

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

Heavenly Minded

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In this issue...

Good Shepherd Princes, Powers and Persia Open Book

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Dear One,

As the result of personal tragedy, our hearts so often cry out to God, "Why?" and, "Couldn't there be another way, Lord?" I wrestled with the Lord like this last night and then He 'touched my hip' with this thought – 'My own Son cried out in anguish, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me". I understood that sometimes, even though it is overwhelmingly tragic, indescribably sorrowful, God wants us to continue to trust in His final outcome, one we may or may not see in this life. Jesus continued that day to place his trust in our heavenly Father despite what He was suffering and what He knew loomed ahead; and we know how it worked out – resurrection, redemption, reconciliation.

This life can seem so terrible and just plain wrong sometimes, but let me encourage those of you who need it to give God time and trust. Don't stop doing what's right even when you've been wronged. The Lord has been down that road as well. He knows how it hurts, but He is there with you. He will see you through. I absolutely know this to be true.

In Christ's Love, John and Darlene

Oh what I would do to have
The kind of faith it takes
To climb out of this boat and then
on to the crashing waves
To step out of my comfort zone
Into the realm of the unknown where
Jesus is
And He's holding out His hand
But the waves are calling out my name
And they laugh at me
Reminding me of all the times
I've tried before and failed
The waves they keep on telling me
Time and time again. "Boy, you never
win!"

"You never win!"
Chorus:
*But the Voice of Truth tells me a
different story
The Voice of Truth says, "Do not be
afraid!"
And the Voice of Truth says, "This is
for My glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the
Voice of Truth*

Oh what I would do to have
The kind of strength it takes
to stand before a giant
With just a sling and a stone
Surrounded by the sound of a
thousand warriors
Shaking in their armor
Wishing they'd have had the strength
to stand

But the giant's calling out my name
And he laughs at me
Reminding me of all the times
I've tried before and failed
The giant keeps on telling me
Time and time again. "Boy you'll never win!"
"You'll never win!"

Chorus:
*But the Voice of Truth tells me a
different story
The Voice of Truth says, "Do not be
afraid!"
And the Voice of Truth says, "This is
for My glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the
Voice of Truth*

But the stone was just the right size
To put the giant on the ground
And the waves they don't seem so high
On top of them lookin' down
I soar with the wings of EAGLES
When I stop and listen to the sound of
Jesus
Singing over me

Chorus:
*But the Voice of Truth tells me a
different story
The Voice of Truth says, "Do not be
afraid!"
And the Voice of Truth says, "This is
for My glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe-
I will choose to listen and believe the
Voice of Truth – Casting Crowns*

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

A famous actor was once the guest of honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite excerpts from various literary works. An old preacher who happened to be there asked the actor to recite the twenty-third Psalm. The actor agreed on the condition that the preacher would also recite it. The actor's recitation was beautifully intoned with great dramatic emphasis for which he received lengthy applause. The preacher's voice was rough and broken from many years of preaching, and his diction was anything but polished. But when he finished there was not a dry eye in the room. When someone asked the actor what made the difference, he replied "I know the psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."—author unknown

Do you know the Shepherd? It amazes me how many commentaries say that Jesus portrayed Himself as a shepherd because that's what the people in the agrarian society of the time knew and understood. I don't think that's the real story. From the earliest days of man's interaction with God until the end of time as we know it, the interaction of our Lord with us has been characteristic of a Good Shepherd. Sure, David was a shepherd as a youth and he wrote Psalms that reflected that in his praise and worship. Moses was a shepherd as well. But I don't buy for a moment the notion that God is simply playing a make-shift picture game when He talks about us as sheep and Himself as a shepherd. In fact, I would be much more inclined to believe that He intentionally fore-ordained and created the role of shepherding, good

shepherding, to help us know Him better.

In any event, let's consider our Shepherd, Jesus. As we do, may God's Spirit open our hearts to lessons and reminders that challenge, comfort and compel us onward, following Him to 'higher ground', in fact, the highest.

First, we must understand that the words Pastor and Shepherd are synonymous. Pastors can of course be teachers of the Word, knee-deep in church administration, 24/7 counselors and worship leaders, etc.

A recent survey resulted in the attributes of the perfect pastor. Here are the results. A perfect pastor:

- Preaches his sermons in exactly 12 minutes
- Frequently condemns sin but never upsets anyone
- Works from 8:00 a.m. until midnight
- Serves as the church janitor and lawn keeper
- Makes \$100 per week, wears good clothes, buys good books, drives a nice car, and gives \$50 per week to the church.
- Is 28 years of age, and he's been preaching for 30 years
- Is wonderfully gentle and handsome
- Gives of himself completely but never gets too close to anyone lest he be criticized
- Speaks boldly on social issues, but must never become politically involved
- Has a burning desire to work with teenagers, and spends all his time with senior citizens
- Makes 15 calls daily to visit church members, visits the shut-ins and those in the hospital, spends all his time evangelizing the unchurched, and is always in his office when needed
- Prepares three or four inspiring lessons weekly from his lengthy hours in the study.

But, contrary to our expectation, first and foremost, the Word of God does link the ministry of pastoring to that of

being a shepherd – one who like the Good Shepherd, Jesus, cares for the sheep. Christ said, *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep."* (Jn 10:11)

"The faithful pastor will, as an under-shepherd, display the same characteristics as the Good Shepherd. He will sacrifice for the sheep... He will be a shepherd and not a hireling who does not care about the sheep. The title pastor translates the same ancient Greek word used...for shepherd. It is a title that is only rightfully earned, not granted or assumed." – Guzik

According to Jewish religious law, [shepherds] were unclean. Their line of work prevented them from participating in the feasts and holy days that made up the Jewish religious calendar. Why? Well, somebody had to watch the sheep. When everyone else was making the trip to Jerusalem to make sacrifices at the temple, or to participate in one of the annual feasts, they were out in the fields, watching over the sheep. A modern day example might be a trucker or a shift worker, whose job keeps them from regularly attending church. It wasn't really their fault. But they were looked down on, from a religious point of view. Whatever might have been in their hearts, they weren't able to participate fully in the religious life of the community.

Not only that, but shepherds were borderline social outcasts. Since they were constantly on the move to find new pasture for their flocks, they were looked on with suspicion. Kind of the way people today might look at gypsies, or carnival workers. They were often accused of being thieves. If something came up missing – it must have been those shepherds. They were not permitted to give testimony in a legal proceeding, because their word wasn't considered

trustworthy.... Most of the time, they were living out in the fields. This was not a 40-hour a week job. They didn't come home at night. They were with the sheep 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During the day, they led the sheep to grass and water. They watched while the sheep grazed. They kept an eye out for predators like wolves. And at night, they actually slept in the sheep pen with the sheep to guard against theft and animal attack. A good shepherd could identify each one of his sheep by sight. – Alan Perkins

As you might expect, the world and worldly religionists abhor this role – oh, not the honored title but the 'job description'. In fact, this is typified clearly in the first mention of shepherds in the Bible. In the book of Genesis, when Jacob brings all his family to Egypt to escape the famine, Joseph, his son, arranges for them to live separately in the land of Goshen saying that they should make it clear to Pharaoh that they are keepers of livestock, *"...for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."* (Gen 46:34)

Now consider this in concert with the fact that Jesus Himself is referred to in scripture not only as a shepherd but as the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd. These adjectives can also be translated Beautiful, Mega-, and Original. Get the picture? Christ is the real deal, the original, the only and authentic standard as a shepherd. Is it any wonder Jesus said, *"If the world [Egypt] hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."* (John 15:18)

So what kind of shepherd is He? First, He's the kind that goes before the flock – Num 27:17. Now, if you're a 'gung-ho' kind of person, you may think He'll just be getting in your way. You would rather that He follow

behind like a cowboy yippin' and yappin', driving you onward or on the sidelines like a cheerleader jumping and shouting, motivating you to win. In reality, whether aggressive or timid, most of us try to take the lead in our lives most of the day, most every day. Yet, He goes before us because He knows the way. He knows it all! If you really want Him in the background or on the sidelines, you don't yet know Him as your Shepherd.

Next, He's the kind of shepherd that provides for His flock – Psa 23:1. Of course, spiritual provision – feeding of the Word, comfort, encouragement, counsel, faith, hope and love, etc. are the most important provisions He gives, but this is inclusive of physical provision as well. The old KJV says, *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."* That does not mean He fulfills the lusts of our greedy little hearts. The word "want" means lack. In other words, the Good Shepherd will take care of your needs. And for many if not most of us, this is where the rub is – we think we know what our needs are. Yet, because we rarely if ever see the big picture of what God is doing in our lives, we can be misled in this. Usually, however, our desperation is simply God's preparation. Along with me, I'm sure you've discovered that He is faithful.

Next, He's the kind of shepherd who leads His flock to still waters – Psa 23:2. At first, this may not seem like such a big deal, but you should understand that sheep need still waters to drink. Typically, rushing waters are intimidating to them. Sure, rushing, gushing, bubbling rapids are pretty to look at, but it's the still waters from which the sheep will drink deeply. The Good Shepherd knows His flock. He does not lead them to risky waters even if they look pretty or exciting. The Good Shepherd is

discerning and loves His flock. Sheep don't swim.

Next, He's the kind of shepherd who makes the flock lie down in green pastures – Psa 23:2. He's not in a hurry. Many of us think of life as consisting of nothing more than a series of getting from points A to points B. Yet, these words are poetic in nature – this place of rest is where the grass is fresh, tender new sprouts – tasty, easy chewing. Also, the word pasture here comes from the word meaning comely or beautiful. So, of course, there are both spiritual and physical applications.

Sheep will not rest until they are free from hunger. A hungry sheep is always on its feet, searching for another mouth of food, trying to satisfy its gnawing hunger. In Israel, green pastures didn't just happen by chance. Shepherds had to search hard for green areas or cultivate them themselves. But when a sheep had eaten enough, when it was free from fear, tension and aggravation, it would lie down.

Next, He's the kind of shepherd who restores our souls – Psa 23:3. Now, restore means to return or bring back and the word used for soul here, according to Strong, means *"soul, self, life, creature, person, appetite, mind, living being, desire, emotion, passion"*. This Shepherd doesn't give up on you when you're in the muck and mire of the world or when your character is filled with fault. His heart is bent on restoring you, the real you. Yes, there's an unreal you as well that's about to be discarded because it's temporal, carnal and corrupted by sin. It is dead in Christ while the real, eternal you is God's restoration project. It is the Good Shepherd's good work. (See Phi 1:6 and Heb 13:21)

There is an Old English shepherd's term called a "cast" sheep. This is a

sheep that has turned over on its back and can't get back up again. It happens frequently. And when it happens, all the sheep can do is lie on its back, with its feet flaying frantically in the air. Sometimes it will bleat, but usually it will just kick.

If the shepherd doesn't arrive within a short time, the sheep will die. That's one of the reasons why a shepherd is always looking over its flock, counting them to see if they are all on their feet. If one is missing, he thinks, "One of my sheep is cast and I've got to find it." This is the thought behind the parable of the 99 sheep and the one that went astray.

Many times a shepherd will search for hours for a single sheep, only to find it on its back, lying helpless. He will turn the sheep over on its side, rub its legs to restore circulation, then lift it to its feet. After a while the sheep will stumble and stagger, and then eventually walk steadily and surely.

That's probably what David had in mind when he said, "He restoreth my soul" because that's how our Lord treats us. We stumble and fall, we become so helpless. And yet our shepherd is patient and tender and helpful in getting us back on our feet. – Alan Smith

Next, He's the kind of Shepherd who leads the flock in paths of righteousness – Psa 23:3. Oh, how I love this about my Shepherd. The picture here is not one of the shepherd wading through some overgrown jungle with machete in hand, chopping away, clearing a barely negotiable opening through uncharted territory. Rather, the words speak clearly of a well worn pathway, one well traveled. Why is this? Simply because He's been there many times before and many sheep like you have followed His footsteps securely. In similar fashion, Paul wrote, *"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in*

the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." – Phi 3:1 Contrary to the conditioning of our culture, we would be better served to appreciate more what's right and true spiritually than what's bright and new.

Next, He's the kind of Shepherd who comforts, protects and disciplines the flock – Psa 23:4. In fact, His comfort comes specifically from His protection and discipline. You see, the Good Shepherd carries a rod and a staff. With the former, He smacks attackers; with the latter, He pulls me out of the predicaments I've stumbled into and even adjusts my course now and then with a merciful 'swat'. Now, you may think, 'protecting me from an enemy is certainly comforting but how does this disciplinary 'course correction' work? How is it comforting?'

Simply put, the Lord only disciplines His children (Heb 12:6-8). The very fact that He deals with you when you need it (and you know you need it now and then) assures you that He loves you too much to let you continue in that way you've taken. You can enjoy the comfort of knowing He sees you and treats you as His child.

Next, He's the kind of Shepherd who gathers the lambs in His arm and carries them in His bosom – Isa 40:11. Some shepherds minister very much 'at arm's length', but the Good Shepherd carries those who are young in the faith very close to His heart. Their burdens are His burdens. He knows their weakness and vulnerability. But, once they know His loving voice and strong affectionate arms, they'll not leave His side.

Next, He's the kind of Shepherd who gently leads those who are with young – Isa 40:11. He knows our limitations. As He leads us onward, we can rest assured that He knows our condition and has adjusted the

pace. Spiritual progress for some of us simply has to come gently.

Next, He's the kind of Shepherd that searches out the lost – Luk 15:1-6. Invitations from the pulpit are beautiful, but the picture here is of the One who sets everything aside to go looking for His lost lamb. His utter dedication to each and every one in the flock is obvious.

From the time He called out to Adam and Eve in the Garden, "Where are you?" to His death on Calvary and even unto today, His mind has been dedicated to recovering all. Quite simply, He knows the pain of losing loved ones. How or why they ended up lost is never the main point with Him. As with the prodigal son, He wants us to learn from our errors, but no mistake, no sin is so grievous that His loving grace is insufficient. He knows the lost cannot find their way back into His arms on their own. And because each one means the whole universe to Him, He cannot settle for 99 out of 100. He searches them out.

But the most emphatic statements from Jesus about being a shepherd are found in John 10 and the most obvious conclusion we draw from studying them is that, above all, the shepherd knows his sheep. And his sheep know him. "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" (Jn 10:14)

At the risk of seeming simplistic, I believe that the great preponderance of problems in the church, both in the pulpit and the pew, are traceable to this fundamental issue. Knowing the sheep and knowing the Shepherd. There are many and quite plausible excuses for shepherds not knowing the sheep, but if you're a shepherd and you don't, you're missing a fundamental point in the role. In imitating Christ, it is the principle point. On the other hand, knowing the Shepherd is requisite to being a part

of His flock. You can know everything about Him and yet never know Him. To know Him is to love Him is to Know Him is to Love Him is to KNOW Him is to LOVE Him... Do you want to know Him more?

Jesus often leads us out of our comfort zone so He can reveal something to us about Himself. He tells us to launch out into the deep so He can reveal something to us about Himself (Luk 8:22-25). He takes us by the hand and leads us out of the city blind so He can reveal something to us about Himself (Mar 8:22-25). He calls us up into a high mountain apart so He can reveal something to us about Himself (Mat 17:1-8).

The problem is that most people won't follow Him up or out or over, because they don't really want to know Jesus. There is something interesting about the word "know" in Philippians 3:10. It is the Greek word "Ginosko" which is a Jewish idiom for the word "intercourse". The same way Adam knew Eve and Eve conceived -- it implies intimacy.

To know Jesus requires such intimacy where we want to do something for Him because He was willing to do something for us. Some people want to know the blessings, but they don't want to know Jesus. Some people want to know the power of His resurrection, but they don't want to experience His resurrection. For you see, experiencing His resurrection requires a dying process, dying to self. But there is no better Shepherd and no better fold than His.

PRINCES, POWERS AND PERSIA

The following article is taken from "Iran in Bible Prophecy – The Prince of Persia" by Darrell G Young. --Editor

Wars in the Heavens

Satan has a host of angels at his command. Among the ranks of his confederation of invisible agents are thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness. The Bible is clear that there are wars continually going on in the unseen world. Most of those angelic confrontations involve the dominion and control of the nations of this world. It should never be lost on the mind of any Christian or prophecy student that Satan commands a host of demonic armies that tend to dominate international affairs, and seeks to dominate the affairs of every nation. In some nations, he has virtual control, while in other nations his control is limited due to the blessed perpetual fertilization of God's word... These unseen forces of evil battle daily with the holy angels of God. They also battle to manipulate the governments and leaders of nations.

The Prince of Gog?

The sudden appearance of "Gog" in Ezekiel's text, without any apparent background from any other passages, has puzzled prophecy commentators for centuries. From the context, it is clearly the title of the "leader of the people of the land of Magog." Still, it seems inconsistent with God's established style to have such a

key figure emerge in the text without a linkage of some sort. There is, however, a provocative reference that has been widely overlooked in the Book of Amos. The traditional rendering of Amos 7:1 reads as follows: ("*Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.*" Amos 7:1)

Our English Bible takes its translation from the Masoretic text, a 9th century source. However, an earlier translation of the Old Testament into Greek, known as the Septuagint, embodies a different rendering of Amos 7:1: "*Thus the Lord showed me, and behold a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold, one of the young devastating locusts was **Gog, the King.***" Many eschatological writers assert that Gog is none other than the Antichrist. But the identification of Gog as the king of the locusts would have profound implications. Yet Proverbs 30:7 reveals that "the locusts have no king," implying that the "locusts" of Amos 7 are not intended to be *natural* locusts, but an idiom for something else. We encounter this theme when we read a similar passage in Revelation chapter nine where locusts are described as having a king, indicating that they are actually demons under the authority of Lucifer.

The passage in Amos 7:1 suggests that *Gog* is the king of

the demon locusts, and this would put an entirely new light on the Gog scenario of Ezekiel 38 and 39. Let's remember that it is not the first time we have heard about demonic forces behind kings and kingdoms.

Consider Daniel chapter ten, where Daniel has prayed and fasted for 21 days, then an Angel appears to him. The Angel comes and tells Daniel that he had been dispatched by God 21 days earlier (when he began his prayer & fast) but was "withstood" by a demonic force that he refers to as, '**The Prince of Persia**'. The prince of Persia, was the angel of darkness that represented the Persian world power, to which Israel was then subject. Daniel even goes on to say Michael (*the Archangel /one of the Chief Princes*) came to help him. He then gives Daniel the visions, and concluded by informing Daniel that he must continue on to contend with another "*prince of the power of the air*," 'The Prince of Grecia' (Greece). The Greek empire was another world power that would rise after Persia, but it points out the reality of the fact that there are battles ensuing in the heavens over earthly events! Every nation on earth is involved in a supernatural struggle, and each nation has unseen agents from the angelic world assigned to it.

Daniel 10:10-14 *And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words*

that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

The Prince of Persia

Ephesians 6:12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

A principality is a powerful ruler, or the principal ruler of someone in absolute authority. The word may refer to human rulers, demonic spirits, angels and demons in general, or any type of ruler other than God Himself.

Daniel 10:15-21 *And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how*

can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

So, Iran, or Persia, has been in the center of an unseen warfare from ancient times. Daniel, being highly favored of God was privileged to have God pull back the curtain of history and time and briefly expose Daniel to the wars that continue in Heaven, and that affect events on the Earth. Daniel prayed for Divine insight into the meaning of some prophecies God gave him about the future of his people Israel.

Daniel's vision reveals the fact that there are mighty fallen angels called demons that influence earthly leaders. And under God's permission, they even control them. The true "Prince of Persia" was able to hinder God's

archangel Gabriel. It was only with the help of the archangel Michael that Gabriel was able to subdue his hindrances. Second, the archangel Michael is said to be the special guardian angel of Daniel and the Israeli people. As it is written, Daniel 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:

I realize for some of you this may sound a little spooky. But this is the Word of God and it is true. My point is this: Even though God has allowed Israel to be disciplined, their final fate always remains in His hands. God has promised that the nation of Israel will never be destroyed once they return from the worldwide dispersion that began with the Roman holocaust in AD70. And all the powers of darkness cannot change God's promise. Israel was officially reborn May 15, 1948. So even though the modern Persians think they will destroy Israel, God has another surprise in mind for them.

The American War on Terror Tracks a Trail to Iran and Syria

Although the US war on terror is ostensibly a global war with many allies, and in reality, it is simply an American war on terror. And that is something we'd better get used to. The United Nations is in reality nothing more than a failed humanistic effort. The United Nations that does exist is united only in its opposition to all things

Israeli, which, by definition, includes all things American. If there is a single issue over which there is almost no division at the UN, it is the shared view that world peace will never be possible as long as Israel exists. When an anti-Israeli resolution comes before General Assembly, the vote is always the same: the whole world votes in favor, with the United States, Israel, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands opposed. Our 'closest allies' at the UN, according to the liberal left, include Germany, France and Russia. With allies like that, who needs enemies? They claim to stand united with America against the terrorists, provided the US doesn't ask them to do anything except stand. None of them seem particularly interested in doing anything beyond that. Even Russia is going after their own terrorists, but any claims of cross-cooperation are a fantasy, except in cases where it benefits Moscow. America's global war on terror remains America's war, despite the very significant contributions from genuine allies like Australia, the UK, Poland and some of the former Eastern European Soviet bloc countries. Even if America survives, they are hoping that it will result in a corresponding reduction of American power and influence, ending what French President Jacques Chirac dubbed the 'unipolar' world of American superpower status. If al-Qaeda can successfully cripple America to the degree it is no longer the

world's only superpower, then the task of developing a counter-balance to American global influence becomes that much easier, and fits squarely with prophetic scripture that forecasts the rise of the Antichrist in the European West. As the Bible's outline for the last days continues to develop, more and more of the Big Picture begins to come into focus. According to Scripture, in the very last days, Israel will face the assembled might of the world's collective armies alone. (*without the protective umbrella of the United States as it presently enjoys*) Zechariah writes, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." Consider the historical progression towards that stage thus far, especially since the 1967 reacquisition of Jerusalem by Israel. There is no political potato hotter today than Jerusalem. Every nation that has attempted her destruction was cut to pieces. Israel won all five of her wars by utterly decimating her enemy's war-making capability. It took years after each attempt for the Arabs to sufficiently rebuild their military capabilities so they could try again. Even with the almost unlimited military aid given the defeated Arab states by the Soviets and Europeans. Zechariah says that all that burden themselves 'will be cut in pieces,' allies as well as enemies. America became a target of Islamic terror more for its

support of Israel than for any other reason. According to Zechariah, Israel is alone in this final confrontation, under siege by all the people of the earth, there is no mention of an ally standing beside her, apart from God. Zechariah says that; "In that day shall the Lord (not America) defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." In the Big Picture, we can already see the four spheres of global power defined by Scripture assuming their final forms: the reviving Roman Empire, the Gog-Magog alliance, the Kings of the East and the Kings of the South (Islamic Saudi Arabia & North Africa). That pretty much encompasses our erstwhile 'allies' in the war on terror who are sitting on the sidelines hoping for an Islamic victory over America.

Prophetic scripture makes no mention of any overarching superpowers in the world resembling the United States, but it does depict one under the authority of the Antichrist based in Europe. Most of the EU lead-states are actually plotting and scheming for the downfall of the US as a superpower, so the EU can amalgamate America under the EU umbrella, and so the EU can emerge as the West's superpower state to compete against Russia and China for world control. Who will be its leader? The leaders of the EU are already touting the office of the EU Presidency as a replacement for the command status of the American Presidency. We can look for the Antichrist to emerge in

this arena, and perhaps very soon. Is it any wonder that the socialist democrats in the American political sphere are so eager to align themselves with supposed allies in Europe, and insist upon the US submitting its Presidential powers for the defense of America to a UN sanctioned litmus test? Why would any American political leader ever concede the power and prestige of the American Presidency? Well, everything in our world today revolves around Israel. Europe is not willing to fight a World War over the security and existence of Israel. Europe and the liberal political establishment will not condone America's traditional support for Israel, (*this is what the war on terror is all about*) and they are working in league to change America's political behavior in regard to the Middle East, to make it conform to a more European worldview, a worldview that does not recognize the Divine sanctity of Israel, (*appease the Muslim world*) and will therefore be willing to sacrifice Israel up on the alter of Global governance and world peace.

In the midst of all these world geo-political mechanisms stands the Axis of Evil. Iran and Syria stand poised to bring the entire world to the precipice of nuclear war. The prince of Persia is assisting all the other princes of darkness in many other nations within the Luciferic conspiracy to oppose the Prince of Peace.

Even so, Come Lord Jesus!

Open Book

Everyone who had condemned her to death was gone. But, there was Jesus, writing on the ground. Surely a stillness permeated the place so completely that no one dared to break it. The disciples probably looked on from the background, mouths agape. Did she dare approach? She was guilty and everyone knew it. She knew it.

The mob had departed, but incredibly, she remained. Nothing prevented her from running away. No one forced her to face the Teacher. Did her feet shuffle? Was her mouth dry? Did her heart race? Just one word from the man before her and she would have been brutally executed earlier. He had not defended her or dismissed her guilt but rather put it in the proper perspective. What would he do now that the threatening crowd had dispersed? (See John chapter 8)

How many would come that close to death and then stick around to face the conclusion of the matter? Yet, this woman waited. Why?

Faced with the painful humiliating reality of personal sin, people react in different ways. Peter wept bitterly. (Mat 26:75) The humble worshiper in Christ's parable, "*standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*" (Luke 18) Paul exclaimed, "*Oh, wretched man*

that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24) Isaiah cried, "*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips,...*" (Isa 6:5) Cain barked, "*Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Gen 4:9) Judas hung himself. (Acts 1:18) Adam 'passed the buck'. (Gen 3:12) David confessed. (2 Sam 12:7-13) Saul made excuses. (1 Sam 13:11)

Basically though, our reactions show that we all fall into one of two camps -- children of light or children of darkness. You see, men love darkness. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* (John 3:19) On the other hand, the children of God love light for they are the children of light. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* (Gal 3:26) *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.* (1Th 5:5) In this life however, both fall short – some less than others. Nevertheless, both miss the mark.

Now, where ever the Light of Life shines it exposes. (Eph 5:13) When it exposes sin in our lives, we react to it based upon how we perceive God. And we perceive God based upon our relationship to Him.

So how does the light shine? Most of us as believers are not confronted with sin directly by other people because our contemporary concepts of church participation focus us on teaching/preaching and musical worship to the

exclusion of sanctification and authentic pastoring. We so much want to be in unity that we can tend to dismiss the notion of loving correction as an endangerment to that goal. And it's true that high-minded criticality will drive wedges between people, but in some cases, we've swung the pendulum so far to the extreme that wayward believers are rarely confronted lovingly with their error on a personal basis.

Consequently, we need to listen individually even more closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit within as He brings conviction of sin. Notice, I did not say condemnation. For the believer, there is no condemnation from God but rather conviction and correction.

Now all of this is important to us because we live in the Christian culture characteristic of Laodecia. (See Rev 3) Observably, the large majority in this culture are spiritually "*neither cold nor hot*" and by comparison to the church throughout the ages, have the sad distinction of acting like we are "*rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing*". We are coddled in 'country clubs' we boast as churches and experience the Christian life as not much more than a buffet of choices focused fundamentally on personal gratification. And the sad thing is that we are typically blind to it. Many have left Jesus outside knocking and don't realize it.

When some audacious preacher has the temerity to tell us about our condition even in the most

cautious terms, the 'spiritually offended' find another buffet at which to dine, a more amiable country club, a more interesting essay to read.

You may think I'm being harsh, unfair, overly this or that, but we are in this 'soup' together. Like Lot's children when he tried to warn them, you may think I'm not to be taken seriously. You may think, 'I'm not a sinner like this woman taken in adultery.' If so, you've missed the point for indeed you are – so am I.

On the other hand, you may be standing with me, and like the woman in our story above, before the Lord, ashamed, exposed, unworthy of His defense. If you are truly 'hanging with me' on this, it is likely because you know you're guilty, but you also sense that the One whom you're facing will not condemn. Oh, we could run away. We could try to hide from the awful truth.

This woman stayed to hear from her Savior. She stayed to look into His eyes and know His heart. When He said, "*Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?*" she may have been hanging her head. But, when she replied, "*No one, Lord.*" I'm very much inclined to envision her eyes finding His in hope. The light was shining and she was bathing in it. Jesus washed her with these words, "*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*"

Several commentators note that the Greek word used earlier for "without sin" when Jesus

answered the accusing mob, can mean without the same sin – whether it was the same type of sin or simply sin in general, the others knew they were guilty too. They had dropped their stones and walked away. Confronted with the fact of their own personal sin, they did not stick around. The light was too much for them. They retreated into their beloved darkness.

Interestingly enough, this story was not read in the early churches generally. It was even left out of most early Greek manuscripts.

“Augustine definitely stated that certain individuals had removed from their codices

the section regarding the adulteress, because they feared women would appeal to this story as an excuse for infidelity ... asceticism played an important role in the sub-apostolic age.” -- William Hendriksen

Most generally, contemporary commentators deal with John 8:1-11 even though the new paragraph mark begins with verse 13. Now, divisions of paragraph magnitude were the first punctuation marks that were added into the New Testament texts so the assumption that this

story ends with verse 11 is not based upon something provided by the author in the original language. In fact, early manuscripts place John 7:53 – 8:11 in several places. Those placements, however, cannot be given any more legitimacy than the complete exclusion of the passage. I'm inclined to believe that the text in John 8 from verse 1 – 20



represents a single passage pertaining to what happened as Jesus was teaching in the temple treasury. Notice it begins and ends with those comments.

Having said that, it seems that to those who were watching this whole scene agasp, He continued, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* The word He used here for follow means to follow as a disciple. This was likely a general statement, but it could also be that this woman at one point previously had tried to follow Jesus. In addition, He

addressed her kindly, using the general term, gune, that denotes a woman, usually a married woman, the same word He used to address Mary his mother and other women who distinctively had faith in Him. Clearly, we do not know for sure whether that is the case or not, however she found not only a temporary reprieve from her accusers but grace. And that is because, contrary to the rest of the sinful crowd, she stuck around. She welcomed the Light.

In some Christian circles there is a tendency to hide from the light not so much because of what the Lord will think but what we suspect men will think. We believe that men will usually want to ‘stone us’. But being ‘salt and light’ in this world has much more to do with honesty and humility than moral purity. To “walk in the Light” does not mean to walk in such a way that everyone oo’s and ah’s at your spiritual splendor or achievements but that under the guidance of the Spirit of God you are an **open book** – not pretending or disguised but rather transparent and on display. You see, this is the only way people can really see Jesus Christ working in you and through you. This is how they see your good works and glorify God. (Mat 5:16)

John wrote, *“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is*

faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:7-9 emphasis added)

Paul wrote, *“Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.*

Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it].

For if any person thinks himself to be somebody [too important to condescend to shoulder another's load] when he is nobody ..., he deceives and deludes and cheats himself.” (Gal 6:1-3 Amplified Version)

Do you love the Light even though it exposes? You will if you're born again. When you know your Father and your Savior as you should, His light is wonderfully welcome. It is truthful, but it is Life. Don't hide from it. Don't just drop your rock and retreat. Don't follow the crowd. Walk in the Light – the shining Light of the bright Morning Star. Hang in there and discover the grace that is in the face of our Savior Jesus (See Mat 17:2 and 2 Cor 4:6).