was scathing, a commission statement said it was 'disappointed' with the way the convention's proposals had been presented.

M Giscard's proposals, due to be presented to EU leaders in June, threaten to dilute the commission's power and its attack sets the stage for a brutal struggle before agreement is reached.

At present the plans include the appointment of a powerful EU president, with a deputy and executive office, to replace the current rotating presidency which shifts between member states every six months.

They also foresee the slimming-down of the commission, reducing its current 20 members to 13,

and creation of a seven-member 'bureau' within the Council of Ministers to co-ordinate the EU's work.

Powerful EU Foreign Minister Planned

EU Observer 4/28/03

The planned foreign minister of the European Union will have far-reaching powers under the new proposals unveiled yesterday by the Convention on the future of Europe.

This individual, who will also be vice-president of the Commission, will be able to have the right to initiate proposals in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Blair Urges U.S. & Europe to Forge 'One Polar Power'

Reuters 4/27/03

Europe and the United States should work as "one polar power" to tackle the world's problems rather than bickering as they did over Iraq, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in an interview published



Bush is first sitting President to land on US carrier at sea.

on Monday. Speaking to the Financial Times newspaper, Blair said the best way to stop Washington acting unilaterally was to join forces with it

rather than opposing it. "I don't want to see a situation develop again in which either Europe or America sees a huge strategic interest at stake and we are not helping each other," Blair said in what the paper described as a warning to French

President Jacques Chirac.

"Some want a so-called multi-polar world where you have different centers of power, and I believe will quickly develop into rival centers of power. And others believe, and this is my notion (as well), that we need one polar power which encompasses a strategic partnership between Europe and America." "Those people who fear 'unilateralism' in America should realize that the quickest way to get that is to set up a rival polar power to America."

'Old Europe' Presses Ahead With Plans for an EU Army

Daily Telegraph 4/30/03

'Old Europe' threw down the gauntlet at the feet of Britain, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance at a mini-summit yesterday, unveiling plans for a new Euro-army with its own military headquarters.

France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg - described by some in the US as the 'Axis of Weasel' - vowed to press ahead with a full-fledged defense union, brushing aside warnings that the move would entrench the European

Union's bitter divisions over Iraq and could lead to the break-up of NATO.

A new rapid reaction force would be built around the existing Franco-German brigade, taking in Belgian commandos and units from Luxembourg. It would answer to a headquarters in the Brussels suburb of Tervuren and be ready for joint operations next year.

Jacques Chirac, the French president, insisted that the plans would bolster NATO by making Europe a more credible partner for Washington, and denied there was an attempt to set up a rival to NATO's operational command. 'The aim is not to decouple European Union and Atlantic Alliance defense efforts,' he said.

United States

Dead US Soldier Hung in Public Display
The Age 4/1/03

US Marines moved into the southern Iraqi town of Shatrah today to recover the body of a dead comrade which had been hanged in the town square, officers said.

Hundreds of troops were dispatched on the operation after intelligence reports indicated the body of a dead American, who was killed in a firefight last week, had been paraded through the streets and hanged in public.

U.S. Tells Iran, Syria, N. Korea 'Learn from Iraq'

ROME (Reuters) - The United States on Wednesday warned countries it has accused of pursuing weapons of mass destruction, including Iran, Syria and North Korea, to "draw the appropriate lesson from Iraq."

John R. Bolton, U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, also appealed to Syria and other countries in the Middle East to open themselves up to "new possibilities" for peace in the region.

"With respect to the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass

destruction in the post-conflict period, we are hopeful that a number of regimes will draw the appropriate lesson from Iraq that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction is not in their national interest," Bolton told a news conference.

Bolton, in Rome for meetings with Vatican and Italian officials, specifically mentioned Syria, North Korea and Iran in his comments in response to a question about what the postwar period would hold.

United Nations

Lining their pockets: 'Rush'-ing in on the UN elite

Toronto Free Press 4/28/03

Newly unearthed scandal could pink slip the world's top diplomat.

Within hours of breaking scandal stories on the UN Secretary General Kofi-Annan-led oil-for-food program, the UN News Service was churning out, we-support-Kofi press releases.

Tied to the oil-for-food program--even before taking over as UN Secretary General--the high-living Annan fell victim to Limbaugh's radio broadcast, in which Limbaugh described "Annan's lavish lifestyle, while purporting to serve the world's poor", as "sickening".

"Salary: \$293,000 a year. Perks: a free mansion on Manhattan's Upper East Side; free servants; a chauffeur-driven car (which parks wherever it wants); 1st class air travel or private jets if he can't get a flight; 24-hour security protection, etc. The secretary-general gets an additional \$25,000 every year for "personal entertainment." That's where all those pennies kids collect in UNICEF cans go to, folks.

"Tuition: the children of UN employees get school vouchers! Poor kids in Harlem have to stay in their failed schools, but UN employees get private school tuition of up to \$12,675 per kid. UN employees who put 7.9% of their lavish pay into the UN pension fund, receive 10% to 60% of their highest three-year salary when they retire. Spouses continue to receive half their

husband's or wife's pension for life. UN employees don't pay any income taxes!"

Billions of dollars have gone AWOL from the oil-for-food program.

The biggest problem in tracing any missing money is that Annan operated the program in secrecy, accountable to nobody. All requests to open the oil-for-food program books have been flatly denied.

Science

DNA Chip Gives Drug Advice

BBC 4/14/03

Doctors will be able to personally tailor treatments using a DNA test which shows which drugs will work best.

Its makers Roche say the chip will cut out the need for patients to try out a series of drugs, risking side effects or reactions, before finding the right one for them.

The chip will be able to analyze drugs used to treat conditions including heart disease and psychiatric disorders.

The test will be used in high-tech laboratories in the US from May, and the company is also seeking European approval for the chip.

Genetically Enhanced Humans to Come, Say DNA Pioneers

New Scientist 4/26/03

DNA pioneers brought together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the molecule's structure believe humans will begin to genetically enhance themselves - and their unborn children - in the next 50 years.

It was on 25 April 1953 that Francis Crick and James Watson published their seminal paper in the journal *Nature*. The breakthrough revealed how genetic information is passed from one generation to the next and revolutionized biology and medicine.

At a meeting in London to mark the anniversary, Watson said the future of

genetics ... will lead to the fusion of biology and psychology.

Another Nobel prize winner, geneticist Sydney Brenner, agrees that the new ability to examine our genes, marked by



New Bird of Prey fighter

the recent completion of the human genome project, will lead to 'the birth of human sciences'

Scientists can make human eggs from male embryos

Daily Telegraph 5/2/03

The ability to make an endless supply of human eggs for post-menopausal women - even for men - could emerge from a breakthrough in reproductive science published today.

Scientists have found a way to mass produce eggs from embryos, even male embryos, a technique that could scrap the "biological clock" of women, end the shortage of eggs for infertility treatments and remove one of the reasons given by maverick doctors for cloning babies.

However, the American research also makes it feasible for men to make eggs too so that it will be possible, in theory, for a homosexual male couple to have children that are genetically their own, with the help of a surrogate mother.

Although it seems likely a similar approach could also help infertile men to make sperm, the technique will not enable women to make sperm because they lack a Y chromosome, the "maleness" chromosome (men do have one X chromosome, the sex chromosome possessed by women, so they can make eggs).

Stuck in the Muck?

Jesus told them over and over – He would be beaten and crucified. Then, on the third day, He would rise again from the dead. But His disciples and other dear followers just didn't get it. What was the problem? It's hard to believe that they didn't hear Him.

Then, they saw Him lay down His life. They watched His agony in Gethsemane, His beatings, his stripes and crown of thorns, and then the tortuous crucifixion on Golgotha. Now, He'd predicted the course of these events (Mat 17:12,22,23; 20:18; 26:31,32; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33...) and the scriptures were amazingly specific from the stripes to the crucifixion to the piercing of the spear to the criminals on His side to the rich man's tomb and much more. But still, they didn't get it. That was Friday.

Fundamentally, they didn't believe He'd return. (Mark 16:9-11) It was one thing, I guess, to see Him raise the dead, open the eyes of the blind, heal the lepers, feed the 4000 and then the 5000 on a few scraps of food, to still the raging sea, to cast out demons...they saw it all and yet they couldn't believe He'd return. They saw Him transfigured on the mount and in dialog with Moses and Elijah. They heard the voice of God Almighty declaring Jesus as His Son. But He'd also been wrapped in linen grave cloths and they didn't believe He'd return. That was Saturday.

When hopes are dashed and grief is raw, that's Saturday. When all your purpose seems absolutely purposeless, that's Saturday. When you heart hardens into a callous pursuit of self-gratification or worldly comfort – that's Saturday. When doubts and fears surround and you

feel like hiding – that's Saturday. When faith is set aside in favor of besetting sin, when your will to obey the Lord seems like a vapor, when ministry becomes just a job and service a duty, when life's circumstances seem bigger than God, when it seems like He doesn't care – that's Saturday.

And many, if not most of us get stuck there to some extent. Stuck, because like the disciples, we don't believe He'll return – not like He said He would – not imminently, not really. Perhaps you've not noticed, but like them, we're seeing many miracles - many prophesied signs of the last days coming to pass – but, we often behave like it's Saturday. Oh, we grant intellectual assent, even verbal 'atta-boy's' to the notion, but how many of us honestly expect the imminent return of Jesus Christ and reflect that expectation in our lives? It's easy by comparison to believe that He'll come someday, but that falls short of what He wants us to believe. What's the problem? Personal agendas? Higher priorities? Better deals? Like the disciples, could it be that many of us just aren't 'getting it'?

As believers, we get to live in the expansive joy of Sunday morning. We get to share in the fantastic reality of resurrection and eternal life. You see, that Sunday is not only the confidence of His resurrection but of His return, the fulfillment of His redemption. It's called in the Bible the "blessed hope" (Tit 2:13). Imminence, looking for His return – here's what the Bible says:

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (Mat 24:36).

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and

took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" (Mat 25:1-6)

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning -- lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch! (Mark 13:33-37).

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. (Rom 13:11-12).

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. (Rom 16:20).

...so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ... (1 Cor 1:7).

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... (Phil 3:20).

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. (Phil 4:5).

...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thes 1:10).

Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes 5:6).

...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ... (Titus 2:13).

...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb 9:28).

For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. (Heb 10:37).

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7-9).

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. (1 Peter 4:7).

...keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 1:21).

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (Rev 3:11).

Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. (Rev 22:7).

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20).

Whether it is filled with travail or slumber, Saturday is like the 'valley of

the shadow of death'. It's not the place the Lord wants us to linger in but rather to pass through. Following Jesus means passing through this worldly state of mind, this Saturday if you would. And pass through we must. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Mat 16:24) So how did Jesus get to Sunday and what does it mean for us?

It was God's doing. And the same is true for us who will follow. No matter how hard we try, how many gimmicks we use, we won't 'unstick' ourselves from the muck and stupor of Saturday; we can't somehow pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and land in the Sunday of that blessed new life and truly imminent expectation. We must call out to the Lord. Yes, though we often miss it, it really is that simple and that serious.

Randy Alcorn, in his book 'Edge of Eternity' described a character who was in a similar fix. He had trodden the long red road toward heaven, he had been saved by faith in Christ, and he had been helped along the way by an angelic 'soldier'. But at one point, he finds great difficulty:

Marcus led me away from the others to the north side of the road. After we'd gone a half-mile, we descended into a storm of wind and lightning. The horizontal rain pelted me, washing my eyes. I turned to Marcus, trying to see him through the blur. He'd disappeared.

As the rain beat down on me, I stood at the foot of a hill, wet leaves slick under my feet and blowing in my face. I didn't want to climb it, but if I'd learned anything here, it was that what I

wanted wasn't reason enough to do or not do something. I climbed for an hour and soaked to the bone, arrived at the top. There stood a lonely, gaunt tree, about nine feet tall. It had only two long limbs, spread horizontally about five feet, in macabre stick-man fashion. Wet leaves blew against it haphazardly, hanging on for a moment until they were blown off. As I came near it, mud grabbed at my feet. It thickened with every step. I tried to plod to drier ground but couldn't.

The mud rose to my ankles. With every effort to get out, I sank deeper. It was now at my knees.

"What am I supposed to do?" I cried, hoping to bring back the warrior who'd abandoned me.

I reached out grasping for branches that weren't there. Then I saw someone in the distance watching me. He sat on a delicate white mare. Was it Marcus? No. It was a gentle rider with fierce eyes. The King!

I felt like a child at bat whose father just showed up at a baseball game. I was determined to pull myself out of the mud, to show him what I could do and how much I'd learned. I tried harder and harder, yet the mud kept swallowing me. It came to my waist now. For a few minutes I stopped trying altogether. Perhaps that was what he wanted. But I continued to sink. So I redoubled my efforts to escape, while the churning mud rose to my chest.

"Why doesn't he come for me? I've traveled so far; I'm so close to the city. Is this where I'll end, buried alone in muddy quicksand?"

Finally the King got off his horse and approached me. He stopped about twenty feet away. I waited for him to speak, but he said nothing.

"What can I do?" I cried.

"You're not using all you have to get out," he said.

"But I am," I whimpered. I flailed my arms and wrenched my back and twisted my body to prove I was using all I had. The mud was now at my neck. I quaked with fear.

"No," he said again, "you are not using all you have to get out." He spoke with infuriating certainty.

"I am! Can't you see that? What else do I have? What do you want me to do?" I spat out mud with my question. The King I'd come to trust was letting me choke on mud? Why?

"You are not using all you have to get out," he said, "for you have not asked me to help you."

He said it slowly and clearly. He gestured to the barren tree with its shaft crossed by the thick ugly branches.

As mud oozed into my mouth, in desperation I cried, "Help me, Lord, please help me!"

As soon as I spoke, he put his left hand on the tree branch and leaned out toward me, one foot stepping into the goo. He stood on the mud, reached down with his right arm and pulled me up.

A moment later I stood on the mud beside him. He drew me to him, embracing me, his white tunic now covered with my mud.

"I'm sorry I got you so dirty," I said.

"It isn't the first time," he said. "I know what it is to be made dirty."

I planted this tree for you, long before you were born."

Now, lest I leave you with the impression that living in the hope of His imminent appearance means some sort of 'hyper-spiritual' (is there such a word?) fanaticism or enormous works trip, let me relate a story from dear Francis of Assisi. One day as he was working in his garden a disciple asked him what he would do if he absolutely knew that Christ would be back in five minutes. He replied, "Why, I'd finish this weeding!"

The blessed hope can't be worked up or feigned. It must be real in our hearts and it will always conduct us to the place where we live in the confidence that who we are and what we're engaged in is pleasing to the Lord. It's a peaceful place yet filled with eagerness. It's a patient place and ultimately a fruitful one as well. May each of us look for and hasten the day! (2 Pet 3:12)

If you have never come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior and King, the One worth following even with a cross to bear of your own so to speak, please understand that you can never please God apart from simple faith. You'll never merit eternal life by how good you try to be or how much effort you put forth. Serving our wonderful King will only come AFTER submitting to His plan of salvation. He wants us all to know Him and receive His love. It is out of that relationship that we desire to see Him return. Open your heart to Him now and invite Him in – confess your sin, ask for His forgiveness and begin a new life. Read Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9,10, Ephesians 2:8,9, Rev 3:20, and John 3:16. They're for you!

Valley Song

by Jars of Clay

You have led me to the sadness
I have carried this pain
On a back bruised, nearly broken
I'm crying out to you

Chorus
I will sing of Your mercy
That leads me through valleys of sorrow
To rivers of joy

When death like a gypsy
Comes to steal what I love
I will still look to the heavens
I will still seek your face

But I fear you aren't listening
Because there are no words
Just the stillness and the hunger
For a faith that assures

Chorus

Alleluia, alleluia
Alleluia, alleluia

While we wait for rescue
With our eyes tightly shut
Face to the ground using our hands
To cover the fatal cut

Though the pain is an ocean
Tossing us around, around, around
You have calmed greater waters
Higher mountains have come down

Chorus

Alleluia, alleluia
Alleluia, alleluia



"I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same." C.S. Lewis

"Let no one apologize for the powerful emphasis Christianity lays upon the doctrine of the world to come. Right there lies its immense superiority to everything else within the whole sphere of human thought or experience.... We do well to think of the long tomorrow. The greatest weakness of the western church today is arguable our failure to think of the long tomorrow-to take seriously the reality that heaven is our home. Out of this springs our love affair with this world and our failure to live now in light of eternity." A.W. Tozer



And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"