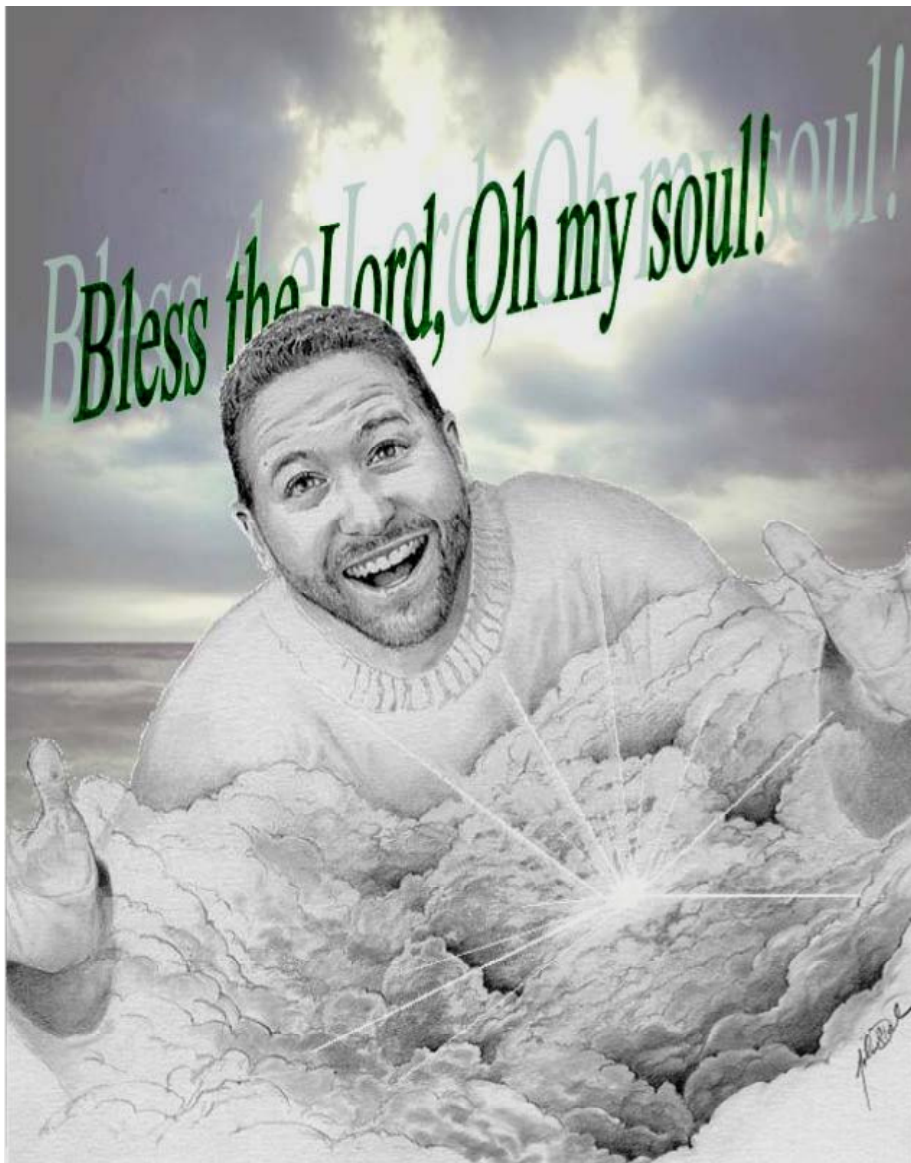


You're of no earthly value unless you're...

# Heavenly Minded

Vol 8 Iss 3



Trump and a Blink by J R Dickey

## In this issue ...

**Pitch Black His Desire, Our Delight God's Obsession Big Untold Story**

See [www.heavenlyminded.com](http://www.heavenlyminded.com) for this issue and much more!

Dear Friends,

As I predicted about a couple of years ago, commodity food prices are soaring – rice, wheat, corn, soy and their by-products are double or triple what they were last year and that's after nearly a generation of stability. Oil prices are stratospheric. Housing and credit markets are DOA. Putin just made a historic visit to Libya and initiated a treaty. Iran, for the billionth time has said that they are ready to wipe Israel off the map. Syria is preparing aggressively for war. Prophetically pertinent news abounds!

But Christ's return for us who believe is a matter of imminence, that is, it can happen at any time. We may see the war of Gog against Israel, and then again we may not. We may see the prophesized peace covenant, which the Antichrist confirms. set up. and then again we may not. We

may see America crumble as a superpower to make way for the Antichrist led EU to become dominant in the West, and then again we may not.



Let's keep our 'eye on the sky' so to speak. Our Lord's return is indeed the "blessed hope" and meanwhile there's much to do! Right? GBY!!

In Christ's Love,

John and Darlene Dickey

**Heavenly Minded** is distributed free of charge. To add a name to our distribution list for either the hardcopy or electronic PDF version, simply contact us at : [admin@heavenlyminded.com](mailto:admin@heavenlyminded.com) .

# Pitch Black

He wasn't a coward but he had to admit that the circumstances were...well, threatening. As he climbed up the hill before him, along with his company, he could hardly make out the rocks on the ground. Looking up though, he could see a faint light radiating from somewhere on the other side.

Days earlier, he and his friends had gathered at the meeting site because their town elders had said to go. Word had been carried throughout the four northern tribes who occupied the land that a big fight was coming, and he was not one to back away from it.

Curiously though, the 'big cheese' among them seemed bent on making it an unusual battle, to say the least. You see, first there had been about 32,000 assembled for war but most had been yella' – you know, chicken-hearted – and so when they were given the opportunity, they hustled back home. Well, that left only 10,000 to fight the massive army camped just north of them.

But then, for some strange reason, their leader had sent all but 300 to their tents. 'Man alive!' he thought, 'The guy must be losing it'. Nevertheless, he'd come to fight and he believed God was with them.

Now, in the thick of the night, it was the beginning of the second watch and they'd reached the top of the hill. Looking down upon the enemy host, he saw for the first

time their numbers. They were strewn out as far as he could see – their campfires were dieing down, but there were thousands of them! *All the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.* Now, he was...scared.

You know, "glory" is probably one of the most misused words of Christianese. If you were to query 100 people as to its meaning, you'd get dozens of different answers. Even many sermonizers have contorted or blurred its meaning to fit their messages.

Fundamentally, there are two basics meanings to the several New Testament words generally translated as glory in the Bible – first, a brilliant light or splendor and second, a boasting. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God is acclaimed in the heavenly realm as worthy of glory (see Rev 5:12), but that's because those in heaven understand what they're saying and why. It's not some mechanical pronouncement or rote rite – rather, it's an explosion of response to His character and deeds.

Is there more we can know about glory, specifically God's glory? Let's see.

In the Old Testament, the word for glory is pronounced something like 'kabad' and means something weighty or of substance. The first time we learn of this glory is with the children of Israel as they began their wilderness journey. It is not

the first mention of the word but its first use in connection with the Almighty. At this point, the people were murmuring against Moses and even wishing they were back in Egypt. *"Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD.'" ... Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.'" Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

What an awe inspiring sight! And this was the point, really. God knew it was not simply enough to answer them, to respond to their complaints or to provide the miraculous mannah. The people needed to be awed, overwhelmed with a sense of Who they were complaining against. When you think about it, it grabs your attention for neither Noah nor Abraham, neither Isaac nor Jacob, not even Joseph beheld the glory of the Lord. But these grumblers did.

Later, Moses may have needed some awe as well. *Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses*

*out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.*

Moses wanted to see this glory up close. *And he said, "Please, show me Your **glory**." Then He said, "I will make all My **goodness** pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. "So it shall be, while My **glory** passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."*

So immediately, we learn that God's glory produces awe and that it is directly linked with His goodness. I love the fact that the first mention of this goodness (Gen 24:10) is when the nameless servant of Abraham took it with him to find the bride for Isaac and it was bestowed upon the bride – many of you recognize this as the awesome picture of the Holy Spirit being sent by the Father to get the bride for His Son, Jesus. This goodness has indeed been bestowed upon us who believe – the church. But back to Moses...

Nearly fifteen hundred years later, on another mountain, a

portion of this same glory was manifested. And again Moses was there, along with Elijah, Peter, James and John. *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. **His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.** And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

*While he was still speaking, behold, a **bright cloud** overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. (see also Luke 9:32)*

Clearly, there is more to glory than 'meets the eye'. There's some spiritual dynamic at work therein. Even from a distance, this weighty brilliance invades and impresses upon the soul an overwhelming sense of either joyful or fearful awe. That's because God's glory is a part of Who He is. It's not created by God but inherent to Him.

Now, the Jews in Egypt had seen many miraculous signs in the course of their deliverance, but they still needed to see God's glory. The disciples had seen many miraculous signs in the course of following the 'Prophet who was like unto Moses' – Jesus, but they still apparently needed to see the glory. In following God's leading, both were leaving old worlds behind them and venturing into the unknown.

And speaking of new worlds, there's one coming for you and I called the Millennium – the 1000 year rule of Jesus Christ on earth. Leading up to that, during the soon coming seven year period of tribulation, Isaiah prophesied of the Jewish remnant: (Isa 60:1,2) *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

While pertaining to the conclusion of the tribulation time, Jesus said, (Mat 25:31) *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:* And, Isaiah said of the same time, (Isa 40:5) *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it] together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].*

Then, the ultimate wonderful future we look forward to is spoken of in the book of Habbakuk where we read, (Hab 2:14) *For the earth shall be **filled** with the **knowledge***

(experiential) *of the **glory** of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.* (also Psa 72:19 and Isa 6:3)

So, we know that God's glory is an awe inspiring splendor that is an expression of Himself, specifically His goodness, and that our future will be filled with it upon earth, but there's more. Not only is it God's plan to reveal it to us and to fill the earth with it but also to make it a part of who we are in Him as well!

Specifically, Jesus prayed, (John 17:5,22) - *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:*

Surprised? Maybe so, but realize that you've been prepared for it. Here's what Rom 9:23 says - *...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had **prepared beforehand** for glory,*

Now, you may not think you're all that glorious. I sure don't. But, understand that for now, it is a work in progress. We've got to keep our eyes on the Lord so to speak. (2 Cor 3:18) - *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

But keeping Him in view isn't done simply from the comfort of your comfort zone is it? The transformation process isn't painless or problem free. Most of

you already know that, don't you? Back to the story we started with:

Orders were given and the meager host of 300 was split into three groups of a hundred. Each man was given a trumpet and a pitcher, that is, a clay pot. Inside each pot was a lamp.

Quietly, they all spread out on the hills surrounding the massive enemy camp below. Then, upon the command signal of their leader, Gideon, they all sounded their trumpets which were in their right hands and broke the clay pots in their left hands. In the pitch blackness of the night, their horns thundered and their now exposed lamps beamed brightly.

Thinking perhaps that they were surrounded by huge numbers of attackers, the enemy hosts below went into chaos. They began killing each other and then headed as fast as they could into retreat. At that point, all the men of Israel, many of whom were previously cowardly, gathered together and launched an assault on the Midianite army which was now weak and in complete disarray. The battle was won; the country was saved. (See Judges 7)

The 'glory' of those lamps had to shine for the enemy to be routed. In the darkness, the enemy was seemingly unbeatable by sheer numbers alone. But as soon as the light broke forth, that hoard was doomed to defeat. So it is with us and the glory of God – the pot has got to be broken for the light to shine forth.

They used to say, “No guts, no glory.” That may be so, for it takes ‘guts’ in a spiritual sense to face the breaking of the pot. For us, glory comes from tribulation. The apostles had much to say about this. They wrote, *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor 4:17); *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations...*(Rom 5:3); *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* (Rom 8:18); *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*(1 Pet 5:10); *So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory:* (1 Cor 15:42,43)

So, where does this ‘guts’, this trust in God, come from? From keeping in mind, in sight, the **goodness** of God. It is in these times of trial that we need most to recall ‘God is **good**’. **As with Moses, to see His glory is to see His goodness.**

And finally, why is Jesus worthy of glory? Because, as ever, He led the way. After His resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus told his disciples, *Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter*

*into His glory?”* (Luke 24:26) and the writer of Hebrews added, *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* (Heb 2:9,10)

You see, Jesus Christ IS the glory of God. He IS the goodness that passed by Moses. He is the face of God, the goodness of God manifested. In heaven, we will know this absolutely as we worship Him, and in the heavenly city we will literally bask in Him. Speaking of this, the apostle John wrote of the New Jerusalem, *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.* (Rev 21:23)

Is your pot being broken? Take courage, for in so doing God is bringing forth His glory in you. Stay your heart on what you know – **God is good** -- for one day soon we will all live eternally in the splendor of His glorious goodness and clay pots will be no more.

## His Desire, Our Delight

It is Jesus who said of Himself, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”* And, since He also said that the scriptures, both old and new testaments, were written of Him, I like to compare the opening and concluding parts of the Bible as one way to learn more about Him. You know, there are several non-trivial words in both the first and last chapters of the Bible – words like beginning, God, Spirit, light, night, morning, water(s), first, fruit and tree. In each of these words, there is a wealth of pertinence to Jesus and some of you could do a whole study on each of them.

However, the one that I find fascinating is the word for “bless” with its various suffixes – there it is in Genesis 1 and Revelation 22. Interestingly enough, in the book of Revelation, it is the last of seven attributes of which Jesus, the Lamb of God is proclaimed worthy by those around the throne in heaven (see Rev 5:12). It is also the first attribute of which Father God is proclaimed worthy by this same group – another ‘first and last’.

But significantly, it is the only such attribute to be in this ‘bookend’ position in scripture – the first and last chapters; potentially, there is something quite special about it. Let’s see if we can find out what.

A careful study of the primary words themselves in the original languages (pronounced “eulogia” in the Greek and “barak” in the Hebrew) reveals something curious – they each have two distinct

meanings which at first glance seem to be unrelated. As a consequence, the usage of one or the other appears to be somewhat arbitrary and I will suggest, inaccurate, in the eight versions of the Bible I checked.

The two meanings for each are ‘**blessing**’ and ‘**praise**’.

The writer of Hebrews tells us, *“Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.* (i.e. greater, stronger, mightier)” (Heb 7:7) But the Bible is filled with sayings like, “Bless the Lord, O my soul...” which seems to contradict that which is ‘beyond all contradiction’. To resolve this, some commentators assert that this latter form of blessing (directed from man to God) is ‘watered down’ or simply a matter of good intentions. Now, in modern languages, this explanation could fly. But in the original languages, it doesn’t even get off the ground. It would seem that the translators missed something.

Perhaps, it is what I would call the ‘connection’. That is, God is connected to us who truly believe by His Spirit. You all know that when you are born again, this connection is established. It’s not that you are simply “interfaced” so to speak with Him but rather that you are indeed a new creation – that is, His life, His being is in you thus making you alive, making you a part of Him. Though you rarely if ever perceive it in this world, when you are born again, you are actually one with Him.

Now, the expression of this connection is the birth of a relational attitude and that, you can perceive. In you, the ‘lesser’, it is **admiration**

**and/or approval** of the 'Greater'. While in God the 'Greater', it is the **deep desire for goodness toward** the 'lesser'. The completely natural **utterance** then of this attitude on the part of the 'lesser' is **praise**. Whereas, the **utterance** of this attitude from the 'Greater' is **blessing**.

Thus, one word, originating from one wonderful event, means two things – praise or blessing. To understand it properly in its context in scripture is to understand the connection produced by God's Spirit, the resulting relational attitudes and the consequent, natural utterances which are produced. When there is no real connection, whatever praise that may come forth is hollow or feigned.

So why is Jesus worthy of this? First, praise – the utterance of admiration and/or approval from we who are saved. All you have to do is consider His goodness, love, mercy, longsuffering, kindness, faithfulness, grace and truth to appreciate His worthiness of praise. But, add to that the fact that He has never done anything wrong – he is completely innocent of sin. In addition, He glorified Father God in all that He did on earth. He came as a servant and denied Himself all the way to the cross. And here's a big one, though saving us from sin and bringing us eternal life was His 'mission', He went beyond this when He prayed for our oneness with both Himself and the Father. That is, He desired the fundamental essence of that connection we mentioned. Our sinless or righteous standing before God and immortality weren't enough for Him; He desired the intimacy of the 'connection'. And it is this that

apparently separates us from the angelic host. So, of course, we praise Him.

Second, blessing – this is the deep desire for goodness which Father God has in a very special way toward Jesus (and since, as a believer, you are in Him, toward you too!) Now, when the host surrounding the throne declares this worthiness, they are only agreeing with the Father's will, for it is He alone who can bless the Son. We simply echo and agree with what He has done – He has delivered all things into the Son's hands and seated Him at the right hand of His throne.

So, yes, it is easy to join in the acclamation for indeed, Jesus is worthy. Yet, in this particular case, even if we do not intellectually understand His worthiness, we will still respond with praise for it is the natural 'echo' to His blessing. The fountain of our utterance is simply the spontaneous response to His own. Even in this life, as we consider His blessings, His deep desire for goodness towards us, we are inspired to praise. King David put it this way:

**Bless (Praise) the LORD, O my soul;**

**And all that is within me, bless His holy name!**

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,*

*And forget not all His benefits:*

*Who forgives all your iniquities,*

*Who heals all your diseases,*

*Who redeems your life from destruction,*

*Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies,*

*Who satisfies your mouth with good things,*

*So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

**The LORD executes righteousness**

*And justice for all who are oppressed.*

*He made known His ways to Moses,*

*His acts to the children of Israel.*

**The LORD is merciful and gracious,**

*Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

*He will not always strive with us,*

*Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

**He has not dealt with us according to our sins,**

*Nor punished us according to our iniquities.*

*For as the heavens are high above the earth,*

**So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;**

*As far as the east is from the west,*

**So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

*As a father pities his children,*

*So the LORD pities those who fear Him.*

*For He knows our frame;*

*He remembers that we are dust.*

*As for man, his days are like grass;*

*As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,*

*And its place remembers it no more.*

*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting*

*On those who fear Him,*

*And His righteousness to children's children,*

*To such as keep His covenant,*

*And to those who remember His commandments to do them.*

*The LORD has established His throne in heaven,*

*And His kingdom rules over all.*

**Bless the LORD, you His angels,**

*Who excel in strength, who do His word,*

*Heeding the voice of His word.*

**Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,**

*You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*

**Bless the LORD, all His works,**

*In all places of His dominion.*

**Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

(Psa 103)

Finally, like most of us, you may be inclined to think at times that you haven't really seen some of these "benefits", but you must recall that although many of us need our eyes opened to perceive the reality of His goodness in the here and now, all of these blessings will be fully and entirely ours -- perceived, embraced and enjoyed forever, in His presence. Heaven is closer than you think, as close as a blink when the time is right. How fantastically worthy is the Lamb of God! Blessing and praise – it's His desire and our delight.

# ***Why does God seem to be so obsessed with the Jews?***

**Dr. David R. Reagan**

This is a frequent question during prophetic forums. The answer is that He loves them, just like He loves all His creation. But there is certainly a sense in which Bible prophecy seems to focus upon the Jewish people. That's because God called the Jews to be His "chosen people" through whom He would accomplish His master plan for history (Deuteronomy 7:6). It was through the Jewish people that God gave the world His Word. And it was through the Jews that He sent the Messiah.

The Hebrew Scriptures say that the Jews were also chosen to be witnesses of God - of what it means to have a relationship with Him (Isaiah 43:10-12). The history of Israel attests to the fact that when one is faithful to God, He blesses; when one is unfaithful, He disciplines; and when one repents, God forgives and forgets and begins to bless once again. Currently, the Jews are under God's discipline, but Bible prophecy tells us a day is coming when a great remnant of them will repent and receive Jesus as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). When that

happens, God will make them the most exalted nation in the world (Isaiah 60 - 61:5). Jesus will live among them as King of kings (Ezekiel 43:7), and all of God's blessings to the nations will flow through them (Zechariah 8:22-23).

The Jews are also God's prophetic time clock. By this, I mean He often relates major future events to things that will happen to the Jews as a nation. Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks of years is a good example. Daniel says to watch for a decree that will allow the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He then states that 483 years after that decree is issued, the Messiah will come and die (Daniel 9:24-26).

In the New Testament, we have another good example. Jesus told His disciples that a day would come when the Jews would be dispersed among all the nations of the world and Jerusalem would be trampled down by the Gentiles. But then He added that when Jerusalem is no longer under Gentile control, He would return (Luke 21:24). Jesus was simply emphasizing a point that is made repeatedly in the Hebrew Scriptures - namely, that when the Jews are restored to their land to the city of Jerusalem, the Messiah will come (Zechariah 12:3, 6, 8-10 and 13:1).

Another reason for the prophetic focus upon the Jews is because God has promised that He will bring a great remnant to

salvation during the final years of Daniel's 70 weeks of years. The Bible makes it clear that during the last half of the Tribulation, God will focus the wrath of the Antichrist upon the Jews, bringing them to the end of themselves and motivating them to turn to God in repentance (Zechariah 12:10, Romans 9:27 and 11:25-26).

## ***Hasn't the disobedience of the Jews invalidated God's promises to them?***

Absolutely not. Or, to put it in the words of the apostle Paul, "May it never be!" (Romans 11:1).

Ever since the Fourth Century, when the Church adopted Amillennialism and began to divorce itself from its Jewish heritage, the prevalent Christian view concerning the Jews has been that "God washed His hands of them" in the First Century when He poured out His wrath on Jerusalem and allowed the Jews to be dispersed worldwide. An accompanying doctrine that developed over the years is called "replacement theology." It is the idea that God replaced the Jews with the Church, that the Church has become the "new Israel," and that the Church has inherited all the blessings that were previously promised to the Jews. Needless to say, these ideas have served as a source of much of the anti-Semitism that has characterized the Church for the past 1600 years.

The idea that God has "washed His hands of the Jews" is thoroughly unbiblical. In Jeremiah 31:36 God says the Jewish people will continue to be "a nation before Me forever." He emphasizes the point by saying they will continue as a special nation of people until the fixed order of the universe ceases, or until all the heavens and ocean depths have been measured (Jeremiah 31:36-37). In Isaiah 49:14-16 God uses a different metaphor to emphasize His devotion to Israel. He says that He has the nation inscribed on the palms of His hands!

There are three chapters in the New Testament that strongly emphasize the continuing love of God for the Jews. These three chapters have been despised and ignored (or spiritualized into meaninglessness) throughout much of Christian history. The chapters are Romans 9-11. In Romans 9:4 Paul writes that God still has covenants with the Jews which He promises to fulfill. He then makes it clear that the Jews who will receive the blessings are a great remnant that will be saved in the end times (Romans 9:27).

Paul even specifically addresses the question of whether or not God has rejected the Jewish people. He asks, "God has not rejected His people has He?" (Romans 11:1). For 1600 years the Church has answered this question with an

unqualified, "Yes!" But Paul answers it by saying, "May it never be! . . . God has not rejected His people whom he foreknew" (Romans 11:1-2).

But what about their disobedience? What about their rejection of God as king of their nation and Jesus as king of their hearts? Hasn't their disobedience nullified the promises of God? Again, Paul specifically deals with this issue. He asks, "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?" (Romans 3:3). And again, for centuries the Church as responded, "Yes!" But not Paul. He responds by saying, "May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar" (Romans 3:4).

Paul becomes so overwhelmed by the grace of God in never giving up on the Jews, that he finally goes bursts froth with an ecstatic proclamation: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33).

When I first started preaching about God's love for the Jewish people and his absolute determination to bring a great remnant to salvation despite their stubbornness and rebellion, my wife said, "You make me want to be a Jew!" I responded by saying, "No, dear, you

wouldn't want to be a Jew because the overwhelming odds are that you would have a spiritual veil that would keep you from recognizing Jesus as your Messiah (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).

I then pointed out to her that God is not doing one thing for the Jewish people that He is not willing to do for anyone. The Jews, again, are simply a witness of God's desire for all people to come to repentance and be saved (2 Peter 3:9). God does not "wash His hands" of anyone. He pursues and pursues, trying to bring us to the end of ourselves so that we will turn to Him in repentance and be saved. That is exactly what is going to happen to the Jewish remnant at the end of the Tribulation. Here's how the prophet Malachi put it in Malachi 3:2-4 -

*Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.*

## **THE BIG (UNTOLD) STORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST:**

*Muslims converting to faith in Jesus  
Christ in record numbers -- 2008*

*Update by Joel C. Rosenberg  
"I will build my church," Jesus  
said, "and the gates of hell shall  
not prevail against it."  
(Matthew 16:18)*

Despite unprecedented press coverage of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East since September 11, 2001, one big story is generally not being told by the mainstream media. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims are converting to evangelical Christianity and will be celebrating their first Easter this year, even amidst widespread persecution and the very real threat of death.

The God of the Bible is moving powerfully in the Middle East to draw men, women and children to His heart and adopt them into His family in record numbers. More Muslims have come to faith in Jesus Christ over the last thirty years -- and specifically over the last seven to ten years -- than at any other time in human history. There is a revival going on among the ancient Catholic, Coptic, and Chaldean churches. Today, the Church is being truly resurrected in the lands of its birth.

### **Consider the latest evidence:**

\* **AFGHANISTAN** -- In Afghanistan, for example, there were only 17 known evangelical Christians in the country before al-Qaeda attacked the United States. Today, there are well over 10,000 Afghan followers of Christ and the number is growing steadily. Church leaders say Afghan Muslims are open to hearing the gospel message like never before. Dozens of baptisms occur every week. People are snatching up Bibles and other Christian books as fast as they can be printed or brought into the country.

The *Jesus* film, a two hour docudrama on the life of Christ based on the Gospel of Luke, was even shown on television in one city before police shut down the entire TV station. "God is moving so fast in Afghanistan, we're just trying to keep up," one Afghan Christian worker told me, requesting anonymity. "We need to train pastors to care for all these new believers."

\* **UZBEKISTAN** -- There were no known Muslim converts to Christ there in 1990. Now there are more than 30,000.

\* **IRAQ** -- As I shared during an interview on Fox & Friends on Easter morning, in Iraq, there were only a handful of Muslim converts to Christianity back in 1979 when Saddam Hussein took full control of that country. Yet today, there are more than 70,000 Iraqi Muslim background believers in Jesus (MBBs), approximately 50,000 who came to Christ as refugees in Jordan after the first Gulf War in 1990-91, and another 20,000 who have come to Christ since the fall of Saddam Hussein. I had the privilege of preaching in a church of more than 100 MBBs from Baghdad -- a church that didn't even exist in 2002 before liberation. We also had the privilege of meeting and interviewing numerous former Islamic jihadist terrorists who have come to Christ and are now pastors and church planters.

\* **KAZAKHSTAN** -- In Kazakhstan, there were only three known evangelical Christian believers before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Today there are more than 15,000 Kazakh Christians, and more than 100,000 Christians of all ethnicities.

\* **EGYPT** -- More than 1 million Egyptians have trusted Christ over the past decade or so, report Egyptian church leaders. The Egyptian Bible

Society told me they used to sell about 3,000 copies of the *Jesus* film a year in the early 1990s. But in 2005 they sold 600,000 copies, plus 750,000 copies of the Bible on tape (in Arabic) and about a half million copies of the Arabic New Testament. "Egyptians are increasingly hungry for God's Word," an Egyptian Christian leader told me. Last Christmas, I had the privilege of visiting the largest Christian congregation in the Middle East, which meets in an enormous cave on the outskirts of Cairo. Some 10,000 believers worship there every weekend.

\* **IRAN** -- In 1979 when the Ayatollah Khomeini led the Islamic Revolution, there were only about 500 known Muslim converts to Christianity. Today, interviews with two dozen Iranian pastors and church leaders reveals that there are well over 1 million Shia Muslim converts to Christianity.

\* **SUDAN** -- Despite a ferocious civil war, genocide and widespread religious persecution, particularly in the Darfur region -- or perhaps because of such tragedies -- church leaders there tell me that more than 1 million Sudanese have made decisions to follow Jesus Christ just since 2001. Since the early 1990s, more than 5 million Sudanese have become followers of Jesus. Seminary classes to train desperately-needed new pastors are held in mountain caves. Hundreds of churches have been planted, and thousands of small group Bible studies are being held in secret throughout the country.

In December 2001, Sheikh Ahmad al Qataani, a leading Saudi cleric, appeared on a live interview on Aljazeera satellite television to confirm that, sure enough, Muslims were turning to Jesus in alarming numbers. "In every hour, 667 Muslims convert to

Christianity," Al Qataani warned.

"Every day, 16,000 Muslims convert to Christianity. Every year, 6 million Muslims convert to Christianity."

Stunned, the interviewer interrupted the cleric. "Hold on! Let me clarify. Do we have six million converting from Islam to Christianity?" Al Qataani repeated his assertion. "Every year," the cleric confirmed, adding, "a tragedy has happened."

One of the most dramatic developments is that many Muslims throughout the Middle East and even in the United States are seeing dreams and visions of Jesus. They are coming into churches explaining that they have already converted and now need a Bible and guidance on how to follow Jesus. This is in fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. The Hebrew Prophet Joel told us that *"in the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days....And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."*

(Joel 2:28-32)

Is life easy for these Muslim converts? By no means. They face ostracism from their families. They face persecution from their communities. They face being fired from their jobs. They face imprisonment by their governments. They face torture and even death at the hands of Muslim extremists. But they are coming to Christ anyway. They are becoming convinced that Jesus is, in fact, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father in heaven except through faith in Jesus' death on the cross and powerful resurrection from the dead.

He is risen! He is risen indeed!