

Dear Friends,

Three years ago this week, our precious boy Gabe went home to be with the Lord. Many of you have experienced similar transitions. Some are dealing with them even now. Death is inevitable. As it has been said, "All men die, but not all truly live." If you have sincerely accepted Jesus – believing that He died and rose again to pay for your sins – you have no need to fear. I think Gabe knew his time was near and I am awed and thankful that he showed such an amazing confidence in his Savior that continues to humble me greatly. He knew a love that cast out fear. Life is stronger than death – resurrection is coming, friends. May God grace you with the peace that can only come with the heart-knowledge of His absolute trustworthiness and confounding goodness. May your lives radiate the living hope of redemption. Our Lord is faithful! God bless and keep you in Him, John and Darlene



Safely Home by Ron DiCianni
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*I fear no foe,
with thee at hand to bless;
ills have no weight,
and tears not bitterness.
Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still,
if thou abide with me.*

*Hold thou thy cross
before my closing eyes;
shine through the gloom
and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and
earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord,
abide with me.*

Henry F. Lyte 1847

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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!

HEALTHY FEAR, HOLY LOVE

"I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked..." These are the first words of man recorded after sin came into the world. Fear. Specifically, a fear of God.

The scriptures tell us much about the fear of God, but as you consider the 170+ mentions of it in the Old Testament you quickly come to the conclusion that the fundamental value of this fear is to cause one to avoid sin and to obey God's commands.

It is the 'natural' result of the sense of sin. Adam said that he was afraid because he was naked, but the word he used is different from that presented previously in Chapter Two of Genesis when it says of Adam and Eve that "...they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Although both words come from the same root, the latter seems to be an 'innocent' or 'compelled' nakedness as suggested in Job 1:21, Ecc 5:15 or Isa 20:3 whereas the term used when they hid from God reflects a lewd or shameful nakedness as in Deut 28:48 or Eze 16:22. It is interesting that the word used to describe the serpent as 'cunning or crafty' is also derived from this same root. This shameful nakedness springing ultimately from his association with the serpent made Adam afraid of God, however...

I submit that man was not created to fear God. But, as a consequence of sin, that is, his sin nature, he must now fear his Creator for his own good. In this life, in this world, the fear of God is:

- The beginning of wisdom – Psa 111:10
- Clean – Psa 19:9
- The beginning of Knowledge – Pro 1:7
- To hate evil – Pro 8:13
- That which prolongs life – Pro 10:27
- Strong confidence – Pro 14:26
- A fountain of life to depart from the snares of death – Pro 14:27
- The instruction of wisdom – Pro 15:33
- Riches, honor and life – Pro 22:4
- Quick understanding – Isa 11:3
- His treasure – Isa 33:6

Fear of God preserved Noah, the patriarchs, the saints of old and for a time, the Jewish nation. In this day and age, we have great need of this fear for sinful rebellion to God's ways has hardened many hearts. But there's a difference -- the alienated sinner fears God because of a sense of coming judgment – that is, a punishment. This can drive some like John Newton, the author of the hymn, Amazing Grace, to salvation.

The saved fear God not because of pending judgment – Christ took that for us – but simply because He is Holy, Almighty, Omniscient and a Father Whom we seek to please. We fear Him because of Who He is and what He can do. Oh, how we need the fear of God! Sinners and saints!

Yet there's something we need even more.

There's an interesting transition on this subject going from Old to New Testament. Rather than fear, love becomes far and away the

predominant theme. In fact, while the OT has 173 mentions of the fear of God, it only has 25 mentions of the love of God (that is, man loving God) or about a 7:1 ratio. Conversely, the NT has some 36 mentions of man loving of God and only 23 mentions of godly fear or about a 3:2 ratio the other way. Also, the OT speaks of fear or dread some 570 times and of love some 294 times. The NT speaks of love some 289 times and of fear some 156 times. The ratios are nearly exact in opposition.

Regarding relationship, man is by far, instructed to fear God in the OT and by far, instructed to love God in the New. This is fascinating! Of course, it's not all one way or the other in either section of the Bible. However, something important is being communicated by the emphasis of repetition if nothing else.

I will submit that although loving God has always been God's desire for man – see Deut 6:5 and 10:12 -- mankind has not been truly able to do so until the indwelling of the Holy Spirit came. Even father Abraham was tested with his son Isaac to verify that he feared God. (Gen 22:12) In fact the only saint in the OT to confess his unabashed love for God was David (Psa 18:1, 116:1?) of whom it was recorded that upon being anointed as the coming king the "...*Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.*" (1 Sam 16:13)

The principle part of the fruit of His Spirit is love (Gal 5:22) and the only way for man to love God with agape love is by the Spirit. Even dear Peter could not confess to loving

Christ with agape love (John 21:15-17) before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

And in heaven, there will be no more sin-based fear – none like Adam's. Rather, an ever-deepening love. Certainly, in heaven, there shall be no sin. With Satan and his demons cleaned out (who BTW are the only spiritual beings in scripture to reflect fear – see Luke 8:27-37) sin-fueled fear will be unknown. We will love and reverence God as our Father and Christ as our Husband and Savior. In Rev 15, we find the tribulation saints in heaven singing, "*Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?*" but it is quite evident that they are pointing to the effects of the coming seven last plagues upon those living on the earth. They follow with, "*For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.*" This will certainly be fulfilled in the millennium!

In Revelation 1, when John was caught up into heaven, beholding the Lord, Jesus said, "*Fear not.*"

In Rev 14:7, an angel circles the globe during the tribulation period announcing to the rebellious sinful world, "*Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come;*" Note, that there is no command to love God.

In Rev 19, a voice from the throne of God proclaims, "*Praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear Him, both small and great.*" Here it is probable that the address is to those in heaven (the *servants*) and as with the Rev 15

scripture above, those on earth (*you that fear Him*) for it seems that all the saved are, at this point, in heaven and God has just judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth.

John recorded, "*God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment (i.e. before God); because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*" (1 John 4:16-18)

In application to our day and age -- in Laodecia and the world around it -- sin is being systematically erased as a concept. Sexual aberrance is termed "gay", murder is called "choice", lying is referred to as "advertising" or "spin", gossip is offered as "news", violence, terror and perversity are dubbed "entertainment"... on and on it goes. You see, no more sense of sin – no more fear of God. No more fear of man, death, discomfort, failure, Satan ...ye-ikes! The world under control of Satan and the Antichrist will be a world of great deception – complete redefinition. As a consequence, it will be a world without moral restraint and the fear of God.

In the Revelation, we read -- "*...men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*" (Rev 16:9) "*...and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven*

because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." (Rev 16:11)

Absolutely, in this life we NEED the fear of God. Jesus said so. In speaking to his disciples, He said, "*...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" (Mat 10:28) It's the only way the 'old man' – the carnal nature – is kept in line. It's the only way we eschew evil. In truly fearing God, we have no fear of man or death.

We cannot afford to buy into the devil's redefinitions – he's a master deceiver. Reject sin? Yes. Reject the sense of sin? NO. And by that, I don't mean to accept the enemy's tirades of guilt and condemnation (Romans 8:1). Just go to the Lord with that sense of sin humbly -- in healthy fear and holy love. Give it to Him and be free.

For the day is coming when sin will be no more and love will fill all. In fact, I'm convinced that heaven worships our Almighty God in reverence fueled primarily by immense and ever expanding love.

And though we who are saved and thus indwelt by God's Spirit still need a healthy fear of God, we need as much if not more a genuine holy agape love for Him – THAT'S His heart's desire, that's the place of intimate fellowship, that's what He sent His Son to enable, that's what it means to "become a child of God" (John 1:12), that's what it means to be a bride and that's the fruit of His Spirit.

To paraphrase the old hymn, "*In life, no guilt. In death, no fear.*" Hallelujah!

World News

...with potential for prophetic importance

Middle East

Saudi peace initiative: Arab states to absorb refugees

Ha'artez 1/26/04

According to a new peace initiative being prepared by Arab states, Israel will negotiate a peace agreement with all the Arab states, and not just with the Palestinians, and Arab states would absorb Palestinian refugees.

The Kuwaiti newspaper Al Siyasa reported Saturday that the initiative, led by Saudi Arabia, would include "declarations of peace agreements between all Arab states," which will bring an end to the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. The states would declare a normalization in their ties with Israel, including the appointment of ambassadors.

The Arab states will demand that

Israel withdraw to its borders prior to the June 1967 war, in other words, to leave the Palestinian territories and withdraw from the Golan Heights.

The initiative also includes a "creative solution" for the problem of Palestinian refugees, which is one of the most serious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

According to the plan, some two million Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return to the new Palestinian state that would be established. More than two million others would be absorbed by other Arab states, and will be compensated for the suffering they had endured.

The Arab countries would open their gates to the refugees on the condition that their number won't exceed 10 percent of the existing population.

Under the deal, Iraq will also accept Palestinian refugees. Israel will not be

required to absorb any Palestinian refugees.

The new Arab initiative, led by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, was presented last week at the U.S. State Department. It would be brought for approval at a summit of Arab League leaders to be held in Tunisia in March.

Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and probably Qatar are the main supporters of the plan. The plan is based on a prior peace initiative presented by Saudi Arabia, and which approved in a summit held in Lebanon in 2002. According to the previous Saudi plan, Arab states would recognize Israel's right to exist in peace, and will hold ties with it if it withdraws to the pre-1967 war lines.

Arab Newspaper Says Al Qaeda Has Ukrainian Nukes

Reuters 2/9/04

CAIRO - A pan-Arab newspaper said Sunday that the al Qaeda organization led by Osama bin Laden bought tactical nuclear weapons from Ukraine in 1998 and is storing them in safe places for possible use.

There was no independent corroboration of the report, which appeared in the newspaper al-Hayat under an Islamabad dateline and cited sources close to al Qaeda, which the United States blames for the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The newspaper said al Qaeda bought the weapons in suitcases in a deal arranged when Ukrainian scientists visited the Afghan city of Kandahar in 1998. The city was then a stronghold of the Taliban movement, which was allied with al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda would use the weapons only inside the United States or if the group faced a "crushing blow" which threatened its existence, such as the use of nuclear or chemical weapons against its fighters, the paper quoted its sources as saying.

Ukraine inherited nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union but in 1994 it agreed to send 1,900 nuclear warheads to Russia and sign up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

After the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, a former Russian National Security Adviser, Alexander Lebed, said that up to 100 portable suitcase-sized bombs were unaccounted for. Moscow has denied such weapons existed.

Lebed said each one was equivalent to 1,000 tons of TNT and could kill as many as 100,000 people.

Al-Hayat did not say how many weapons



Israeli security fence under construction in Abu Dis

Christians urged to convert Muslims

The Australian 2/9/04

ISRAEL'S right-wing Tourism Minister Benny Elon today called today on fundamentalist Christian groups to convert Muslims to "combat terrorism" and bolster Israel.

"It would be better that these people are converted to Christianity, which is based on the Bible and recognises our rights (to the holy land)," the minister told public radio, emphasising that he was speaking in a personal capacity.

Elon, a member of the National Union party, said he only backed the conversion of "extremist Muslims such as terrorists who cry Allahu Akbar (God is great) as they kill".

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, 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 Religion -- Revelation 13

He said evangelical groups, with whom he had close links, should "spread the good word" in Israel on condition that they did not seek to convert Jews.

"In the past I believed that Islam was much closer to Judaism than Christianity, but I have changed my opinion," added Elon, who is a rabbi.

European Union

Palestine wants to become an EU member

EU Observer 2/9/04

Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath has said he hopes that Palestine could eventually become a member of the EU.

According to Spiegel Online, at the NATO conference in Munich Mr Shaath said that after peace is reached with Israel, the country should be taken on as an EU member.

"If Palestine could become a member of the European Union after a peace agreement, it would be a wonderful incentive".

Mediterranean free-trade zone

Mr Shaath was reacting to a suggestion by German foreign minister Joschka Fischer that the EU should have a free trade-zone with the whole of the Mediterranean area.

He also suggested that if the US is too occupied with campaigning for the presidential elections, then the EU and Russia should do more.

Mr Shaath's words come as Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) visits Dublin today (9 February) to try and muster European support against Israel's controversial West Bank separation barrier.

UK set to join Franco-German 'motor'

EU Observer 1/15/04

UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw wants Britain to link up with France and Germany in order to strengthen the 'motor' driving an enlarged EU.

In an interview with French daily Le

Figaro, Mr Straw said, "Associating the UK with the Franco-German motor seems logical as Europe passes from 15 to 25 members". He also hinted that, whilst France and Germany could provide leadership for a union of 15, they would need more power to lead an enlarged EU, which the UK could provide.

London's move to form a more concrete 'big three' at the heart of the EU may concern smaller EU states and some future member states because of worries that the union will become a 'directorate' led by the UK, France and Germany.

Many in France and Germany may also question whether the UK is ready for such a leadership role given, amongst other things, its reluctance to join the euro.

Enhanced co-operation at work

But Mr Straw's statement comes after several signs that the three powerful EU states are working more closely together.

London backed Paris and Berlin over the euro rules row and broadly followed the Franco-German line during the failed negotiations on the new EU Constitution.

More concretely, the big three led a successful diplomatic mission to Iran in an effort to stop its suspected nuclear weapons programme - sidestepping the EU's diplomatic chief Javier Solana.

Mr Straw said, "The EU's foreign policy is written on a piece of paper. Our mission to Iran gave substance to it".

In another sign of growing co-operation, Messers Chirac, Schröder and Blair - the leaders of France, Germany and Britain respectively - will meet next month to discuss ways of thrashing out the Constitution and other EU matters.

Europe needs America

In an effort to draw a line under past disagreements over foreign policy - notably during the Iraq crisis, Mr Straw

said that "the past is the past. What interests me now is that the situation in Iraq is improving".

However, in comments that may find less support in Paris or Berlin, he also emphasised, "Europe needs to work with the US because Europe on its own can do nothing. It's useless to pretend anything else".

He also stressed the role of member states in formulating foreign policy, saying, "It is simply not possible that Europe's foreign policy can be done only by the EU. There will always be a double action: that of the member states and that of the union ... our governments will never give up the final decision because at the root of it all is our defence".

Italy criticises core Europe idea

EU Observer 1/23/04

Italy has spoken out against the increasing efforts by France, Germany and the UK to co-ordinate their policies, fearing a "directoire" in the EU.

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini told the Italian Parliament on Thursday (22 January), "There cannot be a directoire, there cannot be a divisive nucleus which would run the risk of posing a threat to European integration".

His words come ahead of a meeting between the three countries on 18 February to agree positions before a general EU leaders' meeting in March.

Berlin, Paris and London started their public co-operation in earnest last year when an autumn meeting saw a breakthrough on defence issues; they also met in the run-up to the December Summit to co-ordinate their positions on the Constitution.

Similarly, last October saw the foreign ministers from all three countries take the lead in international affairs by traveling to Iran to ask it to accept more rigorous inspections of its nuclear programme.

Core Europe?

France and Germany have also been the most outspoken in calling for a core Europe if the failed talks on the Constitution - which collapsed during the December Summit - are not revived.

Italy, which is one of the six founding member states of the EU as well as being one of the 'large' member states has been left out - but it is not alone in expressing its concern.



Italy's Berlusconi welcomes the PA's newest PM Ahmed Qureia who is to meet with the Pope.

Ireland - which currently holds the EU Presidency - Portugal and Denmark have also spoken out against a core Europe.

But Berlin and Paris remain convinced of the importance of the Franco-German motor and the need for some member states to give direction to the Union.

Speaking to the Financial Times Deutschland, the German Europe minister Hans-Martin Bury said "Europe needs pioneers".

We are aiming to build bridges which all can use, continued the minister.

Also seeking to play down fears, French Europe minister Noëlle Lenoir said "It is not our intention to group national interests in Europe and thereby provoke a counter-movement".

A Franco-British-German alliance? How would it affect the balance of power?

Foreign Report 1/27/04

A little noted event took place in England last week. It was a discreet meeting between the British, French and German foreign ministers, hosted by the British at foreign secretary Jack Straw's country retreat. Nothing was published about the agenda, but the rest of the European capitals were buzzing with speculation the moment the announcement was made. Some said that, far from being a one-off meeting, the foreign ministers of the three are going to meet on a routine, semi-permanent basis from now on. Furthermore, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair are going to meet in Berlin on 18 February. With what in mind?

Italy and Spain against 'big three' core

EU Observer 2/2/04

The foreign ministers of Spain and Italy have both spoken out against the 'big three' - the UK, France and Germany - running EU affairs.

Speaking after a bilateral meeting late on Friday evening, Spanish foreign minister Ana Palacio said, "Europe needs to speak with many voices and a directorate would lead to tensions", according to Italian agency Apcom.

Echoing Spanish fears, Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini said, "the idea of a directorate worries us. It worries us, not just because we are a big country in Europe, but because we think that Europe should be a mechanism in which power is shared rather than concentrated".

Mr Frattini has expressed his concern about the issue before, but the support of Spain suggests that a growing body of opinion is against the idea of a core Europe led by France, Germany and the UK.

Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi has also expressed his concern. Asked about the meeting while visiting Slovenia, Mr Berlusconi said it is understandable that with enlargement some countries may decide to move forward with reinforced cooperation, but he warned against the emergence of "national egoisms".

The meeting between the three leaders will take place on 18 February.

Messers Blair, Chirac and Schröder will discuss, amongst other things, how to restart the failed Constitution talks and the European economy.

United States

Islamic Extremists Invade US, Join Sleeper Cells

Washington Times 2/10/04

Islamic radicals are being trained at terrorist camps in Pakistan and Kashmir as part of a conspiracy to send hundreds of operatives to 'sleeper cells' in the United States, according to U.S. and foreign officials.

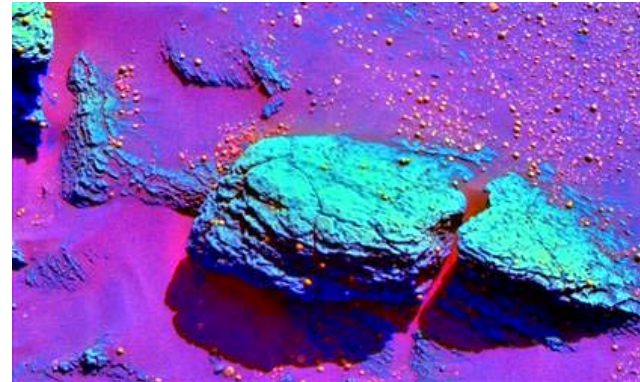
The intelligence and law-enforcement officials say dozens of Islamic extremists have already been routed through Europe to Muslim communities in the United States, based on secret intelligence data and information from terrorists and others detained by U.S. authorities.

A high-ranking foreign intelligence chief told The Washington Times in an interview last week that this clandestine but aggressive network of training camps 'represents a serious threat to the United States, one that cannot be ignored.' The official said as many as 400 terrorists have been and are being trained at camps in Pakistan and Kashmir.

U.S. intelligence officials said the camps, located in the remote regions of western Pakistan and in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, are financed in part by various terrorist networks, including al Qaeda, and by sources in Saudi Arabia.

Pakistani Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi denied in an interview that terrorist camps are operating in his country, including the remote regions of western Pakistan or in Kashmir.

'We have never accepted the allegation that there were training camps here, not now, not ever,' Mr. Qazi told The Times.



Infrared image taken by Mars rover – "Stone Mountain".

'These allegations have persisted despite our repeated denials. I assure you there is absolutely no reason to believe that any terrorist camps exist in Pakistan or Kashmir.'

Al Qaeda sleeper cells are believed to be operating in 40 states, according to the FBI and other federal authorities, awaiting orders and funding for new attacks in the United States. Financed in part by millions of dollars solicited by an extensive network of bogus charities and foundations, the cells use Muslim communities as cover and places to raise cash and recruit sympathizers

Science/Technology

PIG-HUMAN CHIMERAS CONTAIN CELL SURPRISE

New Scientist 1/14/04

Pigs grown from fetuses into which human stem cells were injected have surprised scientists by having cells in which the DNA from the two species is mixed at the most intimate level.

It is the first time such fused cells have been seen in living creatures. The discovery could have serious implications for xeno-transplantation - the use of animal tissue and organs in humans - and even the origin of diseases such as HIV.

The adult pigs that had received

human stem cells as fetuses were found to have pig cells, human cells and the hybrid cells in their blood and organs.

'What we found was completely unexpected. We found that the human and pig cells had totally fused in the animals' bodies,' said Jeffrey Platt, director of the Mayo Clinic

Transplantation Biology Program.

The hybrid cells had both human and pig surface markers. But, most surprisingly, the hybrid cell nuclei were found to have chromosomal DNA that contained both human and pig genes. The researchers found that about 60 per cent of the animals' non-pig cells were hybrids, with the remainder being fully human.

Importantly, the team also found that porcine endogenous retrovirus (PERV), which is present in almost all pigs, was also present in the hybrid cells. Previous laboratory work has shown that while PERVs in pig cells cannot infect human cells, those in hybrid cells can. The discovery therefore suggests a serious potential problem for xeno-transplantation.

The work also suggests a possible route of infection for other viruses that have crossed from animals to humans.

Religion

Megachurches Making People Feel Good; Churches Pleasing Man, Not God

FoxNews 2/3/04

Ask Americans what Sundays are for, and many are likely to give you one of two answers: watching sports or going to church. These days, a growing number of "megachurches" satisfy both camps, providing much entertainment and an uplifting message to crowds so big they rival the attendance at sporting events. There are currently 842 megachurches -- non-Catholic churches with at least 2,000 weekly attendants -- that host an excess of 3 million people on any given Sunday, according to the research group Church Growth Today.

These massive churches attract churchgoers by the thousands with celebratory services that tout contemporary or alternative music, television screens and sermons that aren't "churchy," according to the pastor of the nation's largest church.

But critics explain that the sin-free pep rallies don't encourage the much needed conviction of sin and repentance, don't encourage true inner spiritual change or personal transformations, and reflection, keystones of religion.

Instead of a pulpit, pews and a group of familiar faces found at traditional community churches, megachurches can resemble a campus. "They are so large you can select the activity that you like," said Ken Woodward, Newsweek's contributing editor who covers religion. "If you want to lose weight Jesus' way, you can join the weight-loss program or join a basketball team ... These churches have so many people they don't just sponsor a team, they sponsor a league. "Not everybody can afford to join a country club."

At the biggest church in the country, Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, Pastor Joel Osteen preaches to some 25,000 people each week -- and sin is

not on the menu. Osteen said his goal is to "give people a boost for the week." "I think for years there's been a lot of hellfire and damnation. You go to church to figure out what you're doing wrong and you leave feeling bad like you're not going to make it," Osteen said. "We believe in focusing on the goodness of God."

Critics explain that megachurches' party-like atmosphere takes the true holiness and spirituality out of Sunday services. "It tends to be a guilt-free, sin-free environment," said Woodward. "These places are a bit too bubbly. ... It's very chummy with God."

Richard Wise, a 20-year member of the small, traditional Wesley United Methodist Church in Union City, Ind., said he finds this type of service perplexing. "Sin is in life and sin is everywhere, we are all sinners," he said. "If you just leave church feeling good you are missing the whole point." Wise's church draws about 150 people for Sunday service and he said the size pays off with close-knit relationships and a feeling of community. "We call on a lot of individuals from our church because we know them," he said. "We visit them when they are sick or take communion or flowers to them."

Osteen defends Lakewood's ways, saying the lively and inclusive atmosphere is attracting a whole new generation of parishioners. "I have parents tell me all the time that their kids will sit down and watch us on TV or that they want to come to the service because it's simple and something they can understand," he said. Some Lakewood qualities that appeal to a younger set are "the best lighting and the best sound system," a youth ministry program that attracts hundreds, and every service kicks off with 30 minutes of upbeat contemporary music played by a live band, instead of the hymns enjoyed and sung for so long. "It's not a churchy feel," Osteen, 40, said. "We

don't have crosses up there. We believe in all that, but I like to take the barriers down that have kept people from coming. A lot of people who come now are people that haven't been to church in 20 to 30 years."

The old-fashioned seriousness of traditional churches for thousands of years, scared many parishioners away, Osteen said, but the warm hug delivered by megachurches like his is bringing them back. "I think it's a place of life and victory,"

Lakewood's Osteen said. "They want to be encouraged and uplifted." But Woodward said this approach to religion isn't helping parishioners. "If I'm already a pretty good guy, why do I have to go to church to hear that?" he asked.

"Sin really has disappeared from the pulpit. It's too much of a downer, I'm afraid." Wise also doesn't agree with the idea of hiding religious ways in church in order to boost numbers. "I guess I kind of thought that was what church was about," he said. "I don't see how you could put God first in your life if all you're going to do is go to church and feel good about being there. I enjoy good music and a good sermon, but what did you really get out of the message?"

Jim Caviezel Talks About Playing Christ in 'The Passion'

CBN.com 2/10/04

Jim Caviezel is a respectable actor with a respectable career. *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Pay It Forward*, and *Angel Eyes* are just a few of his films. But his most recent role may jeopardize his respectability -- Jim plays Jesus in Mel Gibson's controversial film, *The Passion of the Christ*.

In his first television interview since the filming of *The Passion*, Jim went to great

depths to help *700 Club* producer Scott Ross understand what it means to play the crucified Savior.

SCOTT ROSS: How old were you when you played in the film?

JIM CAVIEZEL: It is interesting. The day after I accepted the role, I got a phone call from Mel. He said, 'Hi, this is Mel.' 'Mel who?' For some reason, Mel Gibson, Tom Cruise -- that's how I know them. I don't know them by just first name. He said, 'Hey, Jim, this is Mel.'

He started talking about this movie and started talking me out of the role.

SCOTT ROSS: Talking you out of it? This is after he offered it to you?

JIM CAVIEZEL:

The next day,

he said, 'I want you to be aware of what you are going to go through. You may never work again.' He said that several times publicly. I told him, 'Mel, this is what I believe. We all have a cross to carry. I have to carry my own cross. If we don't carry our crosses, we are going to be crushed under the weight of it. So let's go and do it.' And we began with the film.

SCOTT ROSS: How old were you?

JIM CAVIEZEL: I told Mel, 'It is eerie. My initials are J.C. and I am 33 years old.' That was it.

SCOTT ROSS: What's your initial gut response to it?

JIM CAVIEZEL: I was half exhilarated and half terrified, honestly. I felt that the whole way through.

SCOTT ROSS: What did you bring to it, not just as an actor, but how do you prepare to play the Son of God?

JIM CAVIEZEL: It's a great question. How do you prepare? By fire. Looking back, there were two words, 'unquenchable fire.' What was hard was



the physical, the suffering. Makeup time started from 2 a.m. and it went till 10 a.m. -- that alone right there, the boredom, not just the boredom, but the uncomfortable position. You're never sitting down. After day in and day out of this, plus the hypothermia, plus I had a separated shoulder, it forced me to pray. I had to go to a place of something really deep because I was going crazy. **SCOTT ROSS:** You said you went into prayer. Is that something you believed anyway prior to the part? You are a believer?

JIM CAVIEZEL: Well, there's no question that I believe. I think many of your viewers know what I'm talking about. Why would you subject yourself to persecution unless you know that that's the truth? And let me tell you, I was on that cross. Many people who looked up there, I may be playing Christ, but a lot of times I felt like Satan. I had obscenities wanting to come out of me. It was so cold it was like knives coming through me. I had hypothermia. I don't know whether you've dealt with that, but one day of hypothermia I was so cold I could barely get the lines out. My mouth was shaking uncontrollably. My arms and legs went numb. I was suffocating on that cross.

SCOTT ROSS: The whipping and the scourging are hard to watch because that goes on for so long. I was literally counting the lashes. I watched people in the theatre in front of me, a small viewing theatre, turn their faces away because they couldn't continue to look.

JIM CAVIEZEL: You said something very critical there: People turn their eyes away when they see it, and what they're seeing is their own sin. It is not wanting to deal, at times, with their own sin. It's that hard to look at. But this film forces you to see yourself, not the way you want to see yourself, but as God sees you. There are no passive onlookers here.

SCOTT ROSS: What part of this has the greatest affect on you? Is it possible to isolate a moment or time?

JIM CAVIEZEL: Oh boy, I'll be honest with you, there are things that I went through that I can't even talk about. I felt like a great presence came within me at times when we were filming. This prayer that came from me was, 'I don't want people to see me. I just want them to see Jesus. And through that conversions will happen.' That's what I wanted more than anything, that people would have a visceral effect to finally make a decision whether to follow Him or not.

SCOTT ROSS: And that's the only choice; either you do or you don't. You're either for Me, or you're against Me.

JIM CAVIEZEL: Throughout this, when people put on Christ when they go outside, that is all nonbelievers see. And we're going to have people reject it, but there are others who make a living at being Christian. This is serious because they know the Body of Christ. They know what that is. And for them, it's even more serious. Many of our Jewish brothers are terrified. I have people come up to me and say, 'Jim,' -- they're Jewish -- 'some of the e-mails, have you read these things? This is frightening. I didn't kill Christ.' I say, 'No, the people standing before Christ and Pilate during the judgment scene do not condemn an entire race for the death of Christ anymore than the actions of Mussolini condemn all Italians or the heinous crimes of Stalin condemn all Russians. We are all culpable in the death of Christ. My sins, your sins put Him on that cross.' I bring this up because it's very important to address. I want my Jewish brothers to see this film. I want people in my own faith who think it's anti-Semitic to see this film. I want non-religious people to see this film. This film does not play the blame game at all. We're all culpable in the death of Christ.

Rest and Redemption

Genesis 2:1-14

“Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them were finished.”

How wonderful to know that God is faithful to finish His work! Just as He was determined and faithful to complete His new creation, He is absolutely trustworthy regarding every life that has been turned over to Him. Our lives were “tohu va bohu” (Gen 1:2) – empty and meaningless, void and vain. But, as we choose to surrender our will to His, we are ourselves transformed and filled with new life. The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, . . . being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”* (Phi 1:3-6) And to the Corinthian believers, he wrote, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* (2 Cor 5:17)

This is so splendid because the faithfulness of God is as absolute as His goodness. This in stark contrast to the entire history of man; you see, my tendency, along with most of yours, is to flake-out, to take the easy route and give up when the task seems impossibly demanding. Now, as I grow in the Lord, becoming more and more aware of my own wretchedness apart from, I'm

increasingly amazed that He doesn't give up on me. I'm thrilled that He is committed to completing the task of my redemption! Aren't you?

“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

It's important to note that this principle of the “shabat”, the Sabbath, predated the Law of Moses. In other words, it's not something about which you can say, “Oh, I'm a Christian, and I'm not bound by the Law. I don't need to be concerned about this Sabbath deal. It was just for the Jews of the Old Testament times.” It's not a matter of being 'bound'; it's a matter of wisdom. God is not bound by anything yet He chose to take a day of rest as an example. We should note that in all of His creation story there are only two things which God blessed – man and the Sabbath.

Now, why would God rest? He can't get tired – He's omnipotent. Let me suggest the He made Himself a 'visual aid' because of the Sabbath's significance relevant to the central figure in all scripture – Christ. It foreshadows two things – the reign of Christ in the heart of every true believer and His millennial reign on earth.

The former requires ceasing from our own 'good' works done in a desperate attempt to create our own paradise – to earn our salvation or merit God's blessing.

In chapter one, all that God made was “very good”; then He planted a garden paradise. After it was put in place, He planted man in it, telling him simply to tend it. In other words, man never earned or merited Eden. He never had to work for it; he simply worked in it. The same is true concerning our salvation – it’s grace – the unearned, unmerited gift from God. We don’t work for it either; we just work in it.

The latter rest will be a time in which the world ceases its stormy rebellion. Just as Christ’s Lordship in our hearts means rest (Mat 11:28, 29), so the creation will have rest from its groaning (Rom 8:22) for a thousand years during the millennium.

“This is the history (or generations) of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens...”

Here, we begin a recap from a different angle so to speak – the scripture focuses in on man, the garden of Eden and the manifested heart of God -- wanting man to know the joy of intimate fellowship with Him.

“...before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.”

Before man came on the scene, before the plants, the atmosphere of the earth was moist and misty. There was no rain – just a gentle

mist that watered the whole earth. Now, this is fascinating from an agricultural and scientific view, but more importantly, it pictures the pervasive presence of the Lord’s Word. As such, it’s reminiscent of Isa 55:10, 11 – *“For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, ... so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;”* And, it foreshadows God’s plan – *“Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts... they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord...”* (Jer 31:31-34) and, *“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 11:9) The whole earth shall be filled with the intimate, heartwarming, soul-watering knowledge of the Lord!

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

You know, you’re pretty disgusting. Yes, that’s right – I mean you. And me too! We can be so ‘dusty’ sometimes, that is carnal and ‘earthy’ so to speak. How thankful we should be that, *“He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”* (Psa 103:14) And that should also free us up in a sense – oh, not to go

and ‘flesh-out’, but rather to give our family in the Lord ‘space’ if you know what I mean. We don’t have to go around sin-sniffing, being critical and getting all up tight by their ‘dustiness’. What’s more, when the devil tells us, “You’re so earthy and sinful!” We can reply, “You don’t know the half of it – it’s worse than your accusation, but that just amplifies our God’s graciousness.” He knows our dustiness and still He loves us individually. He died to cleanse us from all of it. We’ve got an eternal, loving relationship with Him because of that!

“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there He put the man whom He had formed.”

This is great because it exemplifies our Father’s heart again. Adam was resting, he was not on some quest, or tracking down his destiny, yet God put him in paradise. How can we doubt the goodness of God? There was no union contract or binding arbitration on Him – it was His desire and His idea to make this perfect place and then to pop Adam down in the midst of it. In like manner, if we’ll follow Him, he will put us in our perfect place.

Now, you might say, “That’s not my experience! I’ve tried to follow God’s leading and look where I am! What a mess!” or, “If you only knew my wife or my husband or my boss or ...”

OK, if you’ve turned left and you knew God said, “Go right” so to speak, and you find yourself in a precarious position, then you can be comforted in knowing that although it’s surprising to you, it’s not to God. But you can also rest assured that where ever you are, you can still turn to Him and find yourself back on

track. Jonah the prophet was such a man.

God told him to ‘go right’ and speak a warning message to the people of Ninevah. But Jonah headed left to Joppa just as fast as he could. There, he hitched a ride to the furthest part of the earth he knew about – it wasn’t just ‘left’ but ‘left-field’, in fact the ‘left field bleachers’! But God is faithful with His children.

You know the story – Jonah went down to Joppa, then down to the ship, then down into the hold of the ship, then down into the stormy sea as the crew threw him overboard, and finally down into the belly of the great fish. Jonah thought he was as far from God as any man could be. Nevertheless, the Bible says, *“the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.”* You see, even as he was trying to hide from God, Father had prepared his own ‘Eden’ – his own perfect place, that is, the perfect place for Jonah, the place Jonah needed to be.

It was there amongst the gastric juices that Jonah discovered the salvation of God and that God was committed to him even in spite of his rebellion. He said, *“Out of the belly of Sheol (the grave) I cried, and You heard my voice.”* So Jonah, probably bleached and putrid, cried out to the Lord and up and out he went – vomited onto the beach. Though we may stray, our God loves us and nothing in all of creation is stronger than His gracious love.

How much better, though, to be obedient to the voice of the Lord. There’s a wonderful peace of mind when you’re trusting that where you

are is where you're meant to be; even if it doesn't seem like 'Club Med', your 'garden' is the perfect place for YOU.

“And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Isn't it interesting that He placed both of these important trees right in the middle of the garden. One vital, one lethal. When the serpent lured Eve, it wasn't as if she had gone hiking into some obscure region of the paradise. To do good or to do evil is always in close proximity. As a matter of fact, we can't really consider her as 'out of bounds' in the sense of, "Eve, what are you doing hanging around that tree?!"

You see, based upon what God said in Gen 3:22, eating of the Tree of Life was necessary for eternal life. You could say that although Adam was designed for eternity, the design included a specification – eating of the Tree of Life. Whether this was a one time requirement or a periodic one we don't know, but we can be assured that in order to keep on living, at some point, Adam and Eve had to come to the Tree of Life and consequently into the locale of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The old adage, love demands a choice, is surely true, and what's more, LIFE demands a choice. Everyone must, at some point, come to the Tree of Life – it is also in the immediate proximity of the Tree of Death. In fact, they are one in the same -- found on Calvary. If

you will eat of the 'bloody' fruit of the Tree of Life, you will live – it is the blood of Christ (see John 6:54) *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”* (1Pet 2:24)

But if you listen to the serpent, you'll eat the wrong fruit – doubting God's goodness and love. You will reject God's provision for life and eat death. Everyone must at some point make a choice at the Tree. Even as Moses spoke before Israel, *“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”* (Deut 30:19)

“Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.”

The number four in scripture signifies the world – you have the four seasons, the four corners of the earth, the four winds and such. Here, the river that watered the paradise of Eden also flowed out and watered the world around it. In like manner, the water of God's Word (Eph 5:26) that blesses the hearts of those in paradise (the saved) is intended also to overflow into the world around. The following four rivers will illustrate for us how God has ordained for that to happen.

“The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which runs through the whole land of Havilah where there is gold.

And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there.”

In the Bible, names are very important. Unlike today, where we name someone or something with a name that just sounds nice, these people and places were named either descriptively or prophetically. Names were powerful and meaningful. And wouldn't you know it --in the names of these rivers, we find a picture of our Savior.

The first is Pishon which means a “great effusion”, that is, a fountain or great overflowing. Consider that Jesus said, *“He who believes in Me as the scripture has said, out of his heart (his garden) will flow rivers (literally torrents or great effusions) of living water.”* (John 7:38) In addition, Havilah means “one that suffers pain”. How appropriate that is when you consider that this is exactly what the love and life of Christ does – it overflows from the heart of the believer and winds its way throughout the places of pain and suffering all around. Christ Himself also suffered more than we can know, as did the Father, to make this fountain possible.

I like the fact that there is gold in those places – *good* gold (see 1 Pet 1:7). For it is in our deepest difficulties that we discover the treasures of faith, hope and trust in our God – eternal riches.

“The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes throughout the whole land of Cush.”

Now, Gihon has two meanings and they are both important – first, a “great eruption of waters” and then “the valley of grace”. Where in the

life of Christ do we witness a great eruption or breaking out of water and does it have anything to do with grace?

Back to the Tree. If we look to the cross, we find the answer. There, as He hung, now dead, John the apostle recorded: *“Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”* (John 19:32-34) In piercing His pericardium swollen with water, it erupted. We know that in times of extreme grief and sorrow, this sack around the heart can fill with fluid. It has been said quite accurately that although Christ did not die from a broken heart, He died with one.

Here is the eruption that was and is the perfect expression of God's grace. That flow finds its way to the low places, the valleys in this world – that's where grace is needed. In fact, it flows through Cush. Cush means “blackness”. The man named Cush was the father of Nimrod who became the legendary rebel against God and initiated what many scholars believe to be the original post-diluvian false religious system. Oh, how appropriate when you consider the scripture, *“For where iniquity abounds, there does grace much more abound.”* (Rom 5:20)

“The name of the third river is Hiddekel (or Tigris); it is the one which borders the east of Assyria (or Asshur).”

Hiddekel means a “sharp voice” and indeed, Christ’s voice, though He did not shout, was sharp as a sword for He spoke the Word of God. In fact, He IS the Word of God. It was said of Him prophetically, *“Listen, O coastlands, to Me and take heed, you peoples from afar!”* (The Tigris is one of the longest rivers in the world.) *The Lord has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.”* (Isa 49:1,2)

In concert, Hebrews says, *“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 the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* (Heb 4:12)

That this river borders Assyria is poignant, for Assyria means “one who is happy and walks on prosperously”. You see, as we take heed to the Word of God and make it the border or parameter-provider of our life, we grow into the abundant spiritual life God desires for us.

“The fourth river is the Euphrates.”

Now, Euphrates has two meanings as well – “fertilizing” and “fruitful”. Unlike today where we have all sorts of chemicals to mix into soil, fertilizing was historically the result of mixing with the soil some animal or plant life that had died or some other biological refuse. The result, of course, was increased fruitfulness.

Again, this is the Lord Jesus. He was rejected by His own people –

refuse, if you would, and He died, was buried and indeed ‘fertilized’ the Kingdom soil. The heart-soil in which He planted the seed of His Words. And He has indeed brought forth fruit – great fruitfulness – eternal life.

This river is the only one which has no described course and that’s perfect for Christ died for the sins of the whole world. The gift of eternal life is for anyone who will receive it. It’s not limited to any people or nation. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

May God bless you as you consider the illuminating pictures He has placed within His Word. What a comfort to see that Christ’s sacrifice was not a ‘fix’ for an unforeseen disaster. God knows what He’s doing – always did, always does, always will. This little section might be called His design for rest and redemption.

Was man’s fall a surprise to God? No way. Neither is yours. But rest and redemption are ever found in Him. Let His grace flow into the valley of your life. Open your heart to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and eat the fruit of His Tree of Life. Eternal life is found at the cross of Calvary. Believe in the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus. It’s not too late.

The Amazing Accuracy of Ezekiel

By Jack Kinsella

“And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates. . . (Ezekiel 38:11)

Some two hundred years after the political subdivision called the ‘Kingdom of Israel’ was destroyed by Sargon II, the prophet Ezekiel from the Southern Kingdom of Judah wrote from exile in Babylon.

When Sargon destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, he did what conquerors did in those days; he transplanted the population of Israel to elsewhere in the Assyrian Empire, and then relocated elements of other subjugated people in their place.

The purpose of this was to keep the populations docile. A people without a land have little to fight for. After a generation or two, they assimilate, and the new land becomes their land.

This is how the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were lost to history, and from the beginning of the 7th century BC, there was no place left in the world called Israel.

The surviving kingdom of Judah, known as Jews, was captured and partially assimilated by the Babylonians in the mid 5th century BC. They survived their captivity in Babylon, and later, the Medo-Persians, only because they were allowed to return to their own land by Artaxerxes.

In Ezekiel’s day, there was no place called ‘Israel’, had not BEEN a place called ‘Israel’ for 150 years, would not

be another place called ‘Israel’ for 2,520 years, and besides, Ezekiel was a Jew from Judah.

But Ezekiel’s prophetic writings are filled with references to a future place called ‘Israel’, one that he describes as “the people that are gathered out of the nations” (38:12) and then further describes as “my people of Israel” (38:18)

Ezekiel wrote of Israel’s regathering in the last days. In Ezekiel 37, the prophet is shown a valley of dry bones. Those dry bones, the Lord explains, are the “whole house of Israel” (37:11) that the Lord says would be restored in the last days.

Six hundred years BEFORE the remaining Jews of Israel were scattered by the Romans, the Lord told Ezekiel of their regathering in the last days.

“Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” (Ezekiel 37:21-22)

The fulfillment of this prophecy could not be more obvious. The Jews of the Diaspora have indeed ‘come from among the heathen’ from ‘every side’ and returned to the Promised Land.

In 1897, the first Zionist Congress petitioned the British Crown to allow the ingathering Jews to set up a state in what was the British colony of Uganda. At the time, Palestine

was in the hands of the Muslim Ottoman Empire. The British told them they should ask the Ottomans to let them have their historical homeland and turned the Uganda request down.

Ezekiel prophesied that the regathering of Israel would be on their own land, "mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations" (38:8)

Abba Ebban, one of Israel's Founding Fathers, wrote in his book, 'Personal Witness' that, right up until the last moment before issuing their 1948 Declaration of Statehood, they were quibbling about what to name the new Jewish State.

Some liked 'Zion' others 'Judea' -- and it was only at the last minute, AFTER ben-Gurion had already requested the new state be recognized by Washington, that they decided on the name 'Israel'.

Ezekiel foretold all this two and one half millennia before it happened. He said his prophecy was for "the latter days." (38:16)

It is worth noting again that building moats and walls to protect against invaders was a common strategic option in Ezekiel's day. For that reason, Ezekiel's reference to a 'land of unwallled villages' was generally interpreted as a metaphor for peace, rather than a literal condition. The only modern equivalent would have been the Berlin Wall, but it was built to keep people from escaping, not to defend against invasion.

But Ezekiel's walls are clearly defensive -- the whole 38th chapter is about a war of invasion against Israel. And today, in 2004, 2500

years after Ezekiel foretold it, and nearly sixty years after Israel's restoration, the Israelis are building a defensive wall around their country.

It is an iron-clad certainty that the wall will be built -- it is already partially completed and is proving its worth. Areas protected by the wall are already experiencing fewer terrorist attacks. It is equally certain that the wall will come down.

The entire world community opposes it (although they are having a hard time explaining why) and Israel is already preparing to mount its defense at an upcoming trial before the World Court in The Hague to justify its continuation.

There will be no way the World Court can force the destruction of the wall without some kind of peace guarantee the Israelis can accept and the European diplomatic corps is hard at work trying to come up with one. So far, they've had little success, but it is not from lack of trying.

The wall is becoming a focal point of world attention, to the exclusion of the terrorism that created it, and it can only have one of two outcomes. Either the wall comes down before it is finished, or it will come down at some point in the future. There is no way the world community will learn to live with the status quo.

Once the wall is completed, the Palestinians will have their defacto state, Israel will retain the high ground and more defensible borders, and the Palestinians will have to achieve statehood the old-

fashioned way. By building one. You know, like the Israelis did.

That will never be acceptable to the world community. They were the ones who created the Palestinians in the first place, and having created a people, it is incumbent upon them to provide them with a state.

Since the Israelis are not cooperating in giving up theirs, the plan is to create one beside Israel and force Israel to support it by providing jobs to the Palestinians.

Palestine had no independent status during the Ottoman Empire. As European powers expanded their foothold in the region and as Zionism brought Jewish immigrants to their ancestral homeland, no one could define Palestine's contours. A picture emerged only in the early 1920s under the British Mandate, which extended from the Jordan River to the sea, from the upper Galilee to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The 1948 war created a de facto partition, but no Palestinian state. Jordan took the West Bank, and Egypt grabbed the Gaza Strip, filled with refugees from Israeli areas that now included 78 percent of the British Mandate territory.

When Israel captured the Egyptian Gaza and Jordanian West Bank in 1967, the 'Palestinian people' were created out of the displaced Arabs.

The prophet Daniel, and both Paul and John foretell a peace agreement with Israel that kicks off the Tribulation Period. Daniel says that a leader of the revived Roman Empire confirms a peace covenant between Israel and her enemies, which he breaks halfway through.

In context, one could assume the covenant involves a mutual defense

agreement, since, after the walls come down, Ezekiel says a Russian-led Islamic alliance launches a sneak invasion against Israel. Ezekiel 38:13 says Israel's 'allies' launch what amounts to little more than a weak diplomatic objection.

The literal fulfillment of prophecies penned tens of centuries ago continue to unfold in our generation. Right down to details such as Israel's Tribulation status as a 'land of unwallled villages'.

The same Guiding Hand responsible for Ezekiel's unwavering accuracy and attention to detail also guided those prophecies that yet remain to be fulfilled. Don't let anybody steal away your excitement! We are that special, chosen generation who 'shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled.'

You are not grasping at straws, or following vague and ambiguous prophecies that can be explained away by calling them 'interpretations.' This is the real thing.

"And when these things BEGIN to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)
Excerpted from the Omega Letter Daily Intelligence Digest Vol: 29 Issue: 8.

A 'Heavenly Minded' reminder: "...you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" Romans 8:15