

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

Heavenly Minded

Vol 3 Iss 7



**World News
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The Rapture**

Dear Friends,

Look up and set your affection on high. Encourage yourselves in the Lord! Many of us have sensed the increase in spiritual warfare and some of us have recently taken 'hits' from the enemy's lies, deceptions and entanglements. If that's you, take heart even in the battle and know that our dear King is coming. Even now, He'll help you to overcome sorrow or turmoil with peaceful trust in Him. The Scripture has warned us to expect that the 'times will wax worse and worse' (and they are!), but as with the starry sky – the darker it grows, the more opportunity we have to shine even brighter. You know, warfare should not shock any of us and in fact, it can be just the impetus we need to help us progress as pilgrims. Let's recall who our real enemy is and be ever more engaged in the "good fight". Hold on to your faith – your faithful Father is holding you! We're praying for you.

John and Darlene



When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; For your redemption draws near. (Luke 21:28). For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thes 4:16-17) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye 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)

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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. Articles may be shared freely and reproduced but only in their entirety. Comments and suggestions are always welcome. God bless you!

When Thrones Are Thrown Away

King Saul. He couldn't believe it. King Saul. KING Saul. That 'king' thing had a ring to it though. Why only a short time ago, he was searching for lost donkeys. Now, the most important people in Israel were searching for him, and here among the equipment he hid. Though he stood a good eight to ten inches taller than everyone else, he never imagined he'd stand in royal attire. One day a good-looking rich kid, the next a king. He'd never expected to wear a crown.

We can't really know all that Saul mused while this new position as king over Israel was thrust upon him, but we can learn some extremely powerful lessons in observing him. These points become especially sharp in comparing Saul with his successor, David. Now, many excellent comparisons have been presented over the years between these two men. Thus we'll seek herein to cover but a few points that have become exceptionally poignant to us recently and which we believe may have direct application for all.

To begin with, Saul and David were both 'nobodies' each of whom God clearly and specifically anointed to be king. Neither looked for the office. Both were from well-to-do families, and both are described in the Word as handsome men. Both had significant character flaws, and yet both exhibited greatness under the anointing of God. Both were revered by the people, hand-picked by God, sought-out by the great prophet Samuel, and yet one – Saul, ended up a devastating failure, a classic illustration for all time of good gone

bad – really bad. And this is laid out in scripture for the saints to ponder -- for each of us, in following after Christ, will face similar choices.

Referring to 1 Samuel 15, Saul reigned a fairly long time – 42 years, but the kingdom was taken away from him considerably earlier when, on one of his first assignments from the Lord, he failed to do all that the Lord commanded. He was instructed to wipe out the Amalekites – everyone including the livestock. He, however, gave in to the people's desire to keep the best of the livestock claiming later that he saved them for sacrifices. He also failed to 'do in' Agag, the king of the Amalekites.

Samuel lambasted him, saying,

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,

And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

He also has rejected you from being king." (1Sam 15:22,23)

Now, Saul had no problem with executing severe judgment upon the enemies of Israel. In addition, Saul would later spend years trying to kill David. He even killed dozens of Hebrew priests and threw a javelin at his son in a fit of rage. Saul wasn't a milk-toast king so to speak. He was never squeamish on capital punishment. So why did he fail, and specifically what happened such that God had to rend the kingdom from him?

True, he rejected the word of the Lord – Samuel said so. True, he

feared the opinions of the people – he said so himself (1Sam 15:24) Yet, these outward issues were the result of something going on in Saul that is perhaps not so obvious.

It would be easy to focus upon the fact that he was not completely obedient to God's instructions and from that platform build a 'doctrine' supporting a legalistic adherence to some set of do's and don't's. This would play well with religionists. But, that hypothesis would crumble as we consider David. You see, King David was plagued with sinful acts every bit as bad as this one of Saul's yet God never took the kingdom away from him. In fact, although He dealt with David's sin, He ultimately promised him eternal life – a heavenly home. What was it that God saw?

Even Samuel needed a reminder -- for as he was sent to find and anoint the new king, he first saw Jesse's older son Eliab and was quite impressed. *"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)* What God saw in Saul was not so much the outward disobedience but a heart problem.

I'll suggest we have a hint of it in 1 Sam 16:1,2: *"Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."*

And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me."

Yes, Sam saw it too – Saul would kill him if he heard of this new anointing. Saul, who once was mind-

boggled just by the prospect of being a king had taken to it with such ferocity that it had captivated him. It owned him. It ruled him. God was a sideline for him; in his mind, the people had made him king – thus, he feared/respected their opinion more than God's. He held on to this position as king with the frantic tenacity of a desperate drowning man.

He later knew of God's call upon David to be king but fought against it tooth and nail. Nothing was as important to Saul as holding on to the earthly throne. And herein, is the difference between the two men.

David knew he was to be king many years in advance yet he never strove after it. He never attempted to overthrow Saul but rather gave him allegiance and considered him as God's anointed all his days. Kingship was thrust upon David, but it never 'stuck' to him as with Saul. Oh, David remained king, but he never held to it, never lusted to keep it at all costs – in fact, when his own son Absalom sought to dethrone him, he left Jerusalem. Several loyalists followed him including Zadok the priest but, "... the king said to Zadok, *"Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: "I have no delight in you," here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him."* (2 Sam 15:25,26)

David could lay it down. Saul couldn't.

Herein is the great lesson for all of us – it's about letting go and holding on. This world is a 'sticky' place filled with 'sticky' stuff. It sticks to the heart, and when it does it tempts us to hold on to it at all costs – even at the cost of the soul. On top of that, God

Himself often gives us good things -- relationships, ministries, material goods, etc. that He sometimes later tests us with -- will we adhere to them more than to Him? Or will we let go of them when He requires it and hold on to Him?

Even in heaven, we find those who have been given glorious crowns casting them before the throne of God. (Rev 4:9-11) And as a consequence, I'll suggest that those who are truly heavenly minded behave in like manner not just in heaven but here on earth as well. You see, even Jesus, Who the scripture says will subdue all things will then in turn surrender it all to Father God. (1 Cor 15:25-28)

It's not that God gives just to take away. In fact, the Bible says that the gifts and callings of God are for keeps (Rom 11:29). But He does test us from time to time to see what we're holding on to -- the gifts or the Giver. What has God given you? Good stuff and maybe ...some difficulty -- so what are you holding on to? If God is leading you to -- can you truly let it go. Abraham did with Isaac. Moses did with Egypt. David did with the kingdom. Paul did with his 'stuff and status'. Jesus did with His life. Father God did with His Son.

Now the great thing is that those good things which God has given -- when you can truly let go of them in obedience to His will -- in placing God at the center of your heart's deepest desire -- you will one day see God return to you much more.

As for the sticky stuff of the world -- keeping God in that central role makes you 'stick-resistant'. You can 'use stuff and love people' rather than the other way around. Knowing what and when to let go and what and when to hold on -- a key discipleship lesson. Lip-service doesn't count.

Appearances don't matter. God sees the heart and knows the truth. Is an earthly throne sticking to you that shouldn't be? Conversely, are you holding on to what you should be -- your faith, your Father?

I was so inspired when I learned of a wonderful brother who sincerely sensed the call of God to leave his position as senior pastor of a huge church in southern California to help a struggling little congregation of a couple dozen believers in a foreign country. (Obviously, I'm not advocating this for every pastor!) But this man heard the call and laid down the 'big ministry' for the 'small' (though what's big and small in God's eyes can be quite different than man's!). Interestingly enough, God later called Him back to help pastor an even larger work than the one he'd laid down.

Many of us can 'lay it down' when the cost is small but personal investment seems to increase the 'stick-value' of our earthly thrones. My pastor tells the story of a church meeting in which a man got up and gave a moving testimony of how, when he was just a young man with only \$10 in his pocket, that he gave that \$10 to the Lord. Now, some thirty years later, he was a multi-millionaire. Asserting that God had honored his faith, he claimed, "I'm sure it's because I just gave it all to the Lord." At that, a sweet old saint chimed in, "And I dare you to do it again!"

Jesus plainly said, "...suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace." (i.e. he knows when

to surrender his throne.) "In the same way," (that is, when God requires it) "any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 14:31-35)

May God grant us ears to hear, to discern. May we have hearts filled with heaven, with God's good and perfect ways, with the relentless love found in Christ. May we handle the 'thrones' so to speak of God's blessings as David did his. In contrast to Saul, may we hold tightly to the Lord and keep only a 'loose grip' on the things of this life.

Surrender

By Marc James

*I'm giving You my heart,
and all that is within
I lay it all down
for the sake of You my King
I'm giving You my dreams,
I'm laying down my rights
I'm giving up my pride,
for the promise of new life*

*And I surrender,
All to You
All to You*

*And I surrender
All to You
All to You*

*I'm singing You this song,
I'm waiting at the cross
All the world holds dear,
I count it all as loss
For the sake of knowing You,
For the glory of Your Name
To know the lasting joy,
even sharing in Your pain*

The Rapture of the Church

What is it and when will it take place? *by Dr. David R. Reagan*

The Rapture is a glorious event which God has promised to the Church. The promise is that someday very soon, at the blowing of a trumpet and the shout of an archangel, Jesus will appear in the sky and take up His Church, living and dead, to Heaven.

The Term

The term, Rapture, comes from a Latin word that means to catch up, to snatch away, or to take out. It is a Biblical word that comes right out of the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible. The word is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. In the New American Standard Version, the English phrase, "caught up," is used. The same phrase is used in the King James and New International Versions.

A Promise to the Church

The concept of the Rapture was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets because it is a promise to the New Testament Church and not to the saints of God who lived before the establishment of the Church.

Biblical References

The first clear mention of the Rapture in Scripture is found in the words of Jesus recorded in John 14:1-4. Jesus said, "I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

The most detailed revelation of the actual events related to the Rapture is given by Paul in 1 Thess 4:13-18. He says that when Jesus appears, the dead in Christ (Church age saints) will be resurrected and caught up first. Then, those of us who are alive in Christ will be translated "to meet the Lord in the air." Paul then exhorts us to "comfort one another with these words."

Paul mentions the Rapture again in 1 Corinthians 15 - his famous chapter on the resurrection of the dead:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” (v 51 and 52)

Paul’s reference here to being changed is an allusion to the fact that the saints will receive glorified bodies that will be perfected, imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:42-44, and 50-55).

The Timing

The most controversial aspect of the Rapture is its timing. Some place it at the end of the Tribulation, making it one and the same event as the Second Coming. Others place it in the middle of the Tribulation. Still others believe that it will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation.

The reason for these differing viewpoints is that the exact time of the Rapture is not precisely revealed in scripture. It is only inferred. There is, therefore, room for honest differences of opinion, and lines of fellowship should certainly not be drawn over differences regarding this point, even though it is an important point.

Post-Tribulation Rapture

Those who place the timing at the end of the Tribulation usually base their argument on two parables in Matthew 13 and on the Lord’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24.

In Matthew 24 the Lord portrays His gathering of the saints as an event that will take place “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29). This certainly sounds like a post-Tribulation Rapture. But it must be kept in mind that the book of Matthew was written to the Jews, and therefore the recording of Jesus’ speech by Matthew has a distinctively Jewish flavor to it as compared to Luke’s record of the same speech.

Note, for example, Matthew’s references to Judea and to Jewish law regarding travel on the Sabbath (Matt. 24:15-20). These are omitted in Luke’s account. Instead, Luke speaks of the saints looking up for deliverance “to escape all these things” when the end

time signs “begin to take place” (Luke 21:28 and 36). The saints in Matthew are instructed to flee from Judea and hide. The saints in Luke are told to look up for deliverance.

It appears, therefore, that Matthew and Luke are speaking of two different sets of saints. The saints in Matthew’s account are most likely Jews who receive Jesus as their Messiah during the Tribulation. The saints in Luke are those who receive Christ before the Tribulation begins. Most of those who accept the Lord during the Tribulation will be martyred (Rev. 7:9-14). Those who live to the end will be gathered by the angels of the Lord (Matt. 24:31).

The parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and the parable of the dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50) can be explained in the same way. They refer to a separation of saints and sinners that will take place at the end of the Tribulation. The saints are those who receive Jesus as their Savior during the Tribulation (Gentile and Jew) and who live to the end of that awful period.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture

There are variations of the mid-Tribulation Rapture concept. The most common is that the Church will be taken out in the exact middle of the Tribulation, at the point in time when the Antichrist is revealed.

This concept is based upon a statement in 1 Corinthians 15:52 which says that the Rapture will occur at the blowing of “the last trumpet.” This trumpet is then identified with the seventh trumpet of the trumpet judgments in the book of Revelation. Since the blowing of the seventh trumpet is recorded in Revelation 11, the mid-point of the Tribulation, the conclusion is that the Rapture must occur in the middle of the Tribulation.

But there are two problems with this interpretation. The first is that the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15 is blown for believers whereas the seven trumpets of Revelation 8, 9 and 11 are sounded for unbelievers. The Revelation trumpets

have no relevance for the Church. The last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15 is a trumpet for the righteous. The last trumpet for the unrighteous is the one described in Revelation 11.

Another problem with this interpretation is that the passage in Revelation 11 that portrays the sounding of the seventh trumpet is a “flash forward” to the end of the Tribulation. Flash forwards are very common in the book of Revelation. They occur after something terrible is described in order to assure the reader that everything is going to turn out all right when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation.

Thus, the eighth and ninth chapters of Revelation, which describe the horrors of the trumpet judgments, are followed immediately by a flash forward in chapter 10 that pictures the return of Jesus in victory at the end of the Tribulation. The mid-Tribulation action resumes in chapter 11 with a description of the killing of the two great prophets of God by the Antichrist. Then, to offset that terrible event, we are presented with another flash forward, beginning with verse 15. The seventh trumpet is sounded and we find ourselves propelled forward to the end of the Tribulation when “the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord.”

The point is that the seventh trumpet of Revelation relates to the end of the Tribulation and not the middle. It is therefore no basis for an argument in behalf of a mid-Tribulation Rapture.

Pre-Wrath Rapture

The cornerstone of this concept is that the terrifying events during the first half of the Tribulation are due to the wrath of Man and Satan, and not to God. Since the Church is only promised protection from the wrath of God, the Rapture will not occur until near the end of the Tribulation when God will pour out His wrath on the world.

This concept raises a serious theological problem because it questions the sovereignty of God. It assumes that Man and Satan can act

apart from God’s will, when the fact of the matter is that neither can do anything God is not willing to permit. The Bible often portrays God carrying out His will through evil persons or nations. One of the classic examples is when He allowed the evil nation of Babylon to discipline Israel by destroying Jerusalem and the Temple and by carrying the surviving Jews away into captivity. It was an action that prompted the prophet Habakkuk to ask why God would punish those who are evil with those who are more evil (Habakkuk 1:13).

Any carnage wrought by Man or Satan during the Tribulation will still constitute the wrath of God. They will simply be His instruments. The Bible says God sits in the heavens and laughs over the plots and deeds of evil men, not because He does not care, but because He has everything under control (Psalm 2:1-6). The point is that He has the wisdom and power to orchestrate all evil to the triumph of His will in history. That’s why the psalmist wrote that “the wrath of man shall praise You [God]” (Psalm 76:10).

I think it is also important to note that when God pours out His wrath, He does not always do so directly. One of His most common ways is to simply back away from the nation or person and lower the hedge of protection around them. This is clearly spelled out in Romans 1:18-32. That passage says that when people rebel against God to the point that they begin to worship the creation rather than the Creator, God “gives them over” to the evil in their hearts. In other words, He just steps back and lets evil multiply. The passage further states that if they still refuse to repent, He steps back again and “gives them over to degrading passions.” And if they persist in their rebellion and sin, He finally “gives them over to a depraved mind” at which point the society destroys itself. Such destruction could be viewed as the wrath of Man, but it is

really the wrath of God working through Man.

There is another serious problem with the pre-wrath Rapture concept. It relates to the fact that all the wrath of Revelation is specifically portrayed as the wrath of God. Where do the seal judgments originate? The answer is from the throne of God as Jesus opens each seal of the scroll that was in the Father's right hand (Revelation 6:1). And where do the trumpet judgments originate? The same place — from the throne of God (Revelation 8:2). When we arrive at the bowl judgments in Revelation 15:1, we are told that with them, "the wrath of God is finished."

Another problem with the pre-wrath concept is that it does violence to the chronological order of Revelation. The seal judgments are viewed as the wrath of Man and Satan, occurring during the first half of the Tribulation. The trumpet and bowl judgments are considered to be the wrath of God. They are lumped together at the end of the Tribulation. There is no justification for putting the trumpet judgments at the end of the Tribulation. They are clearly placed in the first half of the Tribulation in the chronological layout of the book of Revelation.

One final problem with the pre-wrath concept of the Rapture is that it disputes the fact that there is no purpose for the Church being in the Tribulation. The Tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel, a time devoted to God accomplishing His purposes among the Jewish people, not the Church.

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

I believe the best inference of Scripture is that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation. The most important reason I believe this has to do with the issue of imminence. Over and over in Scripture we are told to watch for the appearing of the Lord. We are told "to be ready" (Matt. 24:44), "to be on the alert" (Matt. 24:42), "to be dressed in readiness" (Luke 12:35), and to "keep your lamps alight" (Luke 12:35).

The clear force of these persistent warnings is that Jesus can appear at any moment.

Only the pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture allows for the imminence of the Lord's appearing for His Church. When the Rapture is placed at any other point in time, the imminence of the Lord's appearing is destroyed because other prophetic events must happen first.

For example, if the Rapture is going to occur in mid-Tribulation, then why should I live looking for the Lord's appearing at any moment? I would be looking instead for an Israeli peace treaty, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the revelation of the Antichrist. Then and only then could the Lord appear.

Focus

This raises the issue of what we are to be looking for. Nowhere are believers told to watch for the appearance of the Antichrist. On the contrary, we are told to watch for Jesus Christ. In Titus 2:13 Paul says we are to live "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Likewise, Peter urges us to "fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). John completes the apostolic chorus by similarly urging us to "fix our hope on Him" at His appearing (1 John 3:2-3).

Only Matthew speaks of watching for the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15), but he is speaking to the Jews living in Israel in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist desecrates the rebuilt Temple.

Wrath

Another argument in behalf of a pre-Tribulation Rapture has to do with the promises of God to protect the Church from His wrath. As has already been demonstrated, the book of Revelation shows that the wrath of God will be poured out during the entire period of the Tribulation.

The Word promises over and over that the Church will be delivered from God's wrath. Romans 5:9 says that "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through

Him [Jesus]." 1 Thessalonians 1:10 states that we are waiting "for His Son from heaven . . . who will deliver us from the wrath to come." The promise is repeated in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 - "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Deliverance

Some argue that God could supernaturally protect the Church during the Tribulation. Yes, He could. In fact, He promises to do just that for the 144,000 Jews who will be sealed as bond-servants at the beginning of the Tribulation (Rev. 7:1-8).

But God's promise to the Church during the Tribulation is not one of protection but one of deliverance. Jesus said we would "escape" the horrors of the Tribulation (Luke 21:36). Paul says Jesus is coming to "deliver" us from God's wrath (1 Thess. 1:10).

Symbolism

There are several prophetic types that seem to affirm the concept of deliverance from Tribulation. Take Enoch for example. He was a prophet to the Gentiles who was raptured out of the world before God poured out His wrath in the great flood of Noah's time. Enoch appears to be a type of the Gentile Church that will be taken out of the world before God pours out His wrath again. If so, then Noah and his family are a type of the Jewish remnant that will be protected through the Tribulation.

Another Old Testament symbolic type which points toward a pre-Tribulation Rapture is the experience of Lot and his family. They were delivered out of Sodom and Gomorrah before those cities were destroyed.

The Apostle Peter alludes to both of these examples in his second epistle. He states that if God spared Noah and Lot, then He surely "knows how to rescue the godly from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 4-9).

Another beautiful prophetic type is to be found in the Jewish wedding

traditions of Jesus's time. After the betrothal, the groom would return to his father's house to prepare a wedding chamber for his bride. He would return for his bride at an unexpected moment, so the bride had to be ready constantly. When he returned, he would take his bride back to his father's house to the chamber he had prepared. He and his bride would then be sealed in the chamber for seven days. When they emerged, a great wedding feast would be celebrated.

Likewise, Jesus has returned to Heaven to prepare a place for His bride, the Church. When He returns for His bride, He will take her to His Father's heavenly home. There He will remain with His bride for seven years (the duration of the Tribulation). The period will end with "the marriage supper of the Lamb" described in Revelation 19. Thus the seven days in the wedding chamber point prophetically to the seven years that Jesus and His bride will remain in Heaven during the Tribulation.

Revelation

Speaking of Revelation, the structure of that book also implies a pre-Tribulation Rapture in a symbolic sense. The first three chapters focus on the Church. Chapter 4 begins with the door of Heaven opening and John being raptured from the isle of Patmos to the throne of God in Heaven. The Church is not mentioned thereafter until Revelation 19:7-9 when it is portrayed as the "bride of Christ" in Heaven with Jesus celebrating the "marriage supper of the Lamb." At Revelation 19:11 the door of Heaven opens again, and Jesus emerges riding a white horse on His way to earth, followed by His Church (Rev. 19:14).

The rapture of the Apostle John in Revelation 4 appears to be a symbolic type of the Rapture of the Church. Note that it is initiated by the cry of a voice that sounds like the blowing of a trumpet (Rev. 4:1). Since the Tribulation does not begin until Revelation 6, the rapture of John in Revelation 4 appears to be a

symbolic type that points to a pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

Some counter this argument by pointing out that although the Church is not mentioned in Revelation during that book's description of the Tribulation, there is constant mention of "saints" (for example, Rev. 13:7). But that term is not used in the Bible exclusively to refer to members of the Church. Daniel uses it to refer to Old Testament believers who lived long before the Church was established (Dan. 7:18). The saints referred to in the book of Revelation are most likely those people who will be saved during the Tribulation, after the Church has been taken out of the world.

Paul's Assurance

An interesting argument in behalf of the pre-Tribulation timing of the Rapture can be found in 2 Thessalonians. The church at Thessalonica was in a turmoil because someone had written them a letter under Paul's name stating that they had missed the "gathering to the Lord" and were, in fact, living in "the day of the Lord" (2 Thess. 2:1-2).

Paul attempted to calm them down by reminding them of his teaching that the day of the Lord would not come until after the Antichrist is revealed. He then stated that the Antichrist would not be revealed until a restraining force "is taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:3-7).

There has been much speculation as to the identify of this restraining force that Paul refers to. Some have identified it as the Holy Spirit. But it cannot be the Holy Spirit because there will be people saved during the Tribulation, and no one can be saved apart from the testimony of the Spirit (John 16:8-11 and 1 John 5:7).

Others have identified the restrainer as human government. It is true that government was ordained by God to restrain evil (Romans 13:1-4). But the governments of the world are in rebellion against God and His Son (Psalm 2), and they are therefore a contributor to the evil that characterizes the world. Furthermore, the Tribulation

will not be characterized by a lack of government. Rather, it will feature the first true worldwide government (Rev. 13:7).

In my opinion that leaves only one other candidate for Paul's restrainer - and that is the Church. It is the Church that serves as the primary restrainer of evil in the world today as it proclaims the Gospel and stands for righteousness. When the Church fails in this mission, evil multiplies, as Paul graphically points out in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Paul says that society in the end times will be characterized by chaos and despair because "men will hold to a form of religion but will deny its power." When the Church is removed from the world, all hell will literally break loose.

Escapism?

The pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture has often been condemned as "escapism." I think this criticism is unjustified. The Bible itself says that Christians are to "comfort one another" with the thought of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:18). Is it a comfort to think of the Rapture occurring at the end of the world's worst period of war instead of at the beginning?

Regardless of when the Rapture actually occurs, we need to keep in mind that the Bible teaches that societal conditions are going to grow increasingly worse the closer we get to the Lord's return. ... And that means all of us had better be preparing ourselves ...

If you are a Christian, you can do that on a daily basis by putting on "the full armor of God" (Eph. 6:13), praying at all times in the Spirit that you will be able to stand firm against the attacks of Satan (Eph. 6:14-18).

If you are not a Christian, your only hope is to reach out in faith and receive the free gift of God's salvation which He has provided through His Son, Jesus (John 3:16).

World News

...with potential for prophetic importance

Middle East

Arab Leaders Back Mideast Peace

Road Map

AP 6/3/03

SHARM EL-SHEIK, Egypt - Arab leaders, meeting with President Bush as he plunged into the labyrinth of Mideast peace talks, pledged on Tuesday to fight terror and violence and called on Israel to "rebuild trust and restore normal Palestinian life."

"We shall continue to work for a Middle East that is free of strife and violence, living in harmony without the threat of terrorism or dangers of weapons of mass destruction," Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said, reading a statement on behalf of the leaders of Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority — all friendly U.S. allies.

Bush called on the Arab leaders to fight terror at every turn on the road to peace.

"We meet in Sinai at a moment of promise for the cause of peace in the Middle East," Bush said, standing at the edge of the Red Sea, with Mubarak at his side.

Terror threatens the United States, Israel and the emergence of a Palestinian state, he said.

"Terror must be opposed and it must be defeated," Bush said.

Tuesday's meeting served as a prelude to face-to-face talks Wednesday among Bush, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his counterpart, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, in Jordan.

The Arab leaders embraced the internationally crafted "road map" for peace, which calls for an independent Palestinian state by 2005.

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

Bush: Palestinian state must have 'continuous territory'

Jerusalem Post 6/3/03

U.S. President George W. Bush told Arab leaders meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh on Tuesday that Israel must ensure that the Palestinians are able to establish an independent state with continuous territory.

"Israel must deal with the settlements, Israel must make sure there's a continuous territory that the Palestinians can call home," he said.

Bush said "we must not allow a few people, a few killers, a few terrorists" to prevent the Israelis and the Palestinians from reaching a peace deal.

At the same time, Bush made clear that both sides, Israel and Arab, have responsibility for achieving peace.

"The world needs to have a Palestinian state that is free and at peace, and therefore my government will work with all parties concerned to achieve that vision," Bush said.

He said the Arab leaders must close off sources of funding to terrorists and prevent "the terror from gaining a foothold," as he said they have promised.

"It is in their own self-interests to fight off terror," he said. "It's in their own self-interest to enable a Palestinian state to emerge."

Bush acknowledged that the road ahead would be difficult. "But no matter how difficult it is, you have my commitment that I will expend the energy and effort necessary," he said.

Entering the labyrinth of Middle East peace negotiations Tuesday, Bush was looking for a commitment from Arab leaders to end violence and move toward peace with Israel.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell called the two days of talks a "window of opportunity" to build momentum for ending 32 months of bloody Mideast violence and launching the US-sponsored "road map" that envisions a Palestinian state by 2005.

Abbas said the Palestinian

leadership "is committed to implementing its part of the road map and calls on Israel to do the same." His comments, reported by the official Jordanian news agency, Petra, came during talks in Jordan with King Abdullah II.

Regarding settlements, Sharon stated to the Cabinet on Sunday that Israel would dismantle settlements in Palestinian-controlled areas that have been set up in violation of Israeli law, according to an official who was present.

Sharon vows to remove unauthorized outposts

Ha' aretz 6/4/03

U.S. President George Bush, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud

Abbas and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ended summit talks in Aqaba, Jordan on Wednesday with historic pledges to end violence, revive the peace process and work toward the internationally-sponsored road map, which envisions an independent Palestinian state by the conclusion of the 90-minute meeting, the three leaders, along with host King Abdullah II of Jordan, strode side by side to four identical podiums set up on the shores of the Red Sea.

During his speech, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas called for an end to the "armed intifada" - reference to the use of weapons and explosives by Palestinian militants - as well as for an end to attacks on Israelis "wherever they may be" - thus foreswearing violence against settlers as well as residents of Israel proper.

"We will exert full efforts to ending the militarization of the intifada [uprising]. The armed intifada must end and we must resort to peaceful means to achieve our goals," he said, adding that the Palestinians "do not ignore the suffering of the Jews throughout history," Abbas said. "It is time to bring this suffering to an end."

Speaking after Abbas, Sharon said

his primary duty was to work for the security of Israel. "As the prime minister of Israel, the land which is the cradle of

the Jewish people, my paramount responsibility is the security of the people of Israel, and of the state of Israel. There can be no compromise with terror." Sharon said that there was now hope for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, adding that it was not in Israel's interest to rule over the Palestinians.

"It is in Israel's interest not to govern the Palestinians, but for the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state. A democratic

Palestinian state fully at peace with Israel will promote the longterm security and well-being of Israel as a Jewish state. There can be no peace, however, without the abandonment and elimination of terrorism, violence and incitement."

"We can also reassure our Palestinian partners that we understand the importance of territorial continuity in the West Bank for a viable Palestinian state," Sharon said.

Syria slams Arab-U.S. summit

DAMASCUS - Syrian state-run media yesterday slammed the Arab-U.S. summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, accusing the United States of bias in favor of Israel in regards to terrorism.

When the U.S. administration described Israeli Prime Minister (Ariel Sharon) as a man of peace, it seems that the terrorism it wants to fight is martyrdom operations against Israeli



Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (L) shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon prior to talks on the international peace 'roadmap' after both sides took significant first steps in Jerusalem July 1, 2003. Israel's prime minister and his Palestinian counterpart met to discuss the way ahead for a U.S.-led peace plan after a partial Israeli pullout from the Gaza strip and a truce by Palestinian guerrillas.



Leader of Islamic Jihad, Mohammed al-Hindi

occupation," said a commentary broadcast on Damascus Radio, which reflects government thinking.

"In the meantime, Israeli occupation's crimes of mass punishment, killing (Palestinian) women, children and youngsters and destroying houses, farms and crops come in the guise of self-defence," the commentary said.

The Syria broadcast also decried that three of the architects of the road map peace plan (the European Union, Russia and the United Nations) were absent from the Aqaba summit.

Syria and its neighbor Lebanon were not invited to the Middle East summit in Aqaba expressly at the request of the United States.

Muslims lament Israel's existence

International Herald Tribune 6/3/03

If the American threat of preemptive military action against Iraq inflamed the Muslim world over the winter, the war itself fanned the flames, with a sharp new rise in hostility toward the United States, the latest Pew survey has found.

Animosity is so high that solid majorities in five populations surveyed expressed confidence in Osama bin Laden to "do the right thing" in world affairs.

And, at a time when the Israeli government has accepted the right of Palestinians to statehood, most Muslim populations surveyed believe by wide margins that the needs of Palestinians cannot be met so long as the state of Israel exists.

Updated Figures From Jerusalem Rally

Arutz Sheva 6/5/03

According to the final figures from Jerusalem, the demonstration organized by the Judea, Samaria and Gaza Council drew a crowd of 100,000 people by evening's end. The demonstration, called to protest the government's acceptance of the establishment of a Palestinian state, was just the beginning, promised the Council heads.

"This is just the first step in a determined struggle we will wage in the coming months against the Road Map and a Palestinian state," organizers said. "We call upon Sharon to shape up and extricate himself from the Road Map trap."

Hamas, Jihad Say Won't Disarm, Defy Palestinian PM

Reuters 6/5/03

Palestinian militant groups vowed on Wednesday they would not disarm, defying an appeal by Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas issued at a U.S.-led peace summit with Israel.

"We will never be ready to lay down arms until the liberation of the last centimeter of the land of Palestine," Hamas official Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi said. Islamic Jihad, another group sworn to Israel's destruction, followed suit.

But neither group ruled out further talks with Abbas, which seeks a halt to Palestinian attacks in a 32-month-old revolt for independence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad view Israel, as well as the West Bank and Gaza, as Palestinian land but have indicated they could halt suicide bombings and other attacks inside the Jewish state.

Hamas vows to murder Sharon

Jerusalem Post 6/13/03

Hamas threatened Thursday to harm Prime Minister Ariel Sharon labeling him "wanted" and vowing his liquidation, reported Israel Radio.

The Palestinian group called on its leaders to be extremely cautious following Israel's latest wave of targeted killing operations in the Gaza strip.

In a statement Hamas announced that Thursday's attack in Jerusalem was just the first of a series of attacks that it plans to carry out and "this is the price the Zionists have to pay". The group advised foreigner to leave Israel for their own safety.

Israel Army Order: 'Wipe Out' Hamas

WND 6/13/03

Israel's army has been ordered to 'completely wipe out' the Palestinian Islamic terrorist group Hamas, according to Israeli army radio.

The order, directing the army to use 'whatever means necessary,' comes one day after a suicide bomber tied to Hamas killed 17 and wounded 70 in an attack on a Jerusalem bus, the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* said.

No Hamas leader is safe, said Israeli Internal Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi.

The targets are the organization's infrastructure and its leadership, 'from the lowliest member to Sheik Ahmad Yassin,' the Hamas spiritual guide, *ABC* reported.

Hizbullah Warns Conflict Imminent with 'Israeli Enemy'

World Tribune 6/15/03

Hizbullah has warned of an imminent confrontation with Israel.

Nabil Qawk, Hizbullah's commander in southern Lebanon, warned that the changes in the Middle East were leading to an 'approaching encounter with the Israeli enemy.' Qawk called for a coordination of efforts against Israel, but did not elaborate.

The warning came as Hizbullah gunners fired anti-aircraft shells toward several civilian targets in northern Israel on Thursday. Nobody was injured but the shells sparked fires in the area, *Middle East Newsline* reported.

The warning came also during a meeting between Qawk and Islamic seminary students in Sidon on Wednesday. The Hizbullah commander said the Iranian-sponsored insurgency group has reached an unprecedented level of preparations for war against Israel.

Hizbullah is said to have amassed nearly 10,000 rockets and short-range missiles in southern Lebanon. Last month, Iranian sources asserted that some of Hizbullah's heavy weapons

were removed to the Bekaa Valley along the Syrian border.

Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad agree on cease-fire

Jerusalem Post 6/26/03

The three key Palestinian movements, Fatah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have reached an agreement for a three-month halt to all attacks against Israel, Palestinian sources said Thursday.

The deal is expected to be formally announced in Cairo on Friday, the sources said. A Palestinian lawmaker, Fares Kadoura, said an official statement could be published later Thursday.

However, when and whether the cease-fire would take effect is still not clear as Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas is unhappy with the three-month time limit.

According to Palestinian officials, Abbas doesn't see how he can sell such a deal to Israel, which has strongly objected to the idea of only a temporary 'hudna.' Israel feels a short-term truce could hurt Israeli security interests in the long run by giving Hamas and Islamic Jihad an opportunity to replenish their ranks while Israel would be committed to a ban on taking any military action against these groups.

Sources told The Jerusalem Post that the reason for the three-month time limit is because Hamas and Islamic Jihad feel that US President George W. Bush will be unable politically to guarantee that Israel would stick to the truce, because of the upcoming American presidential election campaign in 2004.

Arafat's Fatah faction joins Hamas, Islamic Jihad cease-fire

Ha'aretz 6/30/03

The mainstream Palestinian Fatah movement, headed by Yasser Arafat, on Sunday joined a truce declared earlier by militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

A statement issued by Fatah said it would halt all military operations in

accordance with an Egyptian initiative calling for a six-month truce.

Fatah officials said the group's central committee approved the cease-fire several hours after Hamas and Islamic Jihad declared a three-month half to attacks against Israelis, catching Fatah leaders by surprise.

The truce was negotiated by the three main groups last week, but a formal announcement was held up while additional groups were consulted and wrangling continued over the final wording of the cease-fire statement. Also, some Fatah leaders complained they were not consulted in the negotiations.

Russia

Putin Insists on Oil Interests in Iraq
Reuters 6/23/03

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday Russian firms should have a fair chance for energy contracts in postwar Iraq whose huge oil reserves are eyed by oil majors around the world.

In an interview on the BBC's "Breakfast with Frost" show, a transcript of which was released by the BBC in Moscow, Putin also said Russia would not allow its commercial interests in Iran to be undermined by controversy over Tehran's nuclear program.

Russian involvement in the rebuilding of Iraq following the U.S.-led war and Moscow's sales of nuclear technology to Tehran in the face of U.S. criticism are issues that will figure in talks this week during a historic state visit to Britain by the Kremlin leader.

"As for major investment projects (in Iraq) -- our position is based on the primacy of law...The Iraqi side must fulfil its obligations in compliance with the law and of course we will be insisting that some of those projects do go ahead," Putin said.

The biggest Russian prize in Iraq is a \$3.7 billion contract secured by one of the country's biggest oil companies,

LUKOIL, to develop the West Qurna oilfield.

European Union

Final Deal is Settled With Full-Time EU President

Daily Telegraph 6/6/03

After a week of battles over the draft European constitution, the outlines of a final deal were emerging last night that would create a European president, abolish the national veto in 17 fresh areas and strengthen all the major institutions of the European Union.

Peter Hain, Downing Street's envoy to the European Convention, said a Franco-British plan for a full-time EU president was now assured, despite opposition from small states who fear that it will destroy the 'community' character of the EU and allow the big powers to take control.

In a blunt warning to diehard federalists on the 105-strong convention, he said it was 'time to get real'. If they failed to agree on a sensible document now, EU governments - armed with vetoes - would simply dictate a new text later.

The EU president will be elected by prime ministers, making him accountable to London, Paris, Madrid and other capitals. His staff will be based in the Justus Lipsius building, the headquarters of the EU's Council of Ministers, not the European Commission. He will be supported by a European foreign minister..."

France mulls Mid-East peace force

BBC 6/16/03

France has said it will discuss with the European Union the possibility of sending peacekeeping forces to the Middle East if they could help halt the bloodshed there.

Speaking after a week of Palestinian and Israeli violence, the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, said peacekeepers would only be sent with

the backing of the international community.

In an interview on French radio, Mr de Villepin said that if a peacekeeping force were to help on the ground in the Middle East it would be worth sending.

"[The international community] cannot turn its back on those who today believe in peace," he said.

"If it appears that all parties want it and that action of an international force would help check terrorist movements ... let's decide to do it."

An international force, he said, would be better to ensure security than troops from one nation alone.

US 'monopoly'

The idea itself is not new.

It was first floated by the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, some three years ago and he repeated it last week.

But Israel and the US have both firmly rejected the idea, even though the Palestinians say they would welcome such a force.

The French foreign minister's comments echo concerns in France that the peace process in the Middle East risks being monopolised by the US.

EU Backs Possible Use of Force Against WMD Threats

Reuters 6/16/03

LUXEMBOURG - The European Union in a significant shift toward United States thinking, said Monday the use of force might be necessary where diplomacy failed to address threats from weapons of mass destruction.

EU foreign ministers adopted a strategy to combat the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons that for the first time included a reference to possible military action against states or terrorist groups that acquired such arms.

They were also set to urge Iran, accused by Washington of secretly trying to develop illegal atomic weapons, to accept tougher U.N. inspections of its

nuclear program if it wants a trade deal with the 15-nation bloc.

EU's new version of "road map" to include Syria

Jerusalem Post 6/22/03

The European Union has begun drafting new wording for the "road map" to include Syria, Israel Army radio reported.

In the first stage of the EU's plan, the two sides will start confidence-building measures. Within this framework Syria will close the offices of terror organizations in Damascus, and Israel will stop its reconnaissance flights over Lebanon and will reach an agreement on water sources in southern Lebanon.

After that, the two sides would begin negotiations for Israel to exchange land for peace with Syria.

The program will be suggested in a meeting of the "Quartet" (the US, EU, UN, and Russia) in Jordan Sunday.

Il Cavaliere saddles up for EU presidency

Jerusalem Post 7/1/03

On Tuesday, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi takes over the 6-month European Union rotating presidency. Berlusconi is considered to be the European leader closest to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"Either we have a superpower with military capabilities far greater than the EU, or else the US can have another partner—the EU—which must eliminate its division and enlarge to countries like Russia, with its military capabilities, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey and even Israel," he said in Brussels this year.

On a visit to Israel earlier in the month, Berlusconi said that he respects both Sharon and Israelis for withstanding the pressure of the past two years. He noted that 800 Israelis killed and 5,500 wounded over the past three years is the equivalent of 8,000 killed and 55,000 injured in Italy, and 42,000 dead and 400,000 injured in the US. Sharon has said he hopes Israel's relations with Italy

will be the model for relations with the rest of the EU.

The visit made Berlusconi the first European leader to refuse to meet Yasser Arafat. In response, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas refused to meet the billionaire businessman known as *Il Cavaliere*.

United States

Bush: Free world must deal harshly with Hamas

Jerusalem Post
6/16/03

President George W. Bush said Sunday he has not lost hope for peace in the Middle East and appealed for help in dealing harshly with Hamas and other militant groups responsible for renewed attacks on Israelis.

Those who want peace, Bush said, need to "deny the killers the opportunities to destroy it."

"It is clear that the free world and those who love freedom and peace must deal harshly with Hamas and the killers," Bush told reporters as he left a tiny chapel near his family's compound.

The first contingent of U.S. monitors who will supervise implementation of the U.S.-developed peace plan headed to the region Saturday. The team is led by Assistant Secretary of State John Wolf.

U.S. warns Iran not to pursue nukes

Washington Times 6/19/03

President Bush said yesterday that he "will not tolerate construction of a

nuclear weapon" in Iran and urged Tehran to treat student protesters with "the utmost of respect."

"The international community must come together to make it very clear to Iran that we will not tolerate the construction of a nuclear weapon," Mr. Bush told reporters in the Cabinet Room of the White House.

"Iran would be dangerous if they have a nuclear weapon," he said on a day when U.S. diplomats were demanding tougher inspections on Iran's nuclear

facilities, citing a report critical of the country's compliance with international safeguards. "We all must work together to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon."

Mr. Bush's warning to Iran's ruling ayatollahs came as students demonstrated throughout the country, with some protesting for an eighth straight day outside Tehran University.

Conflict nears for U.S.-Syria

Armed confrontation aims

to eliminate threat in Iraq
WND/G2 6/23/03

While many analysts are breathing a sigh of relief that the threat of U.S. armed conflict with Syria has subsided, Pentagon sources say plans are being made now to hit Syrian targets hard in response to Damascus' support for fighters pouring into Iraq, according to the latest issue of Joseph Farah's G2 Bulletin.

The attack would be more than a limited missile or bombing run, say the

sources. It would be the kind of stinging retaliation that will end the threat from Syria once and for all.

U.S. military sources say hundreds of terrorists have infiltrated Iraq across the Syrian border – with the full knowledge and support of Damascus. The terrorists are being sent with one mission in mind – attacking U.S. troops.

Pentagon officials are particularly concerned by intelligence suggesting that some fighters are planning suicide bombings against U.S. forces in Iraq.

United Nations

Annan tells Haaretz: Armed peace force should be sent to territories

Ha'aretz 6/13/03

NEW YORK - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a joint interview Thursday with Haaretz and Channel Two News, said that the Israelis and Palestinians are apparently unable to reach an agreement on their own, and that in the present circumstances he supports sending an "armed peace force as a buffer zone between the Israelis and the Palestinians."

Annan said that based on the present situation, a peacekeeping force should be stationed to help calm the situation and allow negotiations to continue.

He said that he would give Prime Minister Ariel Sharon the "benefit of the doubt" regarding his commitment to ending the occupation. "I expect that he will deliver and he will engage in the peace process," Annan said.



The Pentagon is seeking to develop a drone in the next two decades that could strike any spot on Earth from the continental U.S. within two hours. The so-called Hypersonic Cruise Vehicle, which would be designed to hit targets about 9,000 miles away, should be available by about 2025. Hypersonic means traveling at more than five times the speed of sound. A hypersonic cruise missile engine is seen during testing on May 30, 2003 at NASA's Langley Research Center in Virginia.

Annan added that he had recently spoken to U.S. President George W. Bush, who promised that he is still committed to the road map and its implementation, despite the difficulties.

Quartet to Gather in Amman on Middle East Road Map

Reuters 6/13/03

UNITED NATIONS - The quartet of international mediators who drafted the "road map" to Middle East peace will meet in Jordan June 22 to try to keep

the peace process on track, the United Nations said on Friday.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan "will participate in a meeting of the quartet principals in Amman, Jordan, on the 22nd of June," U.N. chief spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Annan believes the meeting of representatives of the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations "will be a timely opportunity to discuss what the quartet might do to help generate further momentum in the difficult search for peace," Eckhard said.

Science

Factoid: (from Frontpage Magazine) Since 1981, more Americans have died from AIDS than died in the Second World War - 468,000 to be exact. About 40,000 new AIDS cases are reported in the United States every year. About half of the victims are under 25 years of age.

Army Awards Contract for New Uniform

General Dynamics Wins Bid for Wired Outfits

Washington Post 6/13/03

General Dynamics Corp. won an Army contract yesterday, potentially worth \$3 billion, to outfit the soldier of the future with wired uniforms that monitor heart rates and respiration and with helmets that receive real-time video from overhead drones.

General Dynamics beat Exponent Inc. of Menlo Park, Calif., for the contract, which initially is worth about \$100 million but will mushroom significantly once the Army starts outfitting the troops. The Army expects a prototype of the new uniform to be completed by 2006, with the first unit outfitted by 2010. Each uniform is expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

Religion

John Paul II Says Peace in Holy Land Requires 2 Independent States - Israelis and Palestinians "Are Called to Live Side by Side"

Zenit 6/2/03

VATICAN CITY.- John Paul II sees the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians being resolved only when there are two independent, sovereign and secure states.

The Pope explained his conviction today when he received the letters of credence of Oded Ben-Hur, 51, Israel's new ambassador to the Vatican. Ben-Hur had been Minister Plenipotentiary in the Policy Planning Bureau.

An hour later, the Pope received in audience U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. Both supported the implementation of the "road map," sponsored by the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. Among other objectives, the peace plan calls for a sovereign Palestinian state.

During his meeting with the new Israeli ambassador, the Holy Father focused on the conflict in the Holy Land and stated firmly: "There is absolutely no question that peoples and nations have the inherent right to live in security."

The Pope also said, "The Holy See is convinced that the present conflict will be resolved only when there are two independent and sovereign states."

"Two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, are called to live side by side, equally free and sovereign, in mutual respect," he said.

N.H. Episcopalians Elect Gay Bishop

AP 6/7/03

CONCORD, N.H. - In a national first, New Hampshire Episcopalians on Saturday elected an openly gay man as their next bishop.

The selection of the Rev. V. Gene Robinson, 56, who was chosen over three other candidates in voting by New

Hampshire clergy and lay Episcopalians, is still subject to confirmation next month by the church's national General Convention.

Robinson, who was married and has two grown children, now lives with his partner, Mark Andrew, in Weare and is an assistant to retiring Bishop Douglas Theuner. Friends say he remains on good terms with his ex-wife and two daughters, both of whom were at Saturday's election.

Mel Gibson brings movie to city's church leaders

The Gazette 6/29/03

Actor Mel Gibson has been getting closer to God.

On Thursday, that led him to Colorado Springs, where he visited New Life Church and Focus on the Family and previewed his upcoming film, "The Passion."



Mel Gibson's film on Christ gets good reviews from Christian leaders

Gibson, star of such films as the "Lethal Weapon" series and "Braveheart," said it was his Christian faith that inspired "The Passion," which depicts the final 12 hours in the life of Christ.

"I'm not a preacher and I'm not a pastor," Gibson said. "But I really feel my career was leading me to make this. The Holy Ghost was working through me on this film, and I was just directing

traffic. I hope the film has the power to evangelize."

Although the film won't be released until March, Gibson brought it to Colorado Springs — a national hub of evangelical Christianity — for one day to make sure its depiction of the Gospel was acceptable to leaders at Focus on the Family and to hundreds of church leaders, including Ted Haggard, New Life's pastor and president of the National Evangelical Association.

"It conveys, more accurately than any other film, who Jesus was," Haggard said based on clips he viewed at New Life. "You can't help but be upset when you realize the gravity of what Jesus went through."

"I was very impressed," said Don Hodel, president of Focus on the Family. "It's certainly the most powerful portrayal of the passion I've ever seen or heard about. The movie is historically and theologically accurate."

Wearing a gray shirt and black slacks, Gibson appeared on stage at New Life Church before the screening to address an audience of more than 800 ministers gathered for the Life Giving Leadership Conference, an annual event.

He was candid in relating how events more than a decade ago led him to become a more committed Christian.

"It was a strange mixture of the most difficult thing I've ever done, along with this incredible ease," Gibson said. "Everyone who worked on this movie was changed. There were agnostics and Muslims on set converting to Christianity."

Temple Mount reopens to non-Muslim visitors

Despite threats, Israeli police begin escorting Jews, Christians to explosive Jerusalem holy site

WND 7/1/03

Jews are once again visiting the holiest site in Judaism.

Israeli police have begun to allow non-Muslims, under police escort, to enter the Temple Mount grounds in the Old

City of Jerusalem, despite threats of violence by Muslim leaders.

About two weeks ago, Interior Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi announced Jews would soon be allowed on the Temple Mount, "even if no agreement is reached with the Waqf." The Waqf is the Muslim Religious Trust, a group of Islamic clerics appointed to administer the site by the Palestinian Authority's Yasser Arafat.

According to Haaretz, police officers didn't wait for an agreement to be worked out with the Waqf. Instead, officers stationed at the Western Wall began, in the last few days, to escort groups of tourists on visits to the grounds of the mosques at the site. The commander of the police station at the Western Wall, Officer Yossi Ben Haim, even approached tourists in the Old City and lobbied them to join the organized visit to the sensitive site, according to the Israeli newspaper.

The Temple Mount is the area that served as the foundation for the First and Second Temples. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The temples were the centers of Jewish worship in ancient Israel. Tradition places Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac on this hill. For Christians, this is where Jesus walked and preached.

Oddly, since recapturing the Temple Mount in the 1967 Six-Day War, the secular government of Israel has granted administrative authority over the holy site to a group of the Waqf. Jews and non-Jews who attempt to visit the site are frequently harassed, even attacked.

During this period, the Waqf has presided over a little known, but nevertheless extensive, "renovation" program at the Temple Mount. A new mosque has been built under the southeast corner. Additional exits have been cut through the Temple Mount walls. All supervision of this extraordinary, unprecedented effort has been denied. The Muslims have ripped

physical evidence of the Temple from the Mount and mixed it with debris and garbage in various dumps around Jerusalem, most notably the Kidron Valley.

Recently, Waqf agents began cleaning one of the giant cisterns under the Temple Mount. These cisterns served as reservoirs for both the First and Second Temples. The plan is to fill these cisterns with water from Mecca's Zamzam Spring – instantly turning the Temple Mount into a genuine holy site for Muslim pilgrims with weight equal to the Great Mosque of Mecca.

This would be the ultimate Islamicization of the Temple Mount.

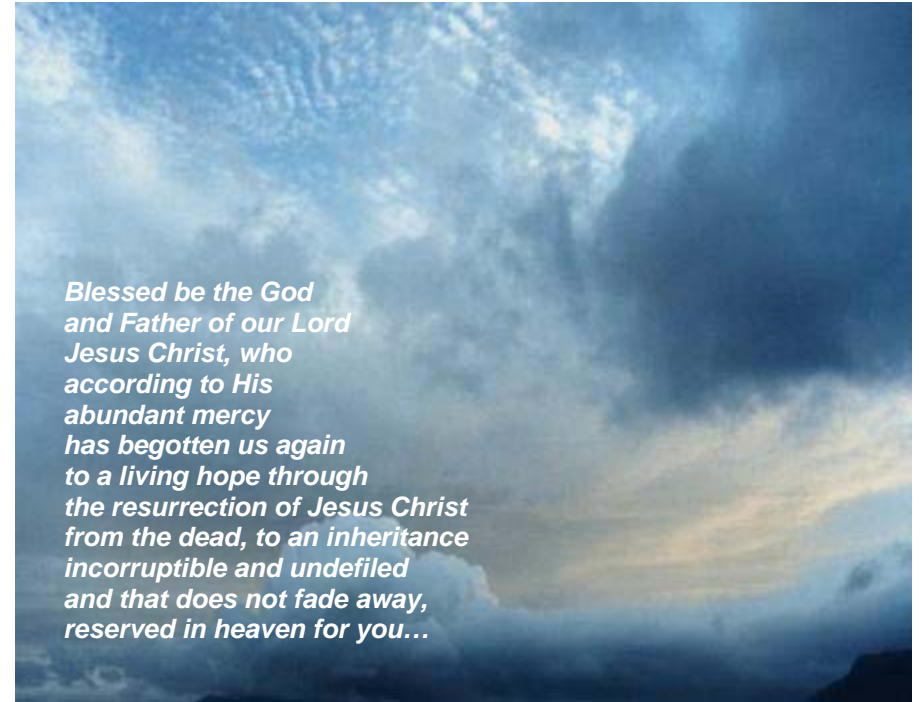
Poll: Presbyterian Clergy Unsure if Jesus is 'The Way'

Agape Press 6/26/03

A poll of members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) indicates that many do not believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.

The survey found that at least 70% of the members, elders, and clergy of the Presbyterian Church (USA) agreed when asked if they believed the "absolute truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ." But when these same groups were asked whether only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved, the agreement rate fell dramatically.

In fact, only 43% of parishioners, 50% of elders, and 39% of clergy said they could agree with exclusivity of salvation by Christ alone.



*Blessed be the God
and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who
according to His
abundant mercy
has begotten us again
to a living hope through
the resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the dead, to an inheritance
incorruptible and undefiled
and that does not fade away,
reserved in heaven for you...*