

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

# Heavenly Minded

Vol 4 Iss 1



In the beginning...

...God created the heavens and the earth.  
The earth was without form, and void; and  
darkness was on the face of the deep. And the  
Spirit of God was hovering over the face of  
the waters.

Then God said,

*"Let there be light."*

Dear Friends,

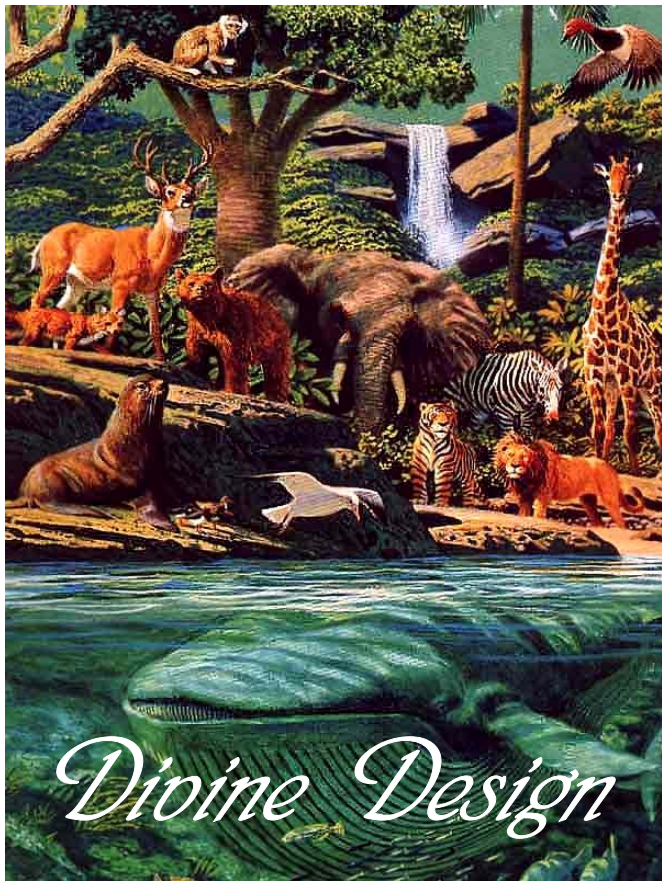
We read about the 'Big Three' (see World News section) and consider Dan 7:8,24 ; we read about how the UN and Arabs nations want Israel disarmed of their nuclear weapons and ponder Russia leading a coalition to do just that as in Eze 38 and 39; we read that the Pope is pushing for a "new world order" and think of the coming one world gov't under the leadership of the antichrist as well as an one world religious order of toleration leading to the worship of the "dragon" as found in Revelation... can you see it too? What God has said will be, will be. Thus, in the "end times" it's good to consider beginning times for in so doing, we witness the awesome creative design not only of the material world but for the heart of God's children as well. That gives us great confidence - He is in control and always has been. May you all be blessed and encouraged in our wonderful Savior Jesus! John and Darlene



...God saw  
everything that He  
had made,  
and indeed... it was  
very good.

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### ***“In the beginning, God...”***

Throughout the Bible, there is never any attempt made to prove the existence of God. In the old comedy series Family Ties, the somewhat ditzzy daughter, Mallory, has a homework assignment from her philosophy class to prove that she exists. After days of anguish, a moment of illumination brings a smile to her face. Standing in the kitchen with her family listening, she exclaims, “I shop! Therefore, I am!!”

Fortunately, God doesn’t face that anguish. Being perfectly content as the great I AM, He never bothers to try to prove it. He always was, is and always will be. It is upon this

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One!” (Deut 6:4)* The word for “One” here means a united or compound oneness. What a wonderful and yet mysterious thing – God is triune and yet One.

And man, made in the image of God, is triune as well – thus the scriptural command, *“You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deut 6:5)* Jesus said in Mark 12:29,30 that this was the most important commandment. It addresses the heart which is the seat of the spirit, the soul which is your character and the strength which speaks of the body. The divine plan is for a complete

fundamental truth, the eternal existence of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, that the rest of the revealed Word and nature of God is given.

Here, in this first phrase of the Bible, we also have revealed the triune nature of the LORD. The Hebrew word for God is ‘El’ which is singular. There is ‘Elah’ as well which is dual and ‘Elohiym’ which represents three or more. Now, the form we find here is ‘Elohiym’. As if to emphasize this compound unity, we read in the famous ‘Shema’,

relationship between God and man – all encompassing; fully integrated; a compound unity.

Additionally, there is a triune correspondence to the Godhead in that we read in Scripture that God the Father is Spirit (John 4:24), Jesus the Son came in the flesh (2 John 7) and the soul made alive by the breath of God (Gen 2:7) points to the “ruach” (Hebrew) or “pneuma” (Greek) i.e. the Holy Spirit (same words – see John 20:22 as an example).

Rabbi Simeon ben Joachi, commenting on this – “Come and see the mystery of the word Elohim; there are three degrees, and each degree by itself alone, and yet notwithstanding they are all one, and joined together in one, and are not divided from each other.”

Your ‘take-away’:

- God’s eternal existence, past, present, future – the “Ancient of Days”, the great “I AM”.
- God’s triune and yet unified nature.

### ***“...God created the heavens and the earth.”***

Immediately following these fundamental truths, the Lord placed what is to many the highest hurdle of faith – that He indeed created everything. It wasn’t just some “fortuitous happenstance”, no cosmic fluke nor an incredibly ‘lucky’ series of evolutionary events.

The story is told of Sir Isaac Newton, (arguably the most intellectually brilliant man, apart from Christ, who ever lived) ridiculed by Voltaire as a ‘doting fool’ for his faith in the Almighty, who in desiring to demonstrate this principle of creation to his ‘learned’ friends, made a handsome model of the solar system. As his companions gathered in his home, they noticed the model and praised Sir Isaac for his remarkable work. He responded by saying that he couldn’t take the credit, because it had simply appeared out of nowhere; it had just come into being on

its own. His guests argued that this was baseless and ridiculous. “Of course, it didn’t just appear. There had to be some designer, some careful thought given by someone for such a masterful model to have been built!”

Then the ‘light came on’ and they realized they’d been ‘had’. For indeed, just as it was absurd to suppose that the little model had accidentally appeared out of nowhere, it was even more incredible to give credence to the idea that the marvelous complexity and intricacy of the universe appeared without a Masterful Creator behind it.

And it is all the more amazing when we consider the greatness of it all – a typical galaxy contains billions of individual stars. Our own, the Milky Way, contains some 200 billion stars. It’s shaped like a giant spiral, rotating in space, with arms reaching out as on a pinwheel. It is so large that one full rotation of that wheel would take about 250 million years. Unimpressed? How about this – the average distance between galaxies is about 20 million trillion miles; in fact, the closest galaxy to our own is the Andromeda Galaxy, about 12 million trillion miles away. Unimpressed? For every patch of sky the size of the moon, searching deeply, you could observe about a million galaxies.

Yet what is even more impressive is that our God is bigger than all of that. In Isaiah, He poses the rhetorical question, *“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured the heaven (the visible universe) with a span (spread your hand out and look at the distance between your thumb and little finger) and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?” (Isa*



40:12) And He fills it all! The Psalmist wrote,

*“Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.”*  
(Psa 139:7-10)

What is staggering in its profundity is that God Who is ‘bigger’ than all His creation chose to become a single cell within the womb of the virgin Mary. The infinitely huge became the microscopically small en route to the salvation of mankind.

Here, in the beginning, God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit created the universe, both seen and unseen. Of note, is the Hebrew word used for create – it is pronounced “bara” which is to create something out of nothing. Clearly, something only God can do. Your ‘take-away’:

- It is in the nature of our God to create.
- God is far ‘bigger’ than our minds can comprehend; consequently, He’s big enough to take on your problems, your sins, if you’ll let Him, no matter ‘where you’re at.’
- God, as ‘big’ as He is, is aware of the smallest detail.

***“The earth was without form and void;”***

Whereas the word “bara” is used in the beginning of God’s creation, afterward, it is always “asah” which means to refashion out of existing material. This leads to a point of some controversy in understanding

this portion of scripture. You see, “was” here can mean “became”, and there are those who believe that the original creation of God became corrupted by Satan. They point to the fact that he drew one third of the angels of heaven into his darkness and propose that he may have destroyed the planet earth in his banishment thereto. Thus, it became “tohuw va bohuw” translated “without form and void”.

Others strongly assert that this is not the case and that what we have here is an intermediate state of creation which was the ‘palette’ in God’s creative hand if you would and in which He continued His work.

What is plain is that God took a planet in shapeless chaos and began His good work; and, this is telling of His divine nature. God can work with the formless void whether it’s planet earth or planet ‘John’. Compared to the perfect character of the Lord, that’s exactly what I am – a formless void and so are you. Does that seem a bit extreme in its criticality? Trust me on this – the longer you walk with Him and get to know Him, the more you realize the formless void your life was without Him.

Your ‘take away’:

- God knew you were a formless void without Him and someday you will too.

***“...and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering (literally brooding) over the face of the waters.”***

“Deep”, here, literally is “abyss” and refers to the vast seas which covered the whole earth. If we consider, however, the type or ‘word picture’ herein, we can see the gentile or unbelieving nations. Throughout scripture, the ocean or seas are a type of the people alienated from God.

Thus, we can’t help but sense the poetry of God’s purpose – to bring His Spirit in to those places, those lives of churning darkness and unbelief. As Jesus spoke of Him in John 16:8, *“And when He is come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

He broods over the darkness, not to condemn but to convict and to comfort, to bring the loving, creative power of God to bear.

Your ‘take away’:

- God’s Spirit convicts; He doesn’t condemn.

***“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”***

Notice the gentle yet irresistible power in His command. We observe this same phraseology throughout the creation story. ‘Let’ is in the imperfect tense; the imperfect is used to express the ‘future’, referring not only to an action which is about to be accomplished but one which has not yet begun; as such, it expresses an action, process or condition which is incomplete. God started with light, but there was much more to come.

God spoke, and as the Psalmist wrote, *“The entrance of Your Word gives light...”*

Just as the light here made manifest the formless void upon which it shone, so the entrance of God’s Word into the heart of man reveals the ruin and emptiness which sin has enjoined. The Bible says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:”* (Jer 17:9) and *“...all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”* (Eph 5:13)

When God brings light into our unbelieving heart, it is a “let” command. It exposes us, our sinful ways, our need for Him. Pertaining to our salvation as well, His command is in the ‘imperfect’ tense. It’s a starting point in making us a new creation. *“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* (2 Cor 5:17 NIV)

Your ‘take away’:

- The first step in a new creation is God’s light shining upon a formless void.
- There’s more to come.

***“And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.”***

Here are another couple of fundamental principles for the Christian. First, what God does is good, in fact, verse 31 says “very good”. He can’t help it; you see, He is good. Goodness is simply an attribute of His divine being. *“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”* (Psa 34:8) *“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.”* (Psa 86:5) *“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”* (Psa 107:1)

And it’s a very unbalanced attribute – infinite, in fact. We need to get this down – God is good. He’s not the ‘force’ of Star Wars or a ‘divine nothingness’ of eastern mysticism or the ‘yin and the yang’. He’s totally, completely, infinitely good.

Consequently, all that He does is good. The mess that sinful man and Satan have made of this world – never confuse that with God’s doing.

The second principle is that light and darkness don’t coexist. They are forever separate. This is important to consider for it is one of the devil’s schemes to confuse that matter – to attempt to bring mixture, spiritually speaking. He desires to contaminate good with evil, light with darkness, purity with poison, and to convince man that as long as he’s got some ‘good’, some ‘light’, or

some 'purity', it's OK. But that notion is a huge deception – a big lie.

Consider this allegory – take a glass of pure, clean spring water and a mug of slimy, foul-smelling toxic waste. Which one would you drink? Most of us would pick the water. Now, take just a spoonful of the toxic waste and stir it into the spring water and consider, which one would you drink? Most of us would say, e-yuck! Neither one! The same is true of the divine principle – light and darkness don't mix. Spiritually speaking, they are purely binary. There is no evil in God whatsoever, none. Conversely, you can stop looking for true goodness elsewhere. That probably sounds harsh, but when you finally realize that what Jesus said is true, *"There is none good but one, that is God."* (Mat 19:17) you can appreciate that whatever goodness you observe is simply God at work. There is no goodness apart from Him – not in man and certainly not in Satan.

Pertaining to salvation, this is important for Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* (John 8:12) You won't find God mixing His light, His truth with other things. Man is continually guilty of that and Satan is perpetually so engaged. The pitiful condition of the church today is the result of such mixture. And the sorry state of some of us Christians individually is frequently due to the same.

Your 'take-away':

- God is good and everything He does is consequently good.
- There is no darkness whatsoever in Him.
- Light and darkness are always distinct from one another.

***"God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day."***

We should notice the order here, the evening and the morning were the first day. Contrary to our own perspective that the day begins each morning and grows progressively darker, in God's 'economy', the day starts dark and gets progressively brighter. You know, we're going to be very surprised when we get to heaven and find out just how many of our earthly perspectives have been "upside down" (see Acts 17:6)

***"Then God said, 'Let there be a firmament (expanse) in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' Thus God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day."***

On the second day, God created what we call the sky. Understand that there are three entities known as heaven – the sky, the cosmos or greater universe and the spiritual place of God's abode. Paul intimates in one of his epistles that at one point he was temporarily caught up into the third heaven – i.e. the place we commonly refer to as heaven.

Now, with the sky (or first heaven) put in place between "the waters", you should picture a shell or canopy of water surrounding our planet with great oceans below separated by our atmosphere. Creation scientists say this canopy shell of water could account for a 'green house' effect which moderated temperature changes and variations over the whole planet. It could have also filtered out much

harmful cosmic radiation which some attest is responsible for our aging.

The picture here pertinent to salvation is that just as God's Word separated the waters above from the waters on earth so it separates in the life of the believer the heavenly from the earthly, the spiritual from the carnal. Without it, by implication, there is no separation. This is especially important in the life of a new believer for we live in an age in which a lot of 'earthly waters (teachings) are pretending to be heavenly!

Also, we should note that the whole world was covered with an ocean. Not only do waters speak of doctrine or teaching as we see in Isaiah 55:10,11 and Ephesians 5:25,26, but, as mentioned earlier, the sea specifically pictures the gentiles or unbelievers. As such, we can consider this in type as our world of faithlessness and disbelief – filled with the doctrine of the devil. The Bible says, *"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one."* (Psa 53:1-3)

And that's exactly where we came from – the sea of faithlessness and disbelief. None of us came into the kingdom of God because we were good. Everyone found in the Book of Life was saved by God's grace.

Your 'take-away':

- God's Word discerns the heavenly from the earthly.

***"Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together***

***of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good."***

After the separation of the waters, it seems that the Lord created vast aquifers, subterranean water chambers which caused the earth to be pushed upward and thus appear. Later, these chambers of the deep played a role in the judgment of God in the days of Noah.

In type, the soil or earth often refers to the heart of man as in the parable of the sower found in Mathew 13. The earth being exposed speaks of what God's Word does – it exposes what's in the heart. *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Heb 4:12)

What's in our hearts needs to be exposed for our own good because some of us can have the idea that we're not so bad; that, after all, God made a good choice in choosing us – Ha! 'I mean, I'm not as 'earthly' as that guy in the pew behind me!

Our hearts ARE earthy. God knows it, (Psa 103:14) but we are often either deceived into thinking we're less wretched than we are or so ashamed and embarrassed that we think we must hide it all – frankly, both attitudes are fueled by pride. Swamped beneath the tide of Satan's lies, our hearts need to be exposed. We need confession. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1John 1:9)

Your 'take-away':

- Don't let the flood of Satan's lies and doubts keep you down and 'under it'.

- Confess your faults, one to another, and pray for one another.
- God's Word exposes what's in our hearts and His purposes in so doing are good.

***“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day.”***

Next, our dear Lord brought forth what was to be the food supply for all the creatures. Later in the story, man was specifically given to eat that which had life-bearing seed in it. Now, seed is another type or picture of God's word as found in Luke 8:11. Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3 said, *“Man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*

Man spends the preponderance of his time seeking and taking in food that has no seed in it, no life. Glued to the tube or grabbed by gossip, there are lots of places for him to find garbage; but God wants the new man to ‘eat’ that which has life in it. The believers ‘food supply’ is God's Word. When the church is weak, it is most often the case that believers are on a bad ‘diet’. Here in the beginning, God seems to have made it clear that man's initial diet was to be a reminder to him of the source of life.

Not only so, but as the ‘trees of God's planting’ (Isa 61:3) with good food, we can bear fruit ourselves.

Once cleansed in confession and by belief in the new covering of the atoning blood of Christ, we can be fruitful spiritually. However, by definition, fruit-bearing is a process requiring patience (Luke 8:15). As we read and hear, study and learn, and DO God's Word, it naturally moves the ‘sap’ of His Spirit through our lives producing fruit ‘after His kind’ – “... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” (Gal 5:22,23) It's a supernaturally natural process.

Standing close to an apple tree and listening carefully, you'll not hear it groaning or grunting, trying to push fruit out on to its branches. Unfortunately though, many believers run around doing just that - trying to produce spiritual fruit in their lives. They dash from one conference or big event to another hoping for ‘McFruit’. Fruit takes time and fruit is what distinguishes the disciple. (John 15) Your ‘take-away’:

- There's life in the ‘seed’. In order to grow, ‘eat’ that which has life in it.
- As trees of His planting, we can bear fruit after His kind.

***“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness.”***

***And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.”***

As God made the sun, moon and stars, He meant for them to ‘rule’ the day and the night, to divide the light from the darkness, to stand for signs, seasons and provide the basis of our time-keeping.

As symbols in scripture, many scholars consider the sun as a type of Christ (e.g. Psa 72:17; 84:11; Mal 4:2), the moon as the church and the stars as picturing the angelic host. If this is the case, it is instructive that the sun rules the day while the moon rules the night. Christ said, *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* (John 9:4,5) and to His disciples, *“You are the light of the world”* (Mat 5:14) In this present darkness, we indeed are like the moon – reflected light if you would. But the day will come when we will be like Jesus – *“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”* (Mat 13:43)

Now, when is the moon dimmest? -- when the earth comes between it and the sun. So it is with the church and our Lord. The dominion or rule of the church has been best when it fully reflects the light of Christ. Conversely, it can be all but absent when the world gets in the way.

As for signs and seasons, recall that the wise men from the orient knew of the birth of Jesus because of a star. They understood the sign. It is tragic, however, that people have relied on astrological signs to guide their lives. That was never God's intent and it is a false, deceitful practice which is leveraged by Satan to manipulate the gullible. At best, signs always point to something, they are indicators – not the ‘real deal’. The Lord has put the substance and direction for our lives in His Word. Though the magi recognized that a great King was born by observing the star, only the scripture could

direct them to the town of Bethlehem and only the prophetic Word could have told them of God's marvelous plan of redemption.

As the heavenly lights were to provide the signposts for the creation so the light of His Word provides the parameters, the directions to guide our lives as believers both during times of ‘light’ and ‘dark’. The Scripture says, *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”* (Psa 1:1,2) Your ‘take-away’:

- You can only shine upon the world around you as much as you are fully facing the Son.
- Signs are not substance – go to the Word.

***“Then God said, ‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.’ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.”***

God's first command to any living creature was again a revealer of His heart. “Be fruitful and multiply.” How often we can be tempted to picture God as against us or down on us when in truth His desire is for us, for our fruitfulness and fulfillment. He

even made the things He commanded us to do enjoyable!

We should note also that the living creatures were made “according to their kind”. In other words, a tuna was a tuna and a stork was a stork. And tuna only make more tuna and storks only make more storks (of course, they bring baby boys and girls too! – ha!). God established the fruitful order of nature and when the order is confused, it becomes unfruitful. For instance a horse may mate with a donkey but the resulting mule is sterile – mules don’t make more mules.

Just as God’s Word here produced an abundance of living creatures, so it will produce in the life of a sincere believer an abundance of life. Jesus said, *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:9.10)

This abundance is not what some preachers profess – material riches, perfect health, worldly power, prestige (whether though ‘ministry’ or the ‘world’). If God chooses to bless a person in such a way, that’s fine; but this abundance refers to far more important things: *“...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all*

*generations, forever and ever. Amen.”* (Eph 3:17-21)

As God restores a soul, He brings abundance of life, love and the fullness of Himself – this is where the pastures are green and the waters still and deep (Psa 23). This is how a born again believer’s life takes on beautiful purpose.

Your ‘take-away’:

- God desires a life for you abundant in His good treasure.

***“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”***

With increasing vigor, scientists are crossing the borders of creation, planting human tissue in animals, mixing animal and human genes, cloning man and animal without regard to the consequences. You can’t help but think, ‘this is going to be unfruitful’ to say the least. We can imagine that we’re pretty ingenious in altering genetic codes and unraveling the mysteries of the human genome but messing with the natural order or “proper domain” of creation is one of the reasons the Abusso or bottomless pit is filled with especially nasty demons. *“And the angels who did not keep their proper (own) domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”*

Jude 6

***“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our***

***likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”***

Like God, man is a triune being. In creating him, the LORD took the lowest part of creation, the dust of the earth, and combined it with the highest possible ‘ingredient’, the breath of His Spirit. Together, they made a ‘living being’ or literally a living soul. So man’s being is triune in that he has a spirit, a soul, and a body.

Man was not designed to die; that’s one reason we are frustrated by time. People rush faster and faster to get nowhere in particular; we strive with schedules that are ever more crowded and stressful. The confines of time and more specifically, the time of death is ‘instinctively’ alien and troubling partly because we were not created for it. We were formed to commune with our Creator apart from the callous demands of an expected life span.

Originally, Adam’s spirit was the primary influence upon his soul or character. The spirit, being the seat of his will and what we would think of as his deepest part, was in direct fellowship with God Who is also Spirit (John 4:24).

Ah, but the soul, being created by the combination of both the spirit and the dust (or flesh) is influenced by both as well. Now, initially, man’s body, though ‘dusty’ was without sin and did not struggle against the spirit’s control over his soul.

This is what the Bible calls being spiritually minded *“...to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* (Rom 8:6) However, when Adam rebelled against God, just as God promised, he died – first, and immediately, he died spiritually which meant separation from God. Secondly, he eventually died physically as well. Though 930 years old,

he died within the same prophetic day (see 2 Pet 3:8).

Ever since, man’s soul has been the pivotal battle ground. As his spirit died, his sin-filled flesh then reigned over his soul. He became carnally minded and *“...to be carnally minded is death...”*

But praise God for the Gospel! When someone responds to the good news and welcomes Jesus Christ into their life, believing in Him as the risen Lord and Savior, Christ sends the Holy Spirit into that person bringing new life to his spirit. From that point on, the believer is no longer a captive slave to the sinful flesh; the sincere believer is free not to sin.

And with this freedom comes a struggle. Paul wrote, *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts (wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish...Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”* (Gal 5:16-23)

Your ‘take-away’:

- *“if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”* (Rom 8:10)

***“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of***

***the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”***

This is fascinating! Man was told to “subdue” the earth. At this point, with no sin in the new creation, the world was at peace. It would seem that this term subdue did not seem to apply to the animal kingdom. In fact, to clarify, the Lord said,

***“Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”***

The Hebrew word for subdue means to tread down and conquer, whereas the word dominion implies simply a ruling over. Some Bible scholars believe this is speaking of a directive for man to subdue the evil spiritual entities that occupied the planet (See Job 1:6,7). This is indeed consistent with other uses of this verb, to subdue, in the scripture (e.g. Micah 7:19)

Imagine lions and tigers eating grass and fruit! This was paradise. All was in harmony. There was no ‘food chain’. Every creature ate of what grew from the earth. When Christ returns, He may re-establish this order for Isaiah, in speaking of His millennial reign, recorded, *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isa 11:6-9)

Though man miserably failed in carrying out this command, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ succeeded. On Calvary’s cross, He crushed the head of the serpent, Satan and destroyed the works of darkness. His dominion shall be an everlasting one!

Your ‘take-away’:

- God gave the command both to subdue and have dominion and He also provided the Man to fulfill it, His Son.

***“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”***

Though the created order as we know it was thus fulfilled, God is ever creative and always at work. In presenting to us the chronicle of creation, He put forth the pattern for His creative/redemptive work in the heart of man as well – His divine design. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* (2Cor 5:17) Very, very GOOD!

*If your world is in a mess, it could be that God has allowed it in order to demonstrate to you His love and goodness. Let the light in, let the word of God into your dark, let Him separate the truth from the lies and bring your sin to your attention so you can confess and forsake it. Let Him produce in you an abundance of life and the wonderful fruit of His Spirit. Let Jesus subdue and have dominion – make Christ, the Savior and Lord of your life. When you do, you’ll realize a truly divine design.*

# Safely Home

*I am home in Heaven, dear ones;  
Oh so happy and so bright!  
There is perfect joy and beauty  
In this everlasting light.*

*All the pain and grief are over,  
Every restless tossing passed;  
I am now at peace forever,  
Safely home in Heaven at last.*

*Did you wonder how I so calmly  
Trod the valley of the shade?  
Ah! But Jesus love illumined  
Every dark and fearful glade.*

*And He came Himself to meet me  
in that way so hard to tread;  
And with Jesus’ arm to lean on,  
Could I have one doubt or dread?*

*Then you must not grieve so sorely,  
For I love you dearly still;  
Try to look beyond earth’s shadows,  
Pray to trust our Father’s will.*

*There is work still waiting for you,  
So you must not idly stand;  
Do it now while life remaineth,  
You shall rest in Jesus’ land.*

*When that work is all completed,  
He will gently call you Home;  
Oh, the rapture of the meeting!  
Oh, the joy to see you come!*

*All the pain and grief are over,  
Every restless tossing passed,  
Now at peace forever,  
Safely Home In Heaven At Last!*

*Author Unknown*

# World News

...with potential prophetic importance.

## Middle East

### Sharon: Unilateral Separation Within Months

12/18/03 Debkafile

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon unveiled his much-awaited policy program Thursday, 18 December, under the heading: A Program of Separation. It came with a warning to the Palestinians that he won't wait forever for them to come around.

The ME Road Map's significance is that peace can only be attained through security. It therefore refutes the opposite proposition that the way to security is through signed peace treaties.

Sharon more or less gave the Palestinians up to six months to root out terror and institute reforms. He pledged Israeli help for raising their living standards. And if there is good security coordination, then Israel will relinquish

West Bank and Gaza Strip towns to Palestinian control.

He noted that he had promised President Bush to remove illegal outposts and announced no land would be confiscated and no new communities built in either territory.

"We want the Palestinians to have a state with territorial contiguity on the West Bank," he said and added: If the Palestinians fail to meet their obligations in the space of six months – and most importantly dismantle their terror infrastructure – Israel will go it alone.

### Jewish Settlers Attack Sharon Plan as Betrayal

Fox News 12/19/03

GANEI TAL, Gaza Strip — Outraged Jewish settlers on Friday denounced as a betrayal Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's

intention to move some settlements as part of a plan to separate from the Palestinians if peace efforts remain stuck.

Sharon's "disengagement plan" -- which would draw a temporary border in the West Bank without negotiations and speed up construction of a controversial security barrier -- also drew opposition from the United States and the Palestinians.

Washington warned Israel against a go-it-alone policy, which would torpedo the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan calling for incremental steps leading to a Palestinian state by 2005.

"We would oppose any unilateral steps that block the road toward negotiations under the road map," presidential press secretary Scott McClellan said. "The United States believes that a settlement must be negotiated and we would oppose any effort -- any Israeli effort -- to impose a settlement."

Palestinians were also sharply critical. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia called for negotiations and bristled at Sharon's threats.

"These are ultimately dangerous words, and this type of talk is simply not acceptable," Qureia told The Associated Press. Qureia is trying to end violence through negotiation and has said he will not confront militants with force.

In Gaza City, the Islamic militant group Hamas put on an angry display, with thousands of Palestinians turning out despite heavy rain for a street rally after Friday's Muslim prayers.

Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi said Sharon's speech was full of old threats and was a sign that he was in the midst of a crisis. Rantisi had a message for all Israelis.

"You should know that we are the owners of this land," he told The Associated Press. "There will be no security or stability until we get our rights, until we liberate the land."

Criticism of the program was also fired from the dovish opposition, which supports dividing Israelis and Palestinians into two states, but through a process of negotiations, not one-sided imposition.

### Israel Accepts U.S. Demand of PA State in 2004

MENL 12/21/03

The Middle East Newline reports: "Israel has accepted a U.S. demand for a Palestinian state in the entire Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank in 2004.

Israeli officials said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon relayed his agreement in a series of talks with the Bush administration over the implementation of the so-called roadmap, an internationally-sponsored plan that envisioned an interim Palestinian state by the end of 2003 and an entity with permanent borders in 2005. They said Sharon has accepted a U.S. proposal for an interim Palestinian state in 2004 regardless of Palestinian Authority agreement to end the more than three-year-old war and dismantle Palestinian insurgency groups.

### Gadhafi Armed al-Qaida With Biochem Weapons

WND/G2 Bulletin 12/28/03

Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi provided al-Qaida with chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction before changing heart and agreeing to destroy his arms program, Joseph Farah's G2 Bulletin has learned.

Libyan intelligence chief Musa Kussa told U.S. and UK spy agencies that tens of thousands of weapons had been produced at 10 secret sites in the country. Kussa has named hundreds of what he termed "sleeper" al-Qaida agents in Britain and the U.S.

Gadhafi's dramatic turnaround has earned him a future meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush.

He was welcomed back onto the world stage with the understanding that his help to Osama bin Laden would never officially be mentioned.

Kussa escorted British officials to Libya's secret sites on what was described as "the best bus tour in intelligence history."

*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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

**Church – 2Tim3:1-5, 1Tim4:1,2**

**Knowledge growth – Dan 12:4**

**Final Generation – Mk 13:28-30**

**Russia – Ez 38. 39**

**One World Reliaion -- Revelation 13**



Not only has that new intelligence led to heightened terror alerts in the U.S. and Britain, but the agreement has prompted new threats on Gadhafi's life by al-Qaida terrorists.

In what one intelligence officer later called an "extraordinarily detailed debrief," Kussa revealed to U.S. and British intelligence:

- Al-Qaida obtained some of its weapons through a Brazilian arms dealer, Suedew Siew, travelling on an Australian passport. He used an alias, David Sunkar. Siew spoke fluent Arabic and carried a letter of credit from the Baltic Bank of Reconstruction and Development in Riga, Latvia.
- Other al-Qaida weapons purchasers were from the former Soviet Union.
- Some weapons were flown out under diplomatic seal to Balkan airports on Libyan airlines. From there, they were transported to Afghanistan.
- Other weapons were taken out of Libya through the Sudan and eventually by Arab dhows, small boats, to Yemen.
- Kussa said he had "reliable information" that al-Qaida had stockpiled chemical and biological weapons in the Balkans.

### **Assad: We Won't Scrap WMD Unless Israel Does**

Ha'aretz 1/6/04

Backing away from Damascus's customary denial of a weapons of mass destruction arsenal, Syrian President Bashar Assad has rejected U.S. and British demands for curbs on non-conventional arms, the Daily Telegraph newspaper reported Tuesday.

"It is not difficult to get most of these weapons anywhere in the world and they can be obtained at any time."

"We are a country which is [partly]

occupied and from time to time we are exposed to Israeli aggression," Assad said in an interview with the British paper, referring to Israel's presence on the Golan Heights. "It is natural for us to look for means to defend ourselves.

Assad said Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's surprise decision last month to scrap his nuclear and chemical weapons programs was a "correct step," calling on the international community to support the proposal that Syria presented to the United Nations last year for removing all WMD from the Middle East, including Israel's widely suspected nuclear stockpile.

"Unless this applies to all countries, we are wasting our time," Assad said.

The Syrian president also said Palestinian suicide bombings attacks had become "a reality we cannot control" and blamed them on "the Israeli killings, the Israeli occupations".

### **Syria Hiding Iraqi WMD**

WND 1/6/04

A relative of Syrian President Bashar Assad is hiding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in three locations in Syria, according to intelligence sources cited by an exiled opposition party.

The weapons were smuggled in large wooden crates and barrels by Zu Alhema al-Shaleesh, known for moving arms into Iraq in violation of U.N. resolutions and for sending recruits to fight coalition forces, said the U.S.-based Reform Party of Syria.

The party, based in Potomac, Md., regards itself as a secular body comprised of Syrians who want to see the country embrace 'real democratic and economic reforms.'

One weapons-cache location identified by the sources is a mountain tunnel near the village of al-Baidah in northwest Syria, the report said. The tunnel is known to house a branch of the Assad regime's national security apparatus.

Two other arms supplies are reported to be in west-central Syria. One is hidden at a factory operated by the Syrian Air Force, near the village of Tal Snan,

between the cities of Hama and Salmiyeh. The third location is tunnels beneath the small town of Shinshar, which belongs to the 661 battalion of the Syrian Air Force.

In an exclusive interview yesterday with the London Telegraph, Assad came close to admitting his country possessed stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

Assad told the London paper Syria rejects American and British demands for concessions on weapons of mass destruction, insisting Damascus is entitled to defend itself by acquiring its own chemical and biological deterrent

### **Sharon Pledges Interim Palestinian State in 2004**

MENL 1/8/04

TEL AVIV -- Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has pledged to the United States that he will help establish an interim Palestinian state in 2004 regardless of whether the Palestinian Authority ends the more than three-year-old war with the Jewish state and eliminates insurgency groups.

Israeli officials said Sharon relayed such a commitment to President George Bush in late 2003. Sharon, the officials said, agreed to a U.S. demand that the so-called roadmap for a Palestinian state be implemented over the next year without the fulfillment of a Palestinian commitment to destroy the infrastructure of such insurgency groups as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Fatah-sponsored Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

Under the Sharon commitment, officials said, Israel would dismantle outposts established by Jewish settlers in the West Bank over nearly the last three years. This would be followed by an Israeli military withdrawal from much of the West Bank and Gaza Strip during 2004 to facilitate the establishment of a Palestinian state with interim borders.

## *Russia/China*

### **Russia Deploys Strategic Nuclear Missiles**

AP 12/22/03

MOSCOW -- Russia has deployed another batch of state-of-the-art intercontinental nuclear missiles after a two-year break in the program caused by a funding shortage.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov inaugurated the new set of Topol-M missiles at the Tatischevo missile base in the central Saratov



*Bush and Putin have been on good terms in the past.*

region Sunday, describing them as a "21st-Century weapon" unrivaled in the world.

"This is the most advanced state-of-the-art missile in the world," Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said in remarks broadcast by Russian television stations Monday. "Only such weapons can ensure and guarantee our sovereignty and security and make any attempts to put military pressure on Russia absolutely senseless."

### **Popular Putin holds sway over Russians**

UPI 12/22/03

MOSCOW — During the two weeks since the Kremlin's resounding parliamentary election victory on Dec. 7, there has been considerable speculation that Russian President Vladimir Putin may seek to use his numerical superiority in the Duma to change the constitution to allow terms in office beyond the official two-consecutive limit.

Even after Mr. Putin made public statements signaling that he is pleased with the current constitution, the

conventional wisdom appears to be that he intends to stay in office for a very long time. However, he does not have to have the constitution amended to remain a powerful figure in Russian politics after he leaves office.

His popularity goes beyond politics. The Kremlin has gone to great lengths to present him as a representative and leader of the Russian people, not as a politician. This is Mr. Putin's most powerful card, and why he probably sees no need to change the constitution: His personal popularity can be translated into political authority without his becoming "president for life."

### **China Cracks Down on Unofficial Worship**

Washington Times 12/23/03

CHANGSHA, China (AP) -- The Christmas carol "Deck the Halls" blares over the speakers of the warehouse store as the toddler lunges for a plastic Santa. His mother grabs him by the seat of his pants and hauls him back.

It's a classic Christmas shopping moment in the unlikely setting of central China - though one that is becoming more common as Chinese... adopt the holiday as a festive time to shop.

But for members of China's unofficial Christian congregations, this is a season of fear as communist authorities crack down on unauthorized worship, detaining activists and bulldozing churches.

The contrast between the crackdown and the Christmas celebrations highlights Chinese authorities' desire to isolate religious dissenters while exploiting the holiday's commercial potential.

"The central policy of the Communist Party has never shied from good commercial opportunities," said Bob Fu, a U.S.-based monitor of the underground Chinese church.

China's government allows worship only in government-monitored churches, temples and mosques. But tens of millions of believers belong to

unauthorized churches, where clergy and members are frequently harassed and detained.

Official controls on religion stem from government unease that churches could act as a rallying point for opposition and threaten communist rule.

Christianity took root in China about 150 years ago, spread by missionaries accompanying European and American traders who set up colonial enclaves along its east coast. Communist leaders barred most religious activity following the 1949 revolution, ordering Chinese to cut ties with fellow believers abroad.

The rise of Christmas - as a secular bright spot during the bleak Chinese winter - has paralleled the rise of capitalist-style economic reforms.

In Shanghai, the country's commercial capital, a 70-foot-high Christmas tree stands on a stretch of tony Nanjing West Road that is dotted with boutiques for Gucci, Versace and other designer brands.

At Shanghai's imposing Cathedral of St. Ignatius - part of the officially authorized Roman Catholic Church - such feuds and commercialism seem far away.

Parishioners follow the Chinese-language Mass on big screen televisions, and the only ornaments are in a nativity scene. Christmas Day services are so popular that the church distributes tickets to limit the number of worshippers.

"We don't pay any attention to the rest of those things," said Li Ting, a middle-aged parishioner. "We just want to carry out our religion and celebrate this special time of year."

## *European Union*

### **Opposition to 'Core Europe'**

EU Observer 12/22/03

In the weeks following the failed Brussels EU Summit (12-13 December) the debate about the possible creation of a core Europe or a Europe of the six founding countries goes on.

The Spanish Prime Minister José Maria

Aznar, whose country together with Poland was blamed for blocking the deal on the EU Constitution at a recent summit, has robustly attacked France for revisiting the 'core Europe' idea.

Poland also opposes the idea which it sees as a threat. Warsaw thinks it risks being marginalised in the EU before it has even joined.

The 'core Europe' is seen by some as an alternative for European integration in the absence of a Constitution.

### **Europe Wants to Rival US as Military Superpower, Says EU Parliamentarian** CNS News 1/2/04

Jerusalem - European Union support for the Palestinian Authority against Israel is part of Europe's "hidden war" against the United States to become a world superpower, a European parliamentarian said in Jerusalem this week.

Washington has often backed Israel's position against the Palestinians, particularly in its war on terrorism over the last three years. The United States is also perceived by the Arab world to be pro-Israel.

President Bush has consistently refused to meet with PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, while Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has been a guest at the White House many times.

The EU has argued that it is a neutral observer. But Israel has rejected direct EU participation in the peace process fearing that what it considers the EU's pro-Palestinian bias would tip the scales in favor of the Palestinians.

The EU has backed the Palestinian Authority since the beginning of the Oslo process in 1992, becoming one of its main financial supporters and giving the PA hundreds of millions of euros (dollars) since then.

EU parliamentarian Ilka Schroeder charged that EU backing for the PA goes beyond support for the Palestinian cause and is actually part of a secret agenda to gain power in the world.

"For me it is obvious that the Middle East has become one of the most important fields of European military superpower ambitions,"

Schroeder said.

"The primary goal of the EU is the internationalization of the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict in order to underline the need for its own mediating role. ... The longer the conflict continues and the deeper it gets, the more evident is the incapability of the U.S. to moderate the peace process," Schroeder told diplomats and journalists at the Institute for Contemporary Affairs in Jerusalem this week.

"The need for a solution only exists as long as war continues. This is why the EU does not want the conflict to end before it gains [a] major role. And this is why the EU does not wish the PA to give up too early and why the EU is strengthening the PA.

"The EU is ... stirring up conflict that it supposedly wants to see resolved by financing one side. This is inherently inhuman purpose of EU humanitarian aid in the region. The Palestinians are playing the ugly role of cannon fodder of Europe's hidden war against the U.S.," Schroeder charged.

Despite the fact that more than 170 European parliamentarians have now joined Schroeder's initiative for an investigation, she said, it has "pretty much failed. European parliament does not intend to verify whether European taxpayers money could have been used to finance anti-Semitic, murderous attacks."

### **Big three plan regular meetings** EU Observer 1/5/04

Germany, France and the UK are planning to have regular meetings to strengthen their common position at the European level.

According to a German government spokesperson, the leaders of the three largest member states will meet before the EU Summit in March to assess how to proceed with the failed EU Constitution talks.

"The three countries would like first ideas to be presented under the Irish

presidency in March on how the discussion on the constitutional process can be followed up this year," the spokesman said on Monday (5 January).

"The goal, the desire of the German government, is that we have a result by the end of 2004 under the Dutch presidency and that we have a constitution."

However, Germany's Chancellor has already upped the stakes.

In an interview with German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Mr Schröder said that if a deal on the Constitution is not reached by the end of 2004, his country would have to consider taking part in a core group of EU nations.

## *United States*

### **Bush's advisers debating military force against Syria**

Knight-Ridder 1/12/04

WASHINGTON — Senior aides to President Bush are vigorously debating what to do about Syria as evidence mounts that the government in Damascus is stepping up support for the terror group Hezbollah and allowing anti-American insurgents to reach Iraq, according to U.S. officials.

Civilians in Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's office are pushing for military action and have drawn up plans for punitive airstrikes and cross-border incursions by U.S. forces, according to three officials.

But Bush's White House advisers, backed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department, are arguing against a new military venture with much of the U.S. military tied down in Iraq and a presidential-election year under way.

That view appears to have prevailed, for now.

Iran, using Syria as a conduit, has resumed deliveries of supplies to Hezbollah, the radical Lebanese-based Shiite group responsible for bombing the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in

Beirut in the 1980s, the senior official said. Hezbollah also clashes periodically with Israeli border forces.

Nor has Assad made good on a promise to Secretary of State Colin Powell last summer to close the Damascus offices of Palestinian terrorist groups, numerous officials said. While electricity and phone lines have been cut, the groups continue to operate using cellphones and generators.

Damascus also is resisting returning about \$1 billion in Iraqi assets that Saddam had moved into Syrian banks, officials said.

Rumsfeld charged that insurgents were continuing to cross unhindered from Syria into Iraq to attack U.S. troops, according to a U.S. official who has seen the document. He also suggested that Assad had colluded with the senior Shiite cleric in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali Hussein al Sistani, who has issued edicts complicating U.S. plans to organize a government.

## *Religion*

### **Religions urged to reconcile for peace**

Washington Times 12/23/03

JERUSALEM (UPI) — Two Jews slowly approached yellow armchairs on a platform in Jerusalem's Independence Park. The man, in a red gold-embroidered skullcap, bowed and placed a silver crown on one seat. The woman beside him placed a robe on the other.

Both bowed repeatedly as spectators from 70 countries as far apart as South Korea and the United States stood watching. Jerusalem police estimated the crowd gathered yesterday at 8,000 persons.

"The [Jews'] rejection of Jesus is restored and He is honored as king of peace, welcomed by the Jewish people and embraced and loved as the Lord," declared the Rev. Michael Jenkins, a minister of the Unification Church, representing the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP).

A Christian clergyman then placed two thick candles on a low table in front of the yellow chairs. "The prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is now recognized as God's prophet," Mr. Jenkins said. "We believe in Muhammad."

Two Muslims then gave a Jewish professor a golden menorah as a symbol of reconciliation with the Jews, and the Jews returned the gesture with a black robe. "The best of what God gave you, you want to give to the other," said Taj Hamad, a Muslim of Sudan, who donned the robe.

The ceremony was designed partly to convey the idea of the participants that Judaism, Christianity and Islam must reconcile to advance peace in the Middle East. "We should break down all boundaries that divide people, we should live together in mutual respect and cooperation," said the Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, chairman of the IIFWP and the Interreligious and International Peace Council. Mr. Kwak is chairman and president of News World Communications, which owns *The Washington Times* and *United Press International*.

### **Religious Restrictions or Religious Censorship?**

Fox News 12/23/03

LOS ANGELES — Burning the American flag is considered free speech; erecting crosses as roadside memorials is not. The Federal Communications Commission allows the "F-word" on television, but thanking God at a high school graduation is a no-no. And some schools freely dispense condoms to kids, but pencils that read "Jesus loves little children" were confiscated from a first-grade class in Virginia.

While some look at these examples and see a legitimate and necessary need to keep religion out of public life, others believe they are signs of religious censorship.

"War on Christianity" author David Limbaugh says the list of examples is long and is evidence of an undeclared cultural war on the religion.



*Pope receives gift of a crystal ball.*

But those on the other side of the battle, like Elliot Minceberg of *People for the American Way*, point to the Constitutional separation of church and state as the reason behind keeping religion out of public life.

The truth is, the Constitution doesn't explicitly discuss separating church and state. Instead, what it does say is that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...," which means that, unlike in England, the United States decided not to form an official national religion, nor can the government interfere with the practice of any religion.

In fact, in 1789, in the days after Congress passed the First Amendment, it declared a national day of prayer.

Still, the number of bans on public displays of Christianity continue to grow. And while those symbols may have little value alone, many Christians fear that taken as a whole, that kind of intolerance will wind up creating not freedom of religion but freedom from religion in this country.

### **Pope calls for a new world order**

*UN's failure to halt US war on Iraq leads to new initiative*  
*The Guardian* 1/4/04

Pope John Paul II launched one of the most important diplomatic initiatives of his long papacy yesterday

when he called for a new international order to replace the one that emerged from the second world war.

Though he did not offer a detailed plan, his words appeared to show he wanted the UN replaced in light of its failure to block the use of force by America in Iraq.

The Pope called last month for the reform of world institutions and deplored any failure to respect international law. But in a sermon during a mass at St Peter's in Rome yesterday, he went much further, referring to the UN as if it were already a part of the past.

"More than ever, we need a new international order that draws on the experience and results achieved in these years by the United Nations," he declared during a service to mark the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, celebrated on January 1.

He was flanked at the altar by two of his most senior international representatives:

the secretary of state, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, and the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Renato Martino, who outraged many Americans last month by expressing "pity" and "compassion" for the captured Saddam Hussein.

In his homily, the Pope said the new world order he wanted "would be able to provide solutions to the problems of today ... based on the dignity of human beings, an integrated development of society, solidarity between rich and poor nations, and on the sharing of resources

and the extraordinary results of scientific and technological progress."

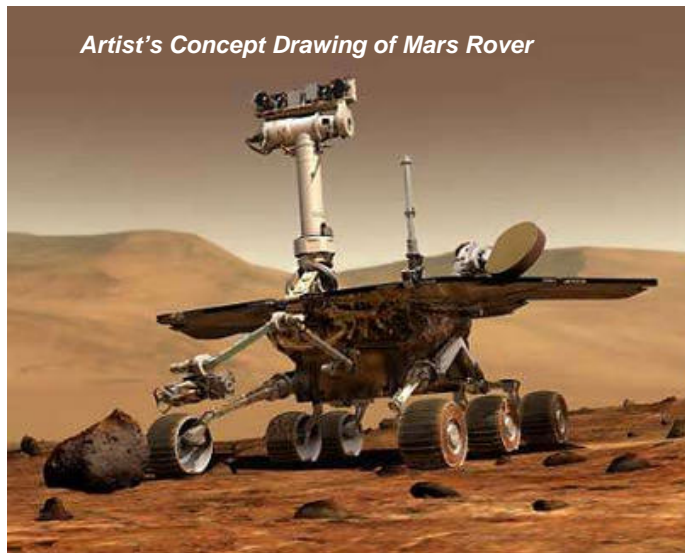
## Science

### Scientists Delay Mars Rover's First Drive

Fox News 1/7/04

PASADENA, Calif. — The air bags that cushioned the landing of the Mars rover are obstructing the vehicle's path and will delay the start of its trek across the planet's rust-colored surface, NASA said Wednesday.

The air bags gave Spirit the soft landing



it needed. It bounced about 25 times over roughly a half-mile after hitting the Martian surface, rising an estimated 26 feet after the first bounce, said Rob Manning, manager of the entry, descent and landing portion of the mission. Scientists picked Spirit's landing site inside Gusev Crater because they believed the depression once contained a brimming lake -- the type of place that may have been hospitable to life. If that was the case, Spirit should be seeing a flat plain rich in fine-grain sediment, said Ray Arvidson, the mission's deputy principal scientist.

