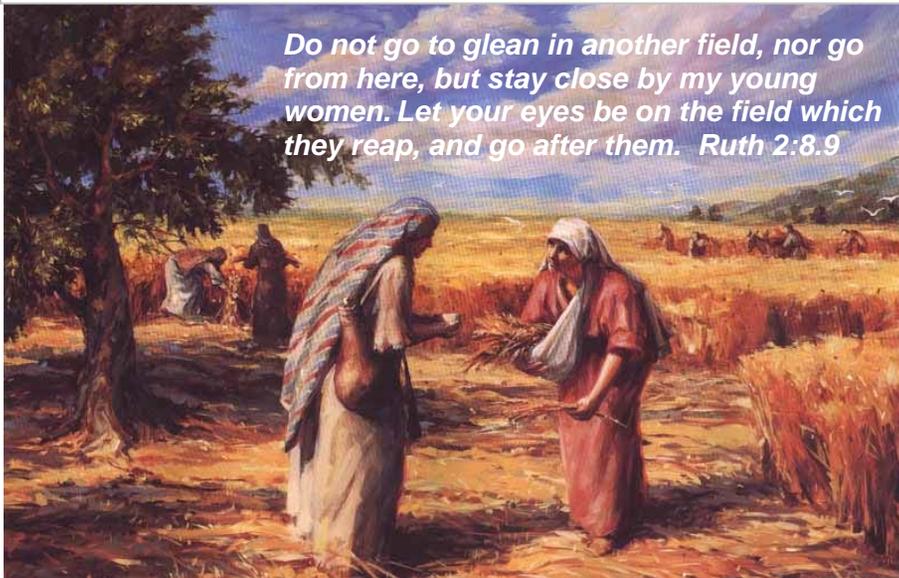


Dear Friends,

If you're sensitive to the "signs of the times", you can't help but sense the trumpet being raised to the archangel's lips. But while the days are 'short' until His appearing, they are also treacherous. The church is in perhaps its most pivotal hour – will we be faithful in this day of infidelity? Will we shrink back in fear of man or apathy or self-indulgence? Will we present the gospel or blend in to the homogenized religious systems of the world? Will we continue to sincerely trust our Lord amid the turmoil of these last days? These questions shouldn't weigh anyone down but rather encourage us all to consider the Almighty's faithfulness, His innumerable good thoughts toward each of us, His commitment to find all the lost as well as to keep us safely in His fold and His absolute trustworthiness. God bless each of you! Let's "Look full into His wonderful face."

John and Darlene



Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Ruth 2:8.9

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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!

Ruthless

It wasn't long ago, as I gazed at the countryside once considered lovely, it now looked forsaken. The trees seemed tortured and tired; the colors of flowers were no longer attractive. All of creation seemed to illustrate vanity and futility and I knew it was all just a reflection of my own soul.

In such a place, why hang on? Why hold on to a hope that seems as vaporous as human life? Why go on when bitterness of grief makes all seem like ashes?

I can relate to Naomi.

Perhaps, you know her story (see the book of Ruth). Elimelech, her husband brought the family from Bethlehem to Moab in search of sustenance. Famine was the motivation – ironic because Bethlehem means "house of bread."

It wasn't long before Elimelech died. His name means "God is my King" and it's significant that he died when he left the "house of bread" and went back across the Jordan, leaving the land of promise and coming to Moab – a place where only a generation earlier the Israelites had brought a catastrophic judgment upon themselves by engaging in sexual sin with the local women. And yet a local woman is what God had in mind.

Naomi's two sons might have been sickly for their names mean "sickly" and "pining." Whatever the case may be, they took wives of the Moabite women and within ten years both sons were dead. Naomi was left destitute – no husband, no children, nothing to show and only one place

to go – back home. What a journey that must have been!

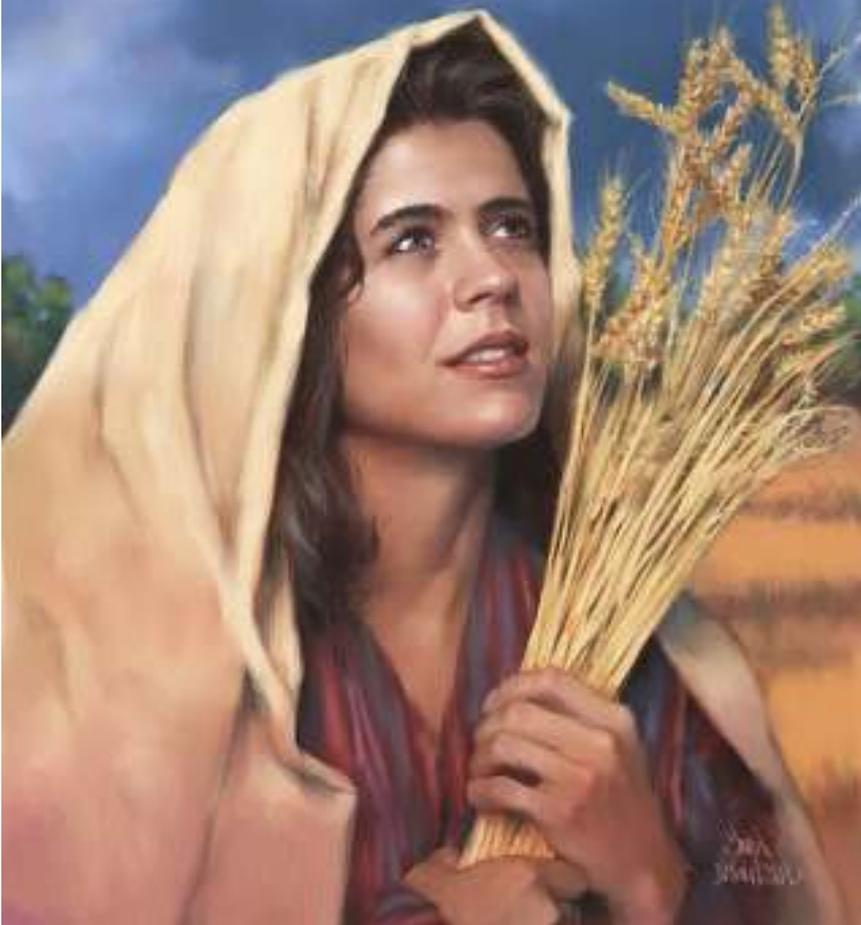
Physically, it was an uphill climb, but inwardly it was probably more like scaling Mt. Everest. In her misery, she sent her two daughter-in-laws home to their families. One departed but the other, Ruth, stayed on. This young woman's devotion was clearly supernatural and many, many fine sermons have focused upon her famous reply,

*"Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following
after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will
lodge;
Your people shall be my people,
And your God, my God.
Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The LORD do so to me, and
more also,
If anything but death parts you
and me."*

Herein, however, let's consider Naomi. Sure, she had family land back in Bethlehem, but who would work it? Sure, she had some extended family there but she was bitter in heart and frankly families are sometimes incapable of filling such voids.

I can conceive of only one reason Naomi would return to Bethlehem, hope in God. Back then, even more than today, a woman's life-purpose was wrapped up in her children. Without children, without a husband and with only a Moabitish widow as her companion, what other hope could she have? Even if she dealt with her nihilistic grief, how could she survive? There was no social security. 'She could beg, but that

"The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." Ruth 2:12



would surely disgrace her relatives. She was too old to sell herself into service or prostitution.' This was a hostile world to an old childless widow.

But she and Ruth made the crossing of the Jordan – it didn't part for them – and made the climb back to Bethlehem. Clearly, she held on

to the unseen, the illogical, the unexplainable. Leaving the pastures of Moab behind, trudging up what must have seemed like an exhausting path, she felt, I'm sure, judged, crushed and forsaken by God. 'After all, they had gone to Moab; they had left the land of Promise; they'd allowed their sons to marry the 'accursed women'; they'd

done so much wrong, right? Perhaps she was just a 'statistic' like those of a couple of generations ago who died in the desert wilderness. Maybe they had angered God and this situation was the result. That was the sensible explanation.'

Yet, inexplicably, she held on while an invisible hand held hers and led her on back home.

These are the times when you can't see the horizon let alone a grand and glorious plan. If an angel from heaven had appeared before her, she might have missed him and so God had an angel, of sorts, walking with her.

You see, it was all about Ruth – this tender woman encouraging her along the trek. But Naomi had no idea that her tragedy was God's prophetic masterpiece of the ages. She was clueless that Ruth, a woman from that treacherous land of Moab, a woman whose sickly husband God had brought to the grave, that she

picture the grace of God upon the gentile nations during the church age.

Dragging her feet along that dusty path up to Bethlehem, she couldn't see chapter two let alone Revelation 22! She undoubtedly loved her daughter-in-law, but she surely longed for the 'good ole days' – way before Ruth, when she was Ruth-less so to speak. She had no way of knowing that her life was really all about someone else's – Ruth's. She had no way of knowing that her own tumultuous life would grandly portray the Jewish people in God's perfect plan.

It was all a majestically beautiful painting and Naomi's life was God's canvas – her tears the background paint for the luminous joy that would highlight the breathtaking foreground of God's faithfulness and goodness in His time and way.

It's important for those of us who experience such times to continue in trust when circumstances seem to



*"Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty."
Ruth 1:20,21*

would be the great grandmother of Israel's greatest king and a fundamental part of the Messianic line – that she would masterfully

say God is untrustworthy. When Mary looked up at her divine child so mutilated on that cross as to be unrecognizable, she may have felt as

though God was ruthless and untrustworthy. When Job lost all his children in a devastating and supernatural way, he may have pondered the same. Or consider Jacob when he learned that his dearest son Joseph was supposedly torn to shreds and “devoured by an evil beast.”

But in all these cases as well as your own, God is not ruthless but indeed has a ‘Ruth’ there with you – an extraordinarily beautiful purpose in mind. He says, “*I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*” (Jer 29:11)

It’s also important for us who experience such times to continue in hope when history haunts our conscience. Undoubtedly, Naomi regarded her own with bitterness and regret. If anyone could feel like they wasted their life, that all opportunity was gone, it was surely this dear old woman trudging up that path. But through it all, she never lost hope in God. Even when she believed “*the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me*” she also recognized His kindness through Boaz (v2:20).

And you know the story – in the end, her companions, speaking to her while she holds Ruth’s little baby Obed, say unto her, “...*may he be to you a restorer of life...*” – certainly a prophetic allusion to Christ as well as the child.

As astounding and unreasonable as it may seem in Moab, Christ will restore life. He came to us serving just as Obed’s name means “serving.” Have you left the ‘house of Bread’? Maybe you thought it

was necessary; maybe you were famished. Do you find yourself in ‘Moab’? Bereaved? Lonely? Hanging by a thread? Perhaps it’s time to get back to ‘Bethlehem’. Need a helping hand?

I held my own son’s right hand when he died. Since then, I asked the Lord to hold my own and in fact He said, “*For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’*” (Isa 41:13) Returning to the Bethlehem of basic trust is a humbling and dusty road. For you see, as with Naomi, your life and mine are all about someone else – Jesus Christ.

But you won’t realize His purpose unless you back there. You won’t find it in Moab. If Naomi hadn’t made that journey back, we’d be looking at a whole different history.

She arrived there at the time of the barley harvest, the end of which is coincident with Pentecost. You remember from the book of Acts that this was the time at which the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and the church was born. Likewise, as you make your way back to the house of bread, you’ll find new life and an outpouring of God’s Spirit.

Now, when we get to heaven, one person I truly want to meet is Naomi. Maybe you’ll see her before me. If so, ask her if she still has any regrets and I’m confident you’ll hear her laugh with an understanding joy as radiant as heaven itself. I bet she’ll tell you every step along the way, as much as it hurt then, is much more than worth it now. (2 Cor 4:17)

For you see, our God is never ‘Ruthless’.

LET IT BURN!

Perhaps it was a dream... perhaps not. The ‘sense’ of peace and security was truly beyond words. Nothing on this earth could compare – filled with an infinite security that was completely unpolluted by any sense of danger, death, disease...no tension, turmoil or trouble of any kind...only a perfectly pleasant sense of peace and the understanding of unlimited possibilities. Words just won’t do...

The peace Jesus promised to His disciples – what does it ‘look’ like? What does it feel like? How is it different than the peace this world offers? Is it worth the pursuit? Is it even obtainable?

Fundamentally, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of peace. (Eph 6:15) In fact, seventeen epistles of the New Testament begin with a pronouncement of grace and peace. For many centuries the Jewish people had greeted one another with the word, “Shalom” meaning peace or peace to you. However, what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing in the New Testament is that we cannot have peace unless we first have received grace.

As part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:21, 22), it is unique in that we are told to seek it, to pursue it (Psa 34:14, 1 Pet 3:11, Rom 14:19, 2 Tim 2:22 and Heb 12:14). Apart from a single reference to meekness, this is a fundamental distinction for although the Word says that God gives peace (John 14:27), we are also to literally “chase it down.”

Now, clearly there is a peace in this world – that is, peaceful coexistence with other people, but the gospel proclaims a far superior peace. That is peace with God. Strong’s puts it like this – peace is “the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God

and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is.”

Jesus who is called the Prince of Peace said of the former – “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*” (Matt 10:34) Of course, He is no war monger; He is simply laying out the truth that the gospel of peace WITH GOD will inevitably bring war in this world. That’s because this world is run by Satan who is in a continual conflict with God.

Strong really hit the nail on the head pertaining to the peace of salvation, and that is the peace which is a free gift (Rom 5:1, Col 1:20) It is the peace that bypasses all understanding of the human mind and thus guards it as well as your heart through Christ (Phil 4:7). But if peace pursuant to salvation is a free gift, why are we instructed to seek and chase it down? I’m not trying to pose a theological question that only echoes somewhere in the halls of ‘higher learning’, but I suggest that the answer has wonderful application and offers a glorious promise.

Perhaps the answer lies in the symbolism of the Old Testament peace offering. “*The peace offerings, unlike other sacrifices, were not ordained to be offered in fixed and regular course. The only constantly-recurring peace offering appears to have been that of the two firstling lambs at Pentecost. (Leviticus 23:19) The general principle of the peace offering seems to have been that it should be entirely spontaneous, offered as occasion should arise, from the feeling of the sacrificer himself.*” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary)

“*The peace offering differed from the [other] oblations ... in this respect: while the burnt offering was wholly consumed on the altar, and the freewill offering was partly consumed and partly assigned to the priests; in this*

offering the fat alone was burnt; only a small part was allotted to the priests while the rest was granted to the offerer and his friends, thus forming a sacred feast of which the Lord, His priests, and people conjointly partook, and which was symbolical of the spiritual feast, the sacred communion which, through Christ, the great peace offering, believers enjoy."(Jamieson, Faussett and Brown)

Therefore, as the above indicates, the peace offering was a spontaneous, free-will gesture and clearly spoke of fellowship with both our Great High Priest and our God. It should also be noted that it included unleavened and leavened bread -- leaven being a type or symbol of sin (Lev 7:13). This stands in stark contrast to the animal offering which was to be without blemish and is quite instructive for although the animal sacrifice which portrays Christ was to be flawless, the two types of bread picture the reborn inner being and our own flawed sin nature – the Christian condition (Rom 7:7-25).

You see, you don't have peace with God, fellowship with the Creator, based upon your ability to be without 'leaven' – sinless. Rather, the sacrifice was acceptable to God, inclusive of the leaven because of the perfect or spotless animal sacrifice. None of us establishes peace with God on any other basis. You can't qualify yourself, purge yourself, make yourself holy enough to obtain that peace. You can't do enough good works to somehow grasp it. That's the fundamental doctrine of grace, isn't it?

OK, but why the pursuit of peace?

Well, there remains another unique peace offering and it has to do with the Nazarite. In Numbers 6, we find the law concerning this one who made a vow concerning a period of time to

be set apart totally unto God. Although his conduct during this time included the abstention from wine and from touching any corpse, his peace offering differed in two ways from the standard – first, there was no leaven allowed in the bread of the offering and second, he let his hair grow during the period of the vow. At the conclusion of his vow when the peace offering was made, he cropped his hair and burned it in the fire under the peace offering sacrifice.

Now, the Nazarite was in pursuit of God so to speak. Going beyond the standard sacrifice, he had a heart to utterly devote himself to the Lord. This was reflected in his diet, his cleanliness and his sacrifice. Clearly, he is a picture of the Lord Jesus who was called a Nazarene (the name means the same thing – separated -- Mat 2:23). The absence of leaven speaks of the purity of the devotion while the burning of the hair could typify the consuming of that which the flesh produces which might otherwise give beauty and/or a covering.

Pictured in the standard peace offering, we who believe in Christ benefit from His sacrifice on the cross. By the laying down of His precious life, our Lord made peace for us with the Father. That peace is the gracious gift of God to all who will receive it. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you..." (John 14:27) There is a peace, however, that is not only with the Father but in the Father.

At the completion of the law on the Nazarite in Numbers, Moses recorded the priest's blessing:

*"The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace."*

(Num 6:24-26)

Notice that the end result is all about peace, the peace of beholding the LORD's countenance. Notice also that it follows His grace just as in the New Testament epistles. Now look at the first part of the blessing – can I suggest that God has blessed us graciously with salvation – the peace with Him; we can now come into His presence with confidence. In addition, He is keeping us by the peace that is in Him, that is, in the personal intimacy of a deeper and deeper relationship with Him. The more we pursue that intimacy, that closeness, the greater that peace. "...the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phi 4:7)

Oh, there's a 'peace' of compromise with this world too but the Lord says, "You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days for ever." (Deut 23:6) On the contrary, along with the psalmist, our hearts should echo, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." and, "When thou said, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." (Psa 27:4,8)

It is when we drift away that we miss out on the peace of intimacy with God. As born anew Christians, we still indeed have the peace of atonement, Christ's satisfactory payment for sin. You can confidently rest in that. No pursuit is necessary. But there's more for the true 'seeker' – "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." (Col 3:1)

Also, if you decide like the Nazarite to seek and pursue, you'll burn your hair if you would, your 'covering' – the covering of the attractions of the flesh -- in the process. You see, that covering

won't matter because you know what God has is infinitely better.

We'll wrap up with the New Testament story to illustrate this point: "Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road." (Mark 10:46-52)

Casting aside his once important covering, blind Bart received his sight, and then he also followed, he pursued Christ. In like manner, God calls us to pursue His peace – to pursue HIM. The Bible speaks of seeking or pursuing Him more than 70 times. You see, in His presence is fullness of joy. In His presence is perfect peace (Isa 26:3) and indescribable security. And don't you know that He desires your pursuit – draw near to God and He will draw near to you! (James 4:8)

World News

...with potential for prophetic importance

Middle East

Turkey asks U.S. to foil Israeli plans for Mount

Ha'aretz 8/15/03

ANKARA - Turkey on Thursday asked the United States to intervene urgently to halt Israel's plan to allow non-Muslims to visit and pray on the Temple Mount.

The request came after Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat appealed to the Turkish premier, saying that opening the Temple Mount to non-Muslims would rekindle violence in the Middle East.

In a message delivered to the U.S. embassy in Ankara, Turkey warned that visits by non-Muslims to the Temple Mount could negatively impact on its ability to implement its recent decision to accede to a U.S. request to send

Turkish troops to Iraq. The government's decision must still be approved by the Turkish parliament.

"We do not need a religious struggle on the Temple Mount when we are facing an internal struggle in Turkey over sending troops to Iraq," a senior Turkish official said. "A religious eruption over this issue could cause anti-American demonstrations in Turkey, leading parliament to oppose assistance to the Americans."

Turkish sources said they hope that the transmission of their message to Israel via the U.S. will be enough to persuade Israel to reconsider its plan to allow visits by non-Muslims to the Temple Mount. "However, if it turns out that the message has not been understood, we will apparently have to transmit sharper and clearer messages," one official said.

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

Olmert: Peace talks possible only after Hamas, Jihad liquidated

Jerusalem Post 8/25/03

"The only chance for the future of the political process is dependent on Israel's ability to wipe out Hamas and Islamic Jihad," Industry, Trade, and Labor Minister Ehud Olmert, who is also deputy prime minister, told The Jerusalem Post Sunday.

Olmert said that such a goal "will not be easy, but is not impossible," and will require intense efforts in the months ahead.

"If we succeed in critically wounding them [the terror organizations], perhaps the conditions will be created which will allow Abu Mazen [Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas] and [PA Security Minister Muhammad] Dahlan to fulfill their obligations and crack down on terror," he said.

Israel suspended its policy of targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders at the end of June, as part of an accord between Israel and the PA, but reinstated it last week following the Hamas bus bombing in Jerusalem that killed 21 people.

Report: US Suspects Iraqi WMD in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley

World Tribune 8/25/03

U.S. intelligence suspects Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have finally been located.

Unfortunately, getting to them will be nearly impossible for the United States and its allies, because the containers with the strategic materials are not in Iraq.

Instead they are located in Lebanon's heavily-fortified Bekaa Valley, swarming with Iranian and Syrian forces, and Hizbullah and ex-Iraqi agents, Geostrategy-Direct.com will report in Wednesday's new weekly edition.

U.S. intelligence first identified a stream of tractor-trailer trucks moving from Iraq to Syria to Lebanon in January 2003. The significance of this sighting did not register on the CIA at the time.

U.S. intelligence sources believe the area contains extended-range Scud-based missiles and parts for chemical and biological warheads.

Mutually-lucrative Iraqi-Syrian arms transactions are nothing new. Firas Tlas, son of Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas, has been the key to Syria's rogue alliance with Iraq. He and Assad made hundreds of millions of dollars selling weapons, oil and drugs to and from Iraq, according to the May 13, 2003 edition of Geostrategy-Direct.com.

The CIA now believes a multi-million dollar deal between Iraq and Syria provided for the hiding and safekeeping of Saddam's strategic weapons

U.S. Mulls International Force for P.A.

MENL 8/27/03

The United States has been examining the prospect of organizing an international force to stop the Israeli-Palestinian war.

Officials said both the Bush administration and Congress have quietly discussed an effort to recruit at least one division of combat troops that would patrol the West Bank and Gaza Strip and enforce a Palestinian ceasefire with Israel. They said many in the administration and Congress have concluded that a Palestinian state can not be established without an international force that will impose a ceasefire in the region.

'We're not talking about another U.S. military deployment,' an official said. 'Instead, we're discussing a NATO-type heavily-armed combat force that would be based mostly on troop contributions from Europe. There has been some discussions and positive feedback from some of our European friends.'

Officials said congressional leaders, both Democrats and Republicans, have supported the deployment of U.S. troops in the Palestinian areas as part of an international force. They said NATO and the international community would require at least a pool of 30,000 troops, aircraft and armored platforms to form a credible deterrent against Palestinian insurgency

groups that operate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At any one time, about 10,000 troops would patrol the West Bank and Gaza Strip in cooperation with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Israel Vows "All-Out War" on Hamas

CNN 9/2/03

Israel declared 'all-out war' against Hamas Monday and said it is freezing diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority unless the Palestinian leadership takes 'tangible steps to deal with infrastructures of terror.'

A statement released after a Cabinet meeting cited Defense Minister Shaul

Mofaz as saying the August 19 bus bombing in Jerusalem had 'broken the track that was supposed to give the diplomatic process a chance.'

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told CNNRadio that military means was not the way to secure peace. He added that breaking off ties with the Palestinian Authority will prevent the road map to peace from ever being implemented.

Before the Israeli announcement, Israeli military helicopters fired missiles at Hamas members Monday in Gaza City.

Israeli security sources said a helicopter fired on 'a car loaded with arms ... killing two Hamas military activists.' They were identified as Khader Housari, 40, and Munther Kaniitha, 32.

Abbas Submits His Resignation

Palestinian Had Clashed With Arafat
Washington Post 9/6/03

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas,

regarded by the United States and Israel as a crucial partner in renewed Middle East peace efforts, submitted his resignation today after a four-month tenure dogged by Palestinian infighting and a failure to meet international demands for security reforms.



Father of Israeli security guard killed by bomb blast is restrained by friends.

Abbas told Palestinian legislators in a closed meeting that he wanted to quit his appointed position because of continuing clashes with Yasser Arafat, the elected leader of the Palestinian Authority, and frustration that the United States and Israel did not support his fragile government with more substantive efforts to move the peace process forward, according to lawmakers present at the session.

'Gates of Hell' Threat Sparks Israeli Alert

Daily Telegraph 9/8/03

Israel and the Palestinians were braced last night for a spiral of bloodshed after Ariel Sharon, the prime minister, called the Hamas leadership 'marked men' and the terrorist group said the Holy Land was entering the 'gates of Hell'.

Israeli troops sealed off the West Bank and Gaza to try to prevent suicide attacks as pressure grew on Mr. Sharon to deport Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader.

Last night at least 11 people, including three children, were injured after Israeli helicopters fired two missiles at the home

of Abdel Salam Abu Musa, a Hamas militant, in Khan Younis on the Gaza Strip.

The crisis was triggered by the resignation of Mahmoud Abbas, the moderate Palestinian prime minister. It was deepened by a failed Israeli attempt to kill Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas.

Hamas Issues SOS to the Arab World

Ha'aretz 9/9/03
In an unusual step, Hamas yesterday issued a call for help to the Arab world, citing Israel's assassination attempt on Sheikh Ahmed Yassin's life and the European Union's inclusion of Hamas on its list of terror groups as the reasons.

The organization asked for assistance in its struggle against pressure exerted by Israel and by the West at large, as exemplified by the European Union's recent decision to place Hamas' political wing on its list of terror organizations.

A Hamas circular distributed in the Gaza Strip and on the Internet declared that, 'in light of the continuing acts of massacre and aggression, the effort to assassinate Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the expansion of the war against Hamas, and its inclusion on the terror organization list, we call on the Islamic Arab world to provide help.'

The circular called on Arab leaders to denounce Israel's assassination policy, and to take diplomatic steps to alter the EU decision. Hamas also asked religious authorities to issue Islamic rulings compatible with the organization's interests.

United Nations

Annan Wants Radical Reforms to Cope with Security

Reuters 9/9/03

UNITED NATIONS - Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Monday the global security system had been shaken to its core by divisions on fundamental issues, especially over Iraq, and called for major changes at the United Nations.

In an annual report to the General Assembly, Annan said U.N. members should look for "radical reform" in the way the United Nations and other institutions work to cope with war, terrorism, poverty and human rights.

"I have an uneasy feeling that the system is not working as it should," he told a news conference, adding that nations must find common ground rather than "striking out on their own."

He spoke as leading states in the 191-member world body were struggling to heal deep rifts caused by the war on Iraq, in which the United States acted without U.N. approval and against the wishes of other key members.

"The war in Iraq brought to the fore a host of questions of principle and practice that challenge the United Nations and the international community as a whole," he said in the report. "It is vitally important that the international community not allow the differences of the past months to persist, and that it find unity of purpose around a common security agenda."

Annan submitted the report for this month's General Assembly ministerial session on security, development, poverty and human rights. World leaders had pledged improvements in all these areas in a September 2000 U.N. Millennium Declaration.

He criticized the 15-member U.N. Security Council as being undemocratic, saying the body, established immediately after World War II, reflected an outdated world power structure.

All U.N. members agree the council has to be expanded but nearly a decade of discussions have been fruitless in determining who should join and who, if anyone, should retain veto rights in the Security council.

Annan said the General Assembly lacked priorities. Its sheer size had produced an agenda of overlapping

EU in bid for bigger role at the UN

EU Observer 9/9/03
BRUSSELS - A radical plan to be presented later this week by the

European Commission will call for more common EU representation at the UN and closer EU-UN crisis management co-operation, the EUobserver has learned.

The plan seeks to extend the areas



UN Headquarters in Baghdad is bombed by a truck.

where the EU represents member states as a sole voice.

"We aim to have joint representation in the areas where the EU has competence" a spokesperson told the EUobserver.

External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten is due to present the proposals on Wednesday (10 September) ahead of the Annual meeting of the UN general assembly next week.

The Commission already represents the EU in areas such as trade and the law of the sea - according to diplomats Mr Patten's proposals will seek to extend this into areas such as the environment.

Development and humanitarian aid have also been discussed as areas where the EU should speak with one voice, as has representation before the Breton Woods institutions (The World Bank and International Monetary Fund) but it is not clear if this will be recommended in the final document.

Sources say the package of proposals will also include a 'joint statement of principles' on crisis management, which will form the basis of future EU-UN crisis

management operations, including crisis prevention operations.

"This is not only limited to peacekeeping", a Commission spokesperson said.

The news will come as a further sign that the EU is seeking to redraw its soft power image and extend its foreign policy tools to cover a whole range of activities.

It is thought that after months of wrangling the EU and the UN have agreed to common goals and areas of interest such as Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

According to

Commission officials the proposals are designed to not only reinforce the role of the UN and deepen EU collaboration with the UN, but also to help form a coherent European foreign policy.

IAEA conference to discuss Israeli nukes for first time

World Tribune 8/28/03

LONDON — The International Atomic Energy Agency has decided to discuss Israeli nuclear capabilities in its next major conference.

Diplomatic sources said the IAEA has placed on the agenda of its General Conference and Regular Session the subject of "Israeli Nuclear Capabilities and Threats." The subject will be discussed at the conference in Vienna in September.

The sources said this is the first time in decades that the IAEA has placed Israel's nuclear programs on the agenda of its general conference.

The conference has been planned from Sept. 15 to Sept. 19, Middle East Newline reported. They said the subject was placed at the behest of Arab and Islamic states.

The proposal to discuss Israel's nuclear programs came from the Arab League, the

diplomats said. Oman was said to have submitted the request.

The IAEA has reserved the conference to also discuss Iran's nuclear program and U.S. charges that Teheran is developing nuclear weapons. In response, Iran and Arab states have criticized the agency for failing to address Israel's purported nuclear arsenal.

In a recent meeting, the Arab League has asserted that Israel has stockpiled up to 300 nuclear warheads. The league said Israel now has the capability of producing hydrogen bombs.

The sources said the Arab League plans to distribute a study on Israel's nuclear programs to participants at the IAEA conference. The league will also demand that Israel sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Russia

Russia & Saudi Arabia Building Strong Ties; Landmark Visit

Yahoo/AP 9/4/03

Russian and Saudi officials agreed Wednesday to coordinate their anti-terrorism efforts as part of a landmark visit to Moscow by the Arab kingdom's leader. Moscow has said Saudi charities have provided financial support to Chechen separatists, who in the eyes of many Muslim fundamentalists are fighting to free an Islamic people, but who are considered terrorists by the Russian government.

"The international community faces international threats and challenges such as terrorism, and we must cooperate closely to resolve these problems," Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov at the start of Wednesday's talks with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Saud al-Faisal. The 2 ministers agreed to set up a working group that would coordinate action against terrorism, Ivanov told reporters.

Al-Faisal is one of several top Saudi officials who accompanied Crown Prince Abdullah to Moscow. Crown Prince Abdullah, who is his country's de facto

leader, is the 1st Saudi official of his rank to visit Moscow in more than 70 years.

While carefully prodding the sensitive terrorism issue, the Kremlin has sought to build warmer ties with Saudi Arabia. President Vladimir Putin hosted the crown prince during Tuesday's Kremlin talks that covered regional crises and the situation in the global oil market. Russia is the world's 2nd-largest oil exporter behind Saudi Arabia, and the 2 nations signed an agreement Tuesday on cooperation in the oil and gas industry. The 5-year deal called for "strengthening bilateral cooperation with the goal of ensuring stability in the global oil market" — phrasing that may suggest coordinated action on production volume and prices. The agreement also envisaged joint ventures in oil and gas exploration.

Kasyanov told Abdullah that "the stability of the entire world market" in oil depends on the "predictable policies" of the 2 largest producers the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Crown Prince Abdullah invited the Russian prime minister to visit Saudi Arabia, and Kasyanov said political relations between the countries "are developing very successfully," ITAR-Tass reported. During their talks, Russian and Saudi officials also addressed the situation in Iraq and the Middle East peace progress (Israel). Riyadh hopes the visit will strengthen Russia's support for Arab causes, particularly the Palestinian issue.

Ivanov and al-Faisal on Wednesday both spoke in favor of sending international disengagement forces into the zone of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Russia is a member of the so-called Quartet — which also includes the United States, the European Union, and the UN, that drafted the "road map" plan for Middle East peace.

With Muslims now making up about 20 million of Russia's 145-million population, Putin has expressed a desire to see Russia become an observer nation in the Organization of Islamic Conference, a grouping of Muslim-majority countries.

The issue was expected to be discussed during Abdullah's visit.

European Union

France Heat Wave Death Toll at 15,000

AP 9/9/03

PARIS - An estimated 15,000 people died in France's scorching heat wave last month, the country's largest undertaker said Tuesday, surpassing the official government estimate of 11,435.

Isabelle Dubois-Costes, a spokeswoman from General Funeral Services, said the updated estimate included deaths in the second half of August, after record-breaking temperatures had abated.

The new estimate came after the government on Monday released a report blaming the deaths on hospital understaffing, bureaucratic delays and insufficient care for the elderly.

The government late last month released an official estimate of 11,435, but the Health Surveillance Institute said on Tuesday that those numbers were based on deaths only in the first half of August.

The institute said it would release an estimate of deaths for all of August at the end of this month.

The new figures could put even more pressure on the government to correct

snags in its highly respected health system and increase outrage over the staggering death toll.

The heat wave brought suffocating temperatures of up to 104 Fahrenheit in the first two weeks of August in a country where air conditioning is rare. The heat baked many parts of Europe, killing livestock and fanning forest fires.

The high death toll has triggered an angry debate in France over shortcomings of the health system. The government is considering eliminating a national holiday to raise revenues for elderly care.

The French lifestyle has also come under scrutiny, since some of the elderly victims died alone in their homes while families were away on lengthy August vacations. Authorities reportedly had difficulties reaching survivors who were away.

EU military to get a home base

International Herald Tribune 9/3/03

PARIS -- Belgium said Tuesday that it would go ahead with plans to build a European military command headquarters near Brussels next year despite opposition from the United States and Britain.

Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt told a meeting of ambassadors to his country that the new headquarters was necessary for Europe to be able to "plan and execute European operations autonomously" - in other words, without interference from the United States.

The command center was first proposed following a mini-summit in April by Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg, the four European states that most vehemently opposed an American-led invasion of Iraq and that had for a time had blocked involvement by

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The European Union has long planned for a common European military capacity that would allow it to formulate and pursue a defense policy separate from that of NATO's, which is dominated by the United States.

In December 1999, the EU heads of state agreed that by the end of 2003 member states would be prepared to deploy up to 60,000 troops in EU-led military operations and that the union would eventually build the infrastructure necessary to direct such operations.

Many European officials believe an autonomous European military capacity is necessary for the union to have a meaningful foreign policy and give it a voice in world affairs. Otherwise, they argue, Europe's individual states are too weak to play a role independent of the United States.

The United States has opposed such a policy as an unnecessary duplication of NATO, which already pools European military capacities under a single command and plans to build a headquarters complex near Brussels in the next few years. NATO and the EU agreed in March that NATO would provide planning support and command facilities for EU-led "crisis response" operations.

Solana says roadmap alive after Arafat pronounces it "dead"

AFP 9/4/03

BEIRUT - EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana dismissed claims by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat that the Middle East roadmap for peace was "dead".

The peace initiative was very much alive and needed full support, Solana told a press conference in Beirut after talks with Lebanese officials.

"I don't want to see a statement saying that the roadmap faces death. The roadmap is alive and we have to maintain its life," he insisted.

Earlier Arafat had told CNN in an off-camera interview that the Israelis, who

have declared all-out war on Palestinian hardliners, had killed off the project.

"The roadmap is dead, but only because of Israeli military aggression in recent weeks," he said.

But Nabil Abu Rudeina, a senior advisor to the Palestinian leader in the West Bank town of Ramallah, later told AFP that Palestinians remained committed to the "roadmap" which he said "still exists".

Science

Iris Scanning in European Passports Being Prepared

EU Observer 8/21/03

As early as 2005 traditional European passports could be replaced by a new set of identification measures including biometric information (fingerprints, iris scans or DNA).

The European Commission was tasked by the Thessaloniki European Council in June to 'prepare the appropriate proposals, starting with visas'.

When EU justice and home affairs ministers meet informally in Rome 12 September the issue is expected to feature high on the agenda.

The US has been foremost in putting pressure on Europeans to upgrade their security. It has said it will start demanding visas from EU citizens who do not have biometric information on their passports from 26 October 2004.

RFID Gussied Up With Biosensors Wired 8/26/03

Still stinging from failed attempts to introduce radio tags to consumers, retailers and their suppliers are now adding features to the technology to make it appear essential to the safety of the nation's food supply.

As recently as last week, retailers and consumer packaged-goods companies have had to quietly dump efforts to implant radio-frequency identification technology into products or store shelves. The tiny radio transmitters let the companies precisely track the numbers and whereabouts of their inventory and



German Chancellor Schroeder explains to EU conference that Europe cannot drive global growth while emphasizing the union's stability.

consumers' purchasing preferences, which worries many privacy advocates.

But many companies are now combining the tags with sensors that can detect the presence of biological and chemical agents, or signal that a perishable item has expired. By doing so, they hope to gussy up the controversial technology as an essential terrorism-fighting tool.

The multifunction RFID tags will track America's food supply "from birth to the bun," said one RFID tag maker. With biosensors attached to them, the tags can instantly alert suppliers and retailers to anthrax or other toxins in their products, and possibly make recalls more effective.

In addition, the food companies hope the technology will protect them from lawsuits brought by victims of deliberately contaminated food.

Machine Thinks, Therefore It Is
Wired 8/27/03

A new type of thinking machine that could completely change how people interact with computers is being developed at the Department of Energy's Sandia National Laboratories.

Over the past five years, a team led by Sandia cognitive psychologist Chris Forsythe has been working on creating intelligent machines: computers that can accurately infer intent, remember prior experiences with users, and allow users to call upon simulated experts to help them analyze problems and make decisions.

Forsythe's team was originally trying to create a "synthetic human" -- software capable of thinking like a person -- for use in national defense.

The thinking software was to create profiles of specific political leaders or entire populations. Once programmed, the synthetic human(s) could, along with analytic tools, predict potential responses to various hypothetical situations.

But along the way, the experiment took a different turn.

Forsythe needed help with the software, and asked some of the programmers in Sandia's robot lab for assistance. The robotics researchers immediately saw that the technology could be used to develop intelligent machines, and the research's focus quickly morphed from creating computerized people to creating computers that can help people by acting more like them.

Synthetic humans are still a big part of the Sandia cognitive machines project, but researchers have now extended their idea of what the technology can and will ultimately be used for.

"We would like to advance the field of simulation, and particularly simulations involving synthetic humans, to the point that it becomes a practical tool that can be used by anyone to answer a wide range of everyday questions," said Forsythe.

World's smallest microchip unveiled
Aljazeera 9/5/03

Malaysia has bought the rights from a Japanese firm to the world's smallest microchip that can be embedded in everything from currencies to human bodies.

Announcing this on Thursday, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad said the microchip would boost the global "anti-terror" war.

Mahathir said the revolutionary miniature chip, developed by Japan's FEC Inc., could be combined with current technology to "greatly prevent the possibilities of terrorist acts" as well as banknote and document counterfeiting.

FEC (M) Sdn. Bhd. chief executive Kunioki Ichioka told reporters that the chip can also be inserted into the human body, animals, bullets, credit cards and other items for verification purposes, and can replace price bar codes used to tag products.

Unlimited application

Measuring 0.5 of a square mm and produced at less than 0.38 ringgit (10 cents) each, the chip - the size of a dot - uses the radio frequency identification (RFID) chip technology.

"The application is almost unlimited," Mahathir told a news conference after annual talks with global hi-tech chiefs at Cyberjaya town in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), an enclave south of the capital Kuala Lumpur modelled after California's Silicon Valley.

"We think this is a great breakthrough for Malaysia. It is the first in the world. No other people have come up with such a tiny microchip, particularly as it also has a built-in antenna," he said.

Religion

Muslim writer: Jerusalem not sacred
Official Egyptian weekly reinterprets Muhammad's 'Night Journey'
WND 9/4/03

A columnist for an Egyptian government journal has called into question the established Muslim belief that Jerusalem is a sacred Islamic city.

Writing for the weekly Al-Qahira, published by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Ahmad Muhammad 'Arafa rejects the Islamic doctrine that the Prophet Muhammad's celebrated "Night Journey" took him from Mecca to Jerusalem.

The passage in Quran 17:1 -- known as the Sura of the Night Journey -- does not refer to a miraculous trip from Mecca to Jerusalem, but to the prophet's emigration from Mecca to Medina, Arafa asserts in his Aug. 5 article.

MEMRI said the column constitutes a "dramatic departure" from a standard Islamic belief held for more than 1,300 years.

"The fact that this article was published in a government journal adds to its political significance," the Washington, D.C.-based group noted.

Jerusalem, at the center of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, is considered to be Islam's third holiest city, after the Saudi Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina.

The text of the Quranic passage says, according to a translation, "Praise be to Him who took His servant by night from the Al-Haram [Sacred] Mosque [in Mecca]

to the Al-Aqsa [literally 'the most distant'] Mosque, whose environs We did bless, so that We might show him some of Our signs, for He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing One."

Arafa contends "Al-Aqsa" must refer to an existing mosque, not a place where a mosque would be established later.

"But in Palestine during that time, there was no mosque at all that could have been the mosque 'most distant' from the Al-Haram Mosque," he said, according to MEMRI. "During that time, there were no people in [Palestine] who believed in Muhammad and would gather to pray in a specific place that served as a mosque."

The Egyptian columnist noted most of the inhabitants of Palestine at that time were Christians and a Jewish minority.

"The construction of the mosque situated today in Jerusalem and known as the Al-Aqsa Mosque began only in the year 66 of the Hijra of the prophet -- that is, during the era of the Omayyad state, not during the time of the prophet nor that of any of the righteous caliphs," he said. "So much for the mosque."

The Al-Aqsa Mosque and the adjacent Muslim shrine known as the Dome of the Rock were built after Caliph Omar I captured Jerusalem from the Persians, six years after Muhammad's death in AD 632. Omar decreed that the Jews holy Temple Mount was the place referred to in the Quran.

Arafa says the Quranic expression "He took His servant by night" means Muhammad ordered him to journey in secret from his enemies to a place where he and his mission would be secure.

"In other words, the text speaks of the Hijra of the prophet from Mecca to Medina, and not of a visit to Palestine." Arafa concludes the Night Journey began at the Al-Haram Mosque in Mecca "after the prophet had prayed there with his companion, and both of them had left it, and the journey ended at the mosque of As'ad ibn Zurara, in front of the house of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, in Medina, where the prophet built the mosque known as the Mosque of the Prophet."

Finding Fulfillment in the Father

(John 20:17)

by Jon Courson @
Searchlightradio.org

No doubt her eyes would often flame like fire — not unlike the look in the eyes of when he was apprehended. Other times, her eyes must have been dark, and dull, and dead.

You see, according to Dr. Luke, Mary Magdalene had previously been possessed by seven devils (8:2). But when she encountered Jesus, she was freed from the demons which had dominated her. No wonder that from that point on, she loved Him deeply and followed Him radically.

Tradition says Mary is the woman spoken of not only in Luke 8, but also in Luke 7. You know the story . . . A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to his house for dinner. And as he sat at the head of the table with the other Pharisees, checking out Jesus, listening to Jesus, skeptical about Jesus — a woman burst into the room and wept. The tears streaming down her face hit Jesus' feet, and with the hair previously used to entice men, she wiped the feet of the Son of Man.

Observing the scene, Simon thought, 'If this man were truly a prophet, He would have known what kind of woman this is.'

Knowing Simon's thoughts, Jesus said, 'Simon, there were two men in debt to a creditor. One man owed \$5,000; the other \$500. But out of the goodness of his heart, the creditor said to both men, 'Your debt is forgiven.' Which of these two debtors would love the creditor more, would appreciate him greater?' 'The one who was forgiven the larger amount,' answered Simon. 'You have said well,

Simon,' was Jesus' gracious reply, 'for the one who is forgiven much loves much. Notice, Simon,' He continued, 'I came into your house and you didn't greet Me with a kiss; you didn't anoint My feet with oil; you didn't welcome Me lovingly. But this woman has not stopped kissing My feet, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair.' You see, Jesus knew what kind of woman Mary was all along. Love is not blind — it just sees more. And because love sees more, it chooses to see less.

Maybe you feel like a terrible sinner today. Good News: You have the potential, the possibility of loving God greatly. If you don't feel like you're a sinner today, you can join Simon the Pharisee and love a little bit. But if you realize your sin and your failures and your shortcomings, guess what? You have the potential to be a lover of God and a lover of people in the biggest sense of the word.

The one who is forgiven little — the one who is unaware of his sins — loves little. That's why many church people are not lovers of God. They fail to see their need for forgiveness. But people like you and me, we know God's great grace and mercy because we experience it daily. And now Mary is at the tomb. The last one at the Cross was the first one at the tomb. That's what love does. It stays the longest. It bears all things and believes all things. It endures all things and hopes all things. It's the last one at the Cross and the first one at the tomb.

And when she gets there, her eyes swollen from crying, she stoops down to look inside. But when she sees the body is gone, her tears begin again. 'Woman, why are you weeping?' asked the angels in attendance. 'Because they've taken away my Lord,' Mary answered. And turning away from the angels, she saw Jesus. But she didn't know it was Him. Why? I suspect it was because her eyes were full of tears. Supposing Him to be

the gardener, she said, 'If you've moved the body for some reason, let me know where you've moved Him, and I will return Him to the tomb.'

Think about this. As a woman, Mary would have been significantly smaller than Jesus. Yet Mary doesn't say, 'You bring Him back,' nor even, 'Help me carry Him back.' She just says, 'I'll carry Him' — because love is not blown away by the heaviness of its object. It pays the price. It expends the energy. It finds a way. At that point, Jesus uttered her name, and recognizing His voice, Mary fell at His feet.

The picture is wonderful, for if she was indeed the same woman of Luke 7, even as she fell at His feet previously — washing His feet with her tears and drying them with her hair — she falls at His feet again, and she clings to Him. 'Don't cling to Me, Mary,' was Jesus' response, 'because I have not yet ascended.'

At first reading, this sounds harsh. Yet there's an important lesson here, for Jesus is saying, 'Mary, My mission was to come to earth to die for your sins. The purpose of My coming was to provide reconciliation so that you and all who believe could be reconciled to the Father and have relationship with Him. Don't cling to Me.'

Ours is a generation of 'cling-ons.' Books, seminars, retreats about this subject abound. A wife will cling to her husband, hoping she might find fulfillment in him. And the tighter she clings to him, the more he backs away. So she clings harder — and he backs away further. Or the husband clings to his wife, hoping to find satisfaction in her. But feeling used and smothered, she backs away. Husbands and wives say, 'If you're not going to fulfill me, I'll find someone who will; if you're not going to satisfy me, I'll find someone who will.'

It happens over and over again. We cling — but never find what we want. Inevitably, the results are divorce, depression, destruction. Not even children are exempt. 'If you don't meet the needs of your daughter,' read the best-selling books, 'she'll try to fill them in someone else.' And so we think we've got to make sure our kids cling to us and receive from us — otherwise who knows what will happen to them.

But Jesus comes in an entirely different manner to this sister of His, saying, 'Don't cling to Me. You've got to see the big picture. It's called reconciliation between you and the Father. That's why I came — to die for your sins, to pay the price for your iniquity, so that you won't have to cling to your husband or wife, your pastor or the church.'

Who clings to the pastor, the boss, or a so-called lover on the side? People who are insecure. And the reason they are insecure is because they don't understand what they really need is, like Adam and Eve, to walk with God in the cool of the day.

You see, any of you who say, 'This afternoon I'm going to put down the paper; I'm going to turn off the TV; I'm not going to cling to my husband or wife. I'm going to go for a walk; I'm going to talk to my Father; I'm going to tell Him the things that are troubling me, laugh with Him about a sight we might see, look at the sky in its beauty' — will come back with a sparkle in your eye, and a peace in your heart. You won't cling to the first person you see, suffocate those around you, or be disappointed in those you love.

The most secure Being in the entire universe is God. God doesn't need you. He loves you, but He doesn't need you. He likes you — but He doesn't need you. God got by for billions and trillions and zillions of years without you — totally content because the Father,

Son, and Spirit fulfilled each other and loved each other. But part of God's plan was to show another side of His character — grace and mercy — to all of the universe. To do that required sinners like you and me.

There are those who teach God needs you. No, He doesn't. And that delights me because God is not clinging to me. I'll find in Him strength, joy, and love — but He doesn't smother me. And He won't smother you. The real issue, gang, is a lack of spending time with the Father because a person who spends time with the Father — who not only hears it in a Sunday sermon, but who goes out and does it — will not have dependent characteristics and fifteen steps to work through to begin recovery.

When you get rid of the clinging, relationships take on maturity, depth, and solidity. But it doesn't happen by psychology or twelve-stepping your way out. It comes by doing one thing: walking with the Father. That's where you find security. Yes, we need to care, share, interact with each other. But we mustn't cling because the sad thing about clinging is that it drives people away. And the more they back away, the more we want to cling. It's a cycle which can only be broken by spending time with the Father. But you can't talk to the Father, walk with the Father, or receive security from the Father until you realize what Jesus Christ did for you on the Cross.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ . . . II Corinthians 5:18
God is holy and beautiful — but, due to our sin, we couldn't relate to Him or be one with Him. So Jesus Christ came to bridge the gap, to die for our sin that we might have sin forgiven and fellowship with the Father anytime we want.

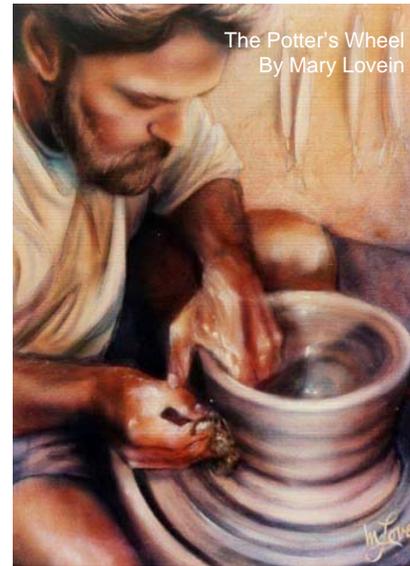
. . . and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; II Corinthians 5:18

Not only can we come freely to the Father because we have been reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ, but we are to reconcile others to the Father as well. Mom and dad, your ministry is not to reconcile your kids to you — to get them to depend on you or look to you. Your ministry ultimately is to reconcile your kids to the Father.

If you say, 'I'm going to meet their needs; I'm always going to be there for them,' they'll rebel because you'll eventually let them down. But if you are a minister of reconciliation, you'll say, 'I want my kids to grow up knowing God. I know I have failings and shortcomings as a dad, but the heavenly Father will never let them down. Never.'

Therefore, I don't care what they think about me as much as I care about them being one with God.' So when my daughter says, 'Dad, I need thirty bucks,' sometimes I give it to her. But other times I say, 'Would you pray about it? Would you see what doors God opens for you?' It is infinitely easier for me to open my checkbook, but it's infinitely more important for my kids to learn not to cling to me because I won't always be there for them. Therefore, I want them to learn to pray, to walk with God, to know the Lord.

I have been given the ministry of reconciliation — and so have you. 'Don't cling to Me,' Jesus lovingly says to Mary. 'I go to the Father.' May God give us that understanding as well.



The Potter's Wheel
By Mary Lovein

These Thousand Hills Third Day -- from Offerings

words and music by Steve Atwell, Mark Blackburn, and Jerry Davison

*These thousand hills roll ever on
Footprints of a Mighty God
They bring me to my knees in praise
Amazing love, amazing grace*

*Was on a hill my Savior died
A broken heart and bleeding side
Hill of the Skull, Mount Calvary
The blood He shed, He shed for me*

*When Heaven's hills at last I roam
Forever settled in my home
I'll join the saints around Your
throne
Your kingdom, Lord, rolls ever on*

*These thousand hills roll ever on
Ripples of a coming storm
The morning star precedes the dawn
These thousand hills roll ever on*

Hands of the Potter

Randall Goodgame/Caedmon's Call

*Lord if I'm the clay then I've been
left out in the sun
Cracked and dry, like mud from the
sky
Still clinging to the prodigal sun*

*But I'm on my way back home
Yes I'm on my way back home*

CHORUS:
*Into the hands
That made the wind from the water
Into the hands
The hands of The Potter*

*Lord if I'm the clay then let Your
living water flow
Soften up my edges Lord
So everyone will know*

*That I'm on my way back home
Yes I'm on my way back home*

BRIDGE:
*And Lord, when You listen for the
song of my life
Let it be, let it be, a song so sweet
Let it be, let it be, a song so sweet
Let it be, let it be, a song so sweet,
let it be*

*Lord if I'm the clay then lay me
down
On Your spinning wheel
Shape me into something You can fill
With something real*

*And I'll be on my way back home
Yes I'm on my way back home*