

PREVAIL

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M A G A Z I N E

THE KING IS COMING

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Jesus Christ /s Fulfilled Prophecy
Proof that Jesus Christ is the Messiah

Is There an Eternal Hellfire?
Dispelling the myth

MICAH 4, 5

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The coming of law and peace

4:1-3pp — Is. 2:1-4

4 BUT ^sIN the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his

The Return of the Twelfth Imam
Ahmadinejad's quest for world peace?

The King's Marine
What is the Christian Mission?

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From the Editor: Horane Smith



BEHOLD HE COMES

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of all humanity, is coming. Whether this sin-sick world wants to believe it or not doesn't matter. The reality is: **THE KING IS COMING!**

The world is not expecting Him. Even if it was, it's not preparing for the triumphant Second Coming of the Lord of all Lords and the King of all Kings. The Second Adam (1 Cor.15: 45-49) came, died for our sins, and rose again; and now this time, He will return as a Conquering King. The saints of God know He'll return and wait patiently for their redemption to be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ is returning and He will *not* be soft on the evil and wickedness plaguing our society. We are told He is returning with vengeance and wrath on wickedness. Humanity is going to weep. Humanity is going to mourn when the wrath of God is unleashed on unrighteousness. Who will be able to withstand the power and might of God when sinful mankind begins to feel God's anger for disobedience to His laws and commands?

Matthew 24:44 warns us, "...the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." His return for millions of people will be "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). And why would that be? Aren't we all aware and haven't we all heard, that Jesus will return some day? Sadly, many have, but most don't really believe it! But Jesus' statement is clear: "Watch therefore for

you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42). This is a *significant warning* for the human race.

The reality is modern day society has very little, if any, time for God. Jesus warns us against allowing ourselves to be overly distracted by the 'social glitz' of this world, especially Christians who should instead be biblically aware of what is happening around them. The very signs given in Matthew 24 as an indication that His return is near *should not* go unnoticed! If Christ's coming is going to be "as a thief in the night," (meaning many are going to be caught unaware, 'not prepared for the intruder'), unquestionably, God's people *should not* be in this category! But rather, they should be preparing by watching and praying.

But, what about those who have knowledge of the true and living God; those called out ones who haven't yet repented of their sins and are hesitating, delaying their decision to commit their lives to God? What does the return of Christ mean to them? Should it really matter? Should they be concerned?

All of us have an appointment with death. Yes, any of us could die at any moment anytime and, therefore be oblivious to His return because of this "sleep" that is appointed to man. Or on the other hand, we could very well see with our own eyes the returning King coming in the clouds on a white horse with the armies of heaven.

But regardless, the point is: if God is calling you, there's no alternative but to *be prepared* by *repenting* of your sins, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, whether you accept His calling or not, Jesus Christ is still coming as He promised and you don't want to be caught unprepared upon His arrival.

Many have questioned whether He will truly come. The scoffers were around during the first century of the church and today they are in no short supply. They still cast doubt among the weak and they still concoct all kinds of ridiculous reasons why Jesus won't return. Some argue Jesus never said He would return, some claim He's here already, while others say He never resurrected, therefore, He cannot come back. Peter warned us about this doubt and cynicism (2 Pet. 3:1-10).

However, notice what Jesus says:

"Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me to give every man according to his works" (Rev. 22:7).

God cannot lie! He's coming for sure and there will be weeping and mourning and gnashing of teeth. All ungodliness will cease. The whole world lies in wickedness we're told in 1 John 5:19, but Jesus is coming to impose divine rule which will end evil.

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‘HEAR’ TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

You’re hearing and reading the Word of God today, tomorrow you may not...
But tomorrow doesn’t have to bring death...

Watch ARMOR OF GOD!
It brings you the good news about ‘life’.

*"Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,'
Says the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 3:1)*

This is a strong announcement from the Lord Himself, regarding His Second Coming.

Over two thousand years ago, there came a man from God whose name was John. He came as a prophet to bear witness of the Light, to announce Jesus' gospel of repentance to Israel and the world, so they would flee from their sins. To accomplish this mission, God raised up, John the Baptist, this "Holy Man... Preacher... and Testifier," of Jesus' gospel to present a message of hope to his generation. God anointed John and gave him tremendous divine power.

WHO WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST?

Like Jesus Christ, John the Baptist was a charismatic religious figure who was able to convince the people to get baptized and repent of their sins. He took his mission to heart, though it was short-lived, because he was only the precursor to Jesus Christ. John the Baptist had a mission of his own with an agenda that was quite different from that of Jesus Christ. John had special qualities such as detailed knowledge of the scriptures allowing him to explain parables and sayings, and the ability to persuade. However, it was extremely difficult, even for him, to convey a religious message to people already deep in their own religious convictions.

John was also related to Jesus, through the family connection of Elizabeth, Zacharias, and Mary. John and Jesus were only six to seven months apart in age. Being so close like that and related to one another, it's quite likely he spent time with Jesus as a youth growing up, but despite that, John was still not quite sure of the true purpose of Jesus' coming to Earth. John did finally enquire of Jesus about whether He was in fact, the Elijah to come after the Roman authorities jailed him.

Admittedly, God may not necessarily explain His entire plans to His messengers up front when giving an assignment. The

same was true with John. For one, John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, but in the pattern of Elijah (Matt. 11:13-14; John 1:21-25), fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi (Mal. 3:1; Luke 1:11-20). That's one reason perhaps, why John went to the Jordan River to baptize converts—the Jordan river was the place where Elijah had been taken up into the clouds above, in the sky surrounding the Earth (2 Kgs. 2:8-18). Perhaps John believed Elijah's spirit rested upon him in much the same way as the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:15) because he knew he was the one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way (John 1:23). Notice how this is confirmed by the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 and is substantiated further by Matthew 3:3.

John began his ministry in the wilderness next to the Jordan River, teaching repentance (Luke 3:1-2; Mark 1:4). He also came to bear witness that Jesus was the Messiah in combination with his preaching of baptism and repentance. He told the people that the Light is coming. John was the *messenger*, not the Light. John came as a witness *preparing the way* for the King! A witness is one who personally sees or observes something that furnishes evidence of proof. John was attesting to the facts or testimony of Jesus, validating Jesus' position and role!

John's business as the forerunner was to proclaim the gospel of God's grace, and Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Believers were to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin. Repentance prepared the soul for baptism. John came proclaiming, heralding a matter of great and solemn importance to humanity; the subject not of his own making, nor of himself, but of God, from whom he had received his commission from birth (Luke 1:13-19).

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

As mentioned before, Isaiah 40:3 clearly proves John the Baptist was the person whom the prophet spoke about. John's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus' First Coming. The idea came from the practice of Eastern Monarchs, who whenever they embarked on an expedition, sent harbingers before them to prepare the way for their passage. Israel was that desert country to which John was sent to announce the coming of the Messiah. It was destitute at that time of God's truths, and of the spirit and practice of piety. John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, by preaching repentance.

God sent John to bear witness and to testify about Jesus Christ so that all might believe through Him. John was not the Light but came to testify concerning the Light. Jesus came to the Jews first, but His own did not receive Him (John 1:6-11). Therefore, He went to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8).

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The Voice
of One
Crying

By Patrick Bastien



Jesus Christ Is Fulfilled Prophecy

By Bill Watson

In today's world many do not recognize the plain prophetic statements foretelling the Coming of Jesus the Christ as the suffering servant. They ignore the specific declaration of His Messiahship, how it was to be accomplished, and what it means for mankind. This eye-opening article will prove from prophecies of the Old Testament that Jesus Christ is indeed the promised Messiah and Saviour, prophetically validating Him as the coming King of kings and Lord of lords!

Peter tells us,

"And now, brethren, I wot [know] that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers [kill the author of life, Jesus Christ]. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." (Acts 3:17-18, emphasis mine)

Regardless of this plain scriptural statement, currently $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world do not recognize Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. And a portion

of the one third *who do recognize Him* as the promised Messiah, don't understand what He *really* represents or what His Gospel message is really about. So many of the traditional Christian teachings within the, so-called-Christian community have camouflaged the truth, resulting in a misunderstood purpose. Consequently, 'the many' Christians today are being misdirecting into believing a *blurred and confusing Christian theology* of what God the Father, through Jesus Christ is accomplishing.

Unfortunately, this has caused 'the many' to be exposed to the jeopardy of what Jesus described as those who think they are pleasing God, but in fact, are not! Notice:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work

iniquity [lawlessness]." (Matt. 7:21-23)

On the one hand, in today's secular, liberal environment where the opinions of even the 'village idiots' are heard, Christianity is often the target. This has contributed to the demise of what little credibility the Bible has retained among the world's 'scholarly elitists.' Yet, on the other hand, traditional Christianity has presented such a compromised version of the original theology of the *Christ-centered gospel*, that it should be no surprise for us to understand that "many" would come claiming Christ is Messiah, but shall deceive 'the many' [most people] (Matt. 24:4-5).

WHERE IS THE PROOF?

So, is it possible to prove from the Bible that Jesus Christ is in fact the promised Messiah? And if that can be done, can we prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, what exactly was the definition and scope of His *God-ordained mission*? These are legitimate questions that deserve answers—and they can be answered!

But, in order to properly answer these questions, initially,

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The coming of law and peace

4:1-3pp — Is. 2:1-4

4 BUT ^sIN the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD shall be from Jerusalem.

MICAH 4, 5

4:1
^sEzek. 17:22
 4:3
^sIs. 2:4
 Joel 3:10
^sPs. 72:7
 4:4
^s1 Ki. 4:25
 Zech. 3:10
 4:5
^sZech. 10:12
 4:6
^sEzek. 34:16
^sPs. 147:2
 Ezek. 34:13
 4:7
^sch. 2:12
^sIs. 9:6
 Dan. 7:14
 Luke 1:33
 Rev. 11:15

flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? ^bis there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for ^cpangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go out of the city, and thou shalt go to the field, and thou shalt say, I will dwell in peace, for I have said, I will dwell in peace.

we must remember the Old Testament scriptures were the only God inspired documents available at the time of Jesus Christ's ministry. Many fail to realize that the New Testament Church was established and built on the texts of the Old Testament writings (Eph. 2:20). This is why it's absurd to consider mitigating the influence these manuscripts of the law, writings, and prophets had on the early New Testament Church.

Contrary to the opinion of many liberal Christian scholars, the Old Testament manuscripts substantiate the New Testament texts, including the very Messiahship of Jesus the Christ! As a matter of historical fact, the Christian 'way' was *originally* considered an extension of the ancient Hebrew religion. Unfortunately, too many have forgotten this and have dismissed the Old Testament and 'moth balled' it—relegating it to ancient history and/or cute little Bible stories that have a 'moral to the story' by the circumstances described.

Sadly, this is an enormous mistake, because the Old Testament has much more value than this oversimplification. It is the Biblical proof that these canonized books verify the very hand of God in human affairs. To marginalize the Old Testament is a decision to rule out a major historical record of God's personal involvement describing how He is orchestrating the human realm for the fulfillment of His purpose, telling *His-Story*. The Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ and His *suffering servant Messiahship Ministry*, is just one of the many very important components sanctioning and authenticating God the Father's role, in the scope of His salvific plan.

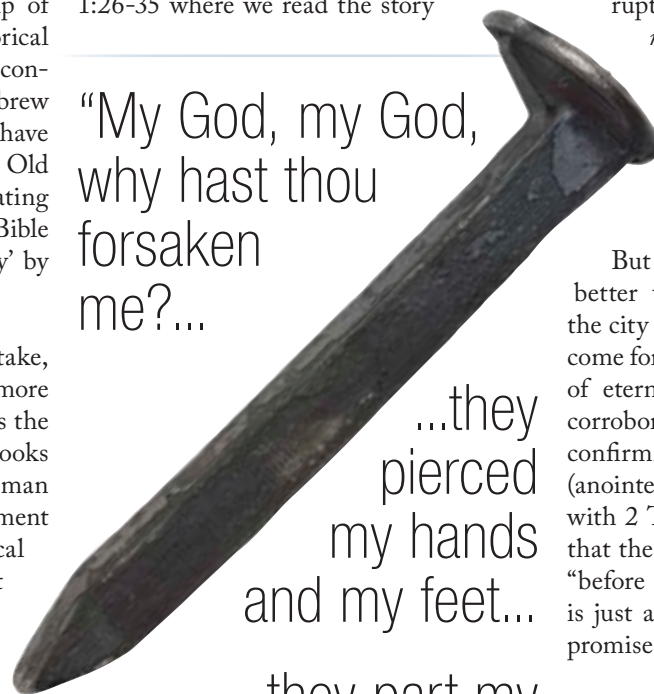
WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Unfortunately, the specific statements that pertain to Jesus Christ's First Coming, as the "Lamb of God," the suffering Servant, are overlooked by many and especially some in the 21st century Jewish community. It's amazing how so many clear and concise prophetic statements concerning this fact can be ignored. Sadly, Nostradamus, Edgar Casey, and other alleged prophets and clairvoyants receive more recognition and credibility than the straight forward prophetic documentation provided in the Old Testament. Yet, the record is there for

any who have 'eyes to see' that specifically, Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament—whom most Jews today, continue to dismiss.

It's regrettable that this obvious and understandable truth is disregarded and unaccepted! Clearly, Isaiah 9:6-7 explains that a Child will be born, destined to be a Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Father, and Prince of Peace *for a government* that would have no end. Additionally, He would be connected to the lineage of King David, who was from the tribe of Judah. This links up with Luke 1:26-35 where we read the story

"My God, my God,
why hast thou
forsaken
me?..."



...they
pierced
my hands
and my feet...

...they part my
garments among
them, and cast lots
upon my vesture."

Psalms 22

of Gabriel's visitation to Mary announcing the fact that she was chosen to bear this Child, Son of the Highest, who was destined to receive the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob (all twelve tribes) forever—ruling a kingdom *without end*. Gabriel also explains this will be a *virgin birth*, conducted through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Now notice how this was prophesied almost *800 years before it happened*. In Isaiah

7:12-13 we see the story of Ahaz, King of Judah fearing his brother nation Israel and its confederates would destroy his nation to the South. God assured him this wouldn't happen. But notice the reason Isaiah gives for preserving the nation Judah, even though Ahaz would prefer not to know (verse 12). Isaiah explains the reason is because *a virgin will conceive a child*, naming Him Immanuel, meaning: *God with us!* The New Testament corroborates this in Matthew 1:18-25 where it's said, the Child would be from the House of David and His name would be Emmanuel which *also* means, *God with us!* These plain, uncorrupted scriptures *emphatically connect* Jesus Christ with the ancient prophecies that foretold how this would happen; undoubtedly authenticating Him (Jesus Christ) as the promised Child King, born of a virgin.

But the story goes on and gets even better when Micah explains that from the city of Bethlehem, a ruler of Israel will come forth who *was promised* from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2). Obviously, this corroborates with Matthew 2:1, perfectly confirming the birthplace where the Christ (anointed) Child was born in conjunction with 2 Timothy 1:9, which clearly tells us that the purpose of Christ was decided on "before the world began." Obviously, this is just another way of explaining He was promised from the days of eternity.

There are so many more prophetic connections we can illustrate from the Old Testament prophets that are incredibly stunning in their detail. For instance, Zechariah 9:9, speaking some *500 years before* Christ was physically born, tells us this King would ride into Jerusalem on a colt. Later, we're told He would be betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12), and of which, this betrayer would ultimately find this 'blood money' paying for a potter's field (Zech. 11:13).

Even some of the prophetic details concerning the death and crucifixion of Christ are just simply remarkable! Notice, in Psalm 22 we are told of how the people witnessing the crucifixion laughed at Him and shook their heads in scorn. We're told He was pierced in His hands and feet and

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The world we live in today is plagued with problems for which there seem to be no solution. The enormity of these problems make our world very unhappy and insecure. We need one King and one Kingdom to take us out of this dilemma.

Interestingly enough, in spite of the efforts from world governments and institutions, we have failed to break this yoke of unhappiness. Human beings won't admit: we simply cannot create our own Garden of Eden. Instead, we continue like generations before us, to put our brightest minds to work at the impossible task of bringing world peace and happiness.

Our attempts at solutions have never worked historically and simply never will. Where does that leave us? How do we bridge the gap, between what we desire and what we see around us? From where, and to whom do we look for the kind of leadership that will effectively bring peace and happiness?

We need to put an end to injustice and greed, the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful, the suffering of the weak inflicted upon them by those who are strong—all in combination with ending famine, disease, murder, and broken homes that contribute so much to the downfall of this society. Not to mention the additional problems of immorality, lack of fear of God, and the destruction of the environment.

What human government can bring solutions to these seemingly overwhelming problems? Instead of getting better, conditions continue to get worse. The world cannot continue much longer on its present course—it will simply destroy itself. The Almighty God who created the Earth will one day intervene to save mankind from himself and bring every desired good. That's exactly what He had in mind when He gave us Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

When Jesus was born, the angels sang, *Peace on Earth and goodwill toward men* (Luke 12:14). However, His birth means far more than the exchanging of gifts, the consumption of food, with partying and having a good time as the traditional

Christmas season illustrates. He came as the only one capable of dealing with the problem of sin—which is the source of our overwhelming geopolitical and social troubles.

The truth is that Jesus is coming again to bring the rule of God to this Earth. Remember a section of the model prayer:

ONE KINGDOM ONE KING

By Anthony Braithwaite



"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

We can prepare ourselves for that because it will be a reality soon. When asked whether He was a king or not, Jesus replied,

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world..." (John 18:37)

But what kind of King will he be and what kind of Kingdom will He be ruling over? What about His subjects? Will they be victims of the kind of dictatorships with which the world is so familiar? Or will the desire for happiness placed within the human heart by God at long last be

fulfilled? (Isa. 40:10-11). Unquestionably, God's word answers this for us!

Luke 4:18 gives a brief look at the credential and mandate of Jesus. He will bring to an end all the evils besetting the human race. The peace and happiness we seek will be brought to us with the establishment of God's Kingdom. A literal kingdom will be established on the Earth (Zech. 14:9). No nation or territory will escape the rule of Jesus Christ; and no politician will be able to sabotage or discredit the Kingdom. Furthermore, no dictator will succeed in mounting a rebellion against it because it will be governed by the power that created the universe. Jesus Christ will subdue all the kingdoms of this Earth, enforcing God's law over all the people of the world. They will learn to respect the purpose for which God created them and the value of honouring and praising Him.

All that has been outlined so far is for the future, a glorious future of peace and harmony. You can become a part of that future because God is offering you and I citizenship in His Kingdom (John 1:12). Being a child of God denotes loyalty and submission to His commands (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). Jesus wants to be Lord of our lives (Mal. 1:6). God expresses His feelings about the lack of reverence now being displayed by human beings; however, we are all invited to humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus. There are great blessing to be enjoyed. We are being offered positions in God's kingdom (Dan. 7:27). God will give us heavenly protection (Psa. 91:1) and prosperity according to His will, preserving us as His beloved children and providing us eternal life in His everlasting Kingdom.

These are only some of the benefits available to those who put their trust in Him. Whenever you are faced with the daily challenges of life brought on by the sins of this world, remember: the day is coming when one King, one Kingdom, will put an end to all the miseries of life once and for all. Christ, the Anointed will usher in an era in which the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). This is what the world needs now, and the King, Jesus the Christ, is coming to do just that!

THE FIRST FAILURE,

The first man, Adam failed, but the Second was triumphant over death. What made Jesus, the Christ, victorious and did He really have anything in common with Adam?

A contrasting look at Adam and Jesus shows our Saviour to be superior in nature and victorious in the flesh after confronting similar circumstances to Adam. These victories make Christ qualified to return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Adam is referred to as the first man and Jesus Christ "the last [second] Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). The similarities and differences between Adam and Christ (the second Adam) show why Christ is indeed worthy to be called The Saviour of Mankind!

FAILURE AND VICTORY

Satan tempted both Adam and Christ. However, Christ succeeded where Adam failed. The book of Genesis reveals that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were truly in a paradise. They were surrounded with lush trees and vegetation where there was plenty of food and water. God made available to them every tree of the garden, but denied them to take from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan appeared to Eve and tempted her. As a result, Adam and his wife disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree.

In contrast, the second Adam, Christ, was also tempted by Satan, but remained obedient. Unlike



the par- setting of A d a m , Jesus was led into the wilderness where there was nothing around. He had neither food nor water. Among the temptations He faced, like Adam, He was tempted with food. He was hungry from fasting, and Satan knew it was the opportune time to tempt Him. He was challenged to turn stones into bread. Where Adam succumbed to Satan, Jesus in a weakened, vulnerable state resisted and was victorious (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Satan's temptation no doubt appealed to the pride in Adam as a human being. This lack of humility was a contributing factor to the first Adam's fall. Satan told Adam's wife that by eating from the forbidden fruit their eyes would be opened and they would

be like God knowing both good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5). The tree was then desirable to the woman because of the wisdom that could be acquired (Gen. 3:6).

The second Adam, on the other hand, already possessed all wisdom, but more importantly, was the perfect example of humility—an indication of His superior nature. Christ humbled Himself so much that He was obedient all the way until death (Phil. 2:8).

DEATH AND LIFE

Both the actions of Christ and Adam impacted mankind. Sadly, by Adam's sin, death entered the world and spread to all men. How can this be? Simply put, the actions of a father affect his wife and children. The decisions of a king or ruler affect everyone in the nation. Likewise, the actions and decisions of the first Adam, who physically fathered the human race, had a deathly result on all of mankind that followed (Rom. 5:12-21).

The second Adam, Christ, created all things and thus is head over all Creation including the human race (Col. 1:16). His actions, too, have affected humanity—but in a good way. By contrast, because of His perfect obedience, death, and resurrection, the grace of God is made available to all by way of Christ Jesus. Romans 5:19 says,

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

Mankind can once again come into right standing with God, justified by the supreme sacrifice of His only begotten Son for the sins of the world. Where Adam's sin...

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THE SECOND TRIUMPH

By Noel Scoburgh



The Return of

the Twelfth Imam



By Duane Nicol

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Columbia University
Photo by: Daniella Zalzman Source: flickr

In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly on September 17, 2005, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke of a plan for world peace.

He told the Assembly,

"When that day comes, the ultimate promise of all Divine religions will be fulfilled with the emergence of a perfect human being who is heir to all prophets and pious men. He will lead the world to justice and absolute peace."

Iranian President, Ahmadinejad, closed his speech by calling for the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam, the *Mahdi*. He prayed before the assembly,

"O Mighty Lord, I pray to you to hasten the emergence of your last repository, the promised one, that perfect human being, the one that will fill this world with justice and peace."

Why is the President of Iran praying for the return of the Mahdi, the so-called perfect human who will bring peace on Earth?

Because, Shi'ite Muslims believe the Twelfth Imam, or Mahdi, the last in a line of saints, descended from Ali, the founder of their sect and vanished down a well in 941 AD. According to this belief, he went into a state of 'occultation' like the sun hiding behind the clouds. The story goes on and claims that after a stormy period of apocalyptic wars, the clouds will part, and the sun (the Mahdi) will be revealed. They believe that when he is released from his imprisonment, *the entire world will submit to Islam*. This belief is the driving force behind Ahmadinejad, Ayatollah Khameni, and the majority of the central figures in the Iranian government.

Ahmadinejad and tens of thousands of mullahs are controlling Iran (ancient Persia) and are dead serious about the Mahdi's

return. They are all connected and impassioned with fiery, zealous, religious fervor. Ahmadinejad believes Iran's redemption will come through a volatile mixture of Islamic ideology and confronting the "world conspiracy" they deeply suspect is instigated by the Crusaders and Zionists (America and Israel); this suspicion and hatred goes back hundreds of years.

In fact, the origin of the volatile hatred dates back to the book of Genesis where Moses wrote about Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar. Moses writes,

"And he [Ishmael] will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. 16:11-12)

Once Iran has the necessary nuclear bombs or missiles, Israel, the U.S. and/or even Europe will be threatened with a thermo-nuclear exchange if any of these countries expects or attempts a regime change in

Iran.

Michael Evans, author of, *Showdown with Nuclear Iran*, gives a chilling example of just how feasible a nuclear attack could be manifested by Iran on the U.S. and Israel, and has set up an illustrative scenario depicting a nuclear attack:

"Nabih Osami was the Director General of Pakistan Shipping Lines in the port city of Karachi. Brigadier General Hossein Shirazi paid a visit to Osami to discuss having a special compartment built on the cargo deck on one of Osami's container ships. Shirazi wanted a space twice the normal size of a container space of eight feet wide, nine feet tall, and forty feet long. The container would be a permanent fixture of the ship and be covered with a normal container load. The deck had to be able to deploy a vehicle from the compartment and clear the deck above the container. The Shadow-3, one of Osman's new container ships, dropped anchor outside of the Port of New York. He was sailing under a Panamanian flag for anonymity. Inside the special lead lined compartment, was a Russian built missile launcher, an MHZ 534 transport erector launcher. The erector raised a fifty three foot long Shabab-3 missile skyward. At exactly 6:30 AM EST the Revolutionary Guard Commander in charge of the missile pushed a button and sent the Shebab-3 shooting star missile carrying a 550-kiloton enriched uranium nuclear warhead into space. It detonated at 80,000 feet. When it exploded it sent a barrage of gamma rays to earth and created an Electromagnetic Pulse. The EMP instantly reached a radius of several hundred miles and rendered all electronic equipment inoperable. All cell and land phones, electrical equipment, lights, motors, and computers were dead due to the pulse. The eastern half of the U.S. was in a state of shock and disbelief. All agencies in the government and civilian areas could not contact each other due to the

EMP energy pulse. The President and the military tried to discern what had happened. With the country silent from the EMP pulse, there was no way to know who attacked us and why. At exactly 6:30 AM, another container ship 250 miles off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia, a second Shabab-3 missile was launched carrying a 550 kiloton warhead headed for Washington DC. Eight minutes later a mushroom cloud formed over our nation's capital destroying a large portion of the city. At the time of these two nuclear blasts a third missile was fired from Rafah, Egypt, toward Tel Aviv, Israel. With the blast, all communications in Israel also went dead. All three crews knew they were an integral part of ushering in the Twelfth Imam."

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An illustrative scenario from *Showdown with Nuclear Iran*

The EMP scenario is a proven concept as the U.S. Congress in 2000 created a commission to discern whether such a feat could be accomplished. The scenario is feasible and could be accomplished as the commission gave its report to Congress. The terrorists, in these examples, plan very carefully and then execute with vengeance. If they are caught, martyrdom is part of their faith and they are willing to die for their objectives hoping they will be richly rewarded in heaven for their dedication. Let us take a look at Osama bin Laden and his cosmocrats.

The dictionary definition of a cosmocrat is "a universal monarch or world ruler." The same term can be used in the context of

a terrorist in that they are comfortable in business meetings, weddings, and dinner meetings and political events. They speak several languages fluently and may have multiple degrees from prestigious universities. Their focus is on talent and drive. Islamic leaders have always cherished the idea of the *umma*: the world community of Muslims.

Osama bin Laden's network is comprised of many cosmocrats. They have operated in Afghanistan, Yemen, Algeria, Kenya, and the Philippines just to name a few. Bin Laden's al-Qaeda is sized between a cult and a genuine mass movement. There are presently several thousand al-Qaeda members that are scattered in sixty countries around the globe. One of the defining characteristics of an al-Qaeda operative, aside from the

cosmocrat status, is patience. The 1998 Embassy bombing in Kenya took five years to execute. The U.S.S. Cole bombing in Yemen was two years in the making. The plotters of the World Trade Center Attack formed around Mohammed Atta started in Germany in 1998; the execution of the plan was on September 11, 2001.

For millions of Muslims, the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was not viewed as a victory for the U.S., but rather a Muslim victory. If Saudi Arabia were to have a democratic election, Osama bin Laden would be elected president. Most Muslims believe, including Amadinejad, that Osama bin Laden was anointed by Allah to defeat the evil empires of both the Soviet Union and the United States. Osama, with his inherited millions, is able to support his jihadist agenda whenever and wherever he pleases. He is an activist that operates with impunity. Why is he on such a vengeful attack on America?

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The Pursuit of Happiness



By Zion Hezekiah

*The vanity of the human being is what I'm seeing
Self-interest, idolatry, hatred and cheating
Wealth gathering and futile competing
Insincere fake smiles when greeting
Domestic affairs involving wife beating
Resulting in spouses leaving
Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden
We are living in the times of perilous deceiving.*

It's 6 o'clock on Monday morning and many in the Western world are scrambling, getting ready to pursue yet another futile, never-ending, self-defeating weekly expedition better known as the 'rat race.'

According to a February 2007 survey conducted by The U.S. Conference Board, less than 35% of American workers under the age of 25 are satisfied with their jobs, while less than 45% between the ages of 45-54 express satisfaction. We are living in the age where many of us are living to work as opposed to working to live. Most Westerners, who are trapped within this vicious cycle of detrimental living, are undoubtedly sick and tired of being sick and tired.

That being said, we would all agree that it is the innate nature of mankind to be in constant pursuit of happiness and satisfaction. Since it is a fact that happiness can rarely be attained in the workplace where many spend well over 50% of their time, this is a major dilemma.

We search for happiness in the music we listen to, the movies we watch, the food we eat, the friends we socialize with—the list goes on and on. But what constitutes happiness? Who are the happy people? Does happiness favour those of a particular age, sex, or race? What is the correlation between happiness and wealth? Can one



truly find happiness without having a concrete understanding of one's purpose on Earth?

Well, let's take a moment to identify a few forms of basic human behaviour and see if we can attempt to answer some of the aforementioned questions.

People smoke, drink excessively, curse, kill, steal, and commit fornication. Why? Because these activities create for them a sense of happiness. 'If it feels good, it must be okay.' Basic psychology and mere common sense dictate that people do what works. Where there is no benefit, consequently there is no action. The human demand for immediate gratification, as opposed to long term benefit, is prevailing more and more as the generations go forward.

*"If it feels good,
it must be okay"*

We are living in a very rapid, high-speed era where everything is now-now-now! It's all about fast cars, fast food, easy money etc...

It's virtually every man for himself and most

people, particularly in the Western world, are longing for satisfaction—the quest for personal happiness at any expense.

It is quite interesting to note that The United States of America is second among the world's countries in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), yet the U.S. only ranked number fifteen in a "subjective well-being" test, analyzing the world's happiest countries (*UN Human Development Report, 2005*). Is it possible that human beings were not created to be contented with the limitations of material possessions and other vanities of this world? Could there possibly be much more to life than that which is tangible?

A young child will go to grade school, leave the house when they are 18, go off to college, find a steady job, get married and have children, then eventually die. Of course, much more than that occurs in between, but in the grand scheme of things, this is generally the sequence in which life tends to transpire. That's life! But what's next? During the course of life, there is very little consideration for life's true purpose, the afterlife, and the reason why humanity was created.

The book of Ecclesiastes records one man's personal search for happiness and the true meaning of life. Following King Solomon's lengthy and comprehensive quest, he concluded that this life that we all love and cherish is meaningless and

vain (Eccl. 1:2).

But even from a secular viewpoint, we all would agree that no matter how much pleasure we experience during our lives, or how much wealth we accumulate, none of this will be of any benefit to us once we are six feet under in the grave.

All this considered, there must be a specific plan for mankind, a definitive purpose as to why we were created, and what is to be expected of each and every one of us. Indeed, there must be a way to attain true and everlasting happiness.

According to the Word of God, there is a deeper purpose for mankind on Earth. We were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26) with the purpose of becoming joint-heirs with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). God expects us to make serving Him our number one priority (Col. 3:2; Matt. 6:33). The reality is, there is no true happiness, no benefit outside of a life of true Christianity (Mark 8:36).

A Christian life provides both immediate and long term benefits. Life is much more rewarding and stress-free when we obey God's laws and commandments. It is important to make the best of our physical lives, but not at the expense of our spiritual lives.

As followers of Christ Jesus, we must be readily willing to deny our physical happiness and to live by the Word, according to the will of God the Father, for we shall be rewarded in due time (John 16:20). Presently, we are living in very sinful and perilous times where the temptations are a challenge to overcome. In our pursuit of true happiness, we must draw close to God so that He can draw close to us (Jas. 4:8).

We were not created to partake in the vanities of this world, which are considered the path of "happiness" by many. Instead we were created to fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

Ecclesiastes is one of the most logical

and relevant books in the Bible. It challenges every popular notion of what leads to happiness and the true purpose of this life that we live. This collection of philosophical essays written (approx. 250 BC) by King Solomon, serves a great purpose in acknowledging the fact that "all is vanity" and that one can only live a happy and meaningful life by learning to discern good from evil and by obeying the laws of God. Simply put: *life without God is pointless.*

The comprehension of life's true purpose, according to the Word of God, is the beginning of the pursuit of true happiness which can only be found in Christ Jesus.

Jesus' victory and authority over sin, death, and the grave belong to those of us that have accepted Him as our Lord and Saviour. True happiness is now ours!

True and eternal happiness for all of mankind will only begin once Jesus Christ returns to Earth to set up His everlasting Kingdom.

Shall we continue to live in the flesh, vain, according to in our pursuit of happiness? Can we invest in bags with holes or cisterns? Or, will we live a life of self-denial and obedience according to the will of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ?

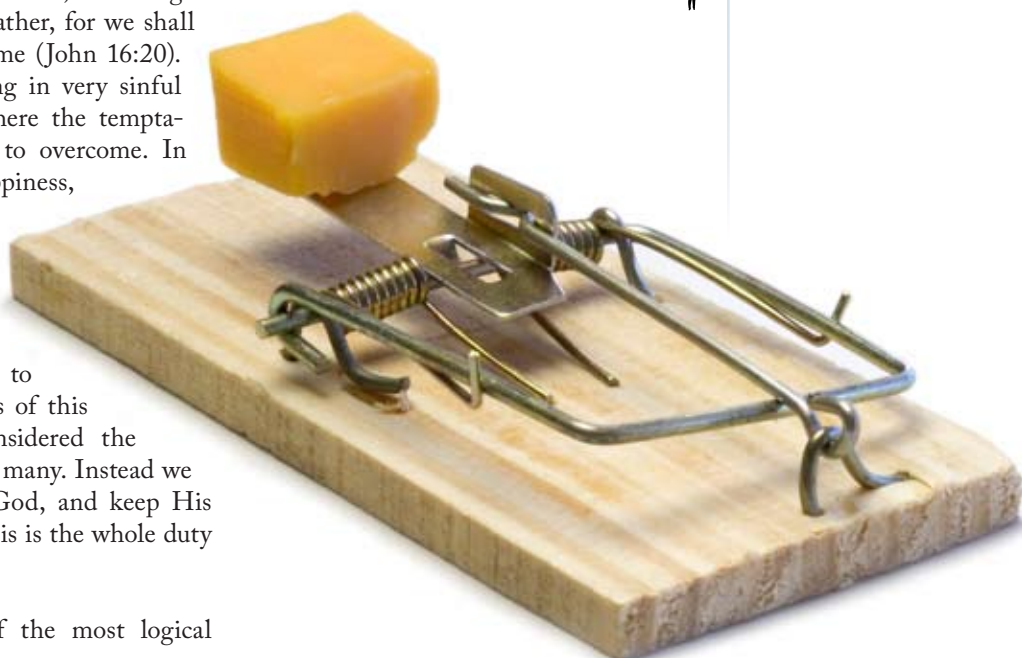
What shall it be? You must make a decision soon because the King is coming!

Behold He Comes

continued from page 1

As it was in the days of Noah, when evil was everywhere, the Holy Bible tells us "so shall it be at the end" (Matt. 13:49). It's even more urgent when we see evil all around us. The time is now: "prepare to meet thy God," (Amos 4:12) because *tomorrow may be too late*, and so could next week, or next year if we keep resisting the call of The Eternal. He won't keep calling all the time. God gives all of us who are called various opportunities in the course of our lives to answer His call and *this could very well be yours now*. Think about it carefully, because undoubtedly, Jesus is coming for sure and perhaps sooner than we expect.

In this issue of *Prevail*, we have articles showing you the prophecies pertaining to Jesus Christ, His return, why He must come again, and what it will mean for this civilization. The articles are to enlighten you about the *perilous* times we are living in and why it is incumbent on each and every one of us to be conscious of what is happening around us, not taking things for granted, especially when they have international implications. We truly hope you will enjoy this issue and that the thought-provoking articles will equip you with enough information to read and understand the need for you, *personally* to draw closer to God as the weeks, months and years tick by. May God open your understanding to the glorious plans He has for *you!*



THE KING IS COMING

By Murray Johnson

I will begin by stating boldly that Christ is coming back to Earth soon as King of kings and Lords of lords to establish the Kingdom of God. When He returns there will be signs and wonders in the sky and all those who are alive will see them. That's one promise that will certainly be fulfilled. If God is calling you and you haven't repented of your sins, what are you doing about it?

When Christ came to Earth approximately 2000 years ago, there was also a sign in the heavens. The wise men from the east saw this sign and they followed it to Bethlehem. They were learned men who knew their scripture and they studied the stars. They knew this star would lead them to the New Born King and they came to worship Him. Even Herod, King of Judea, knew a King was born, albeit he thought it was an earthly king. He reasoned this King would be a threat to him and he tried to put him (The New Born King) to death.

Now, when Christ returns to Earth the second time, he won't be as a little child to suffer at the hands of men, rather He'll return with all the divine power and might that He used to create the universe. As we see in Romans 1, the divine nature and invisible qualities of God can clearly

be seen in every aspect of His Creation. The vastness, order, and precision of the universe are manifestations of God; thus, those who refused to believe in Him have no excuse.

Everything in the universe is orderly, follows a precise pattern, and is endless. There is no disorder or confusion; everything runs as God has set in place and commanded. There is no mystery about this. God reveals His nature to all those who want to see. God doesn't hide Himself. He makes clear that His only begotten Son came the first time to die for our sins and the second time He'll come to redeem us and put a stop to sin. He also outlined a chain of events leading up to His Second Coming.

We've all heard the term *secret rapture*. The word 'rapture,' however, doesn't appear in the Bible. The Greek word translation of the word means "snatch out or catch away." Even though the word never appears in scripture, we read that the saints will meet Christ in the air, in the clouds at His Coming. We know this will happen; however, let's be clear on *when* this will happen—what is the timeline, and what will happen afterward?

There's a certain segment of Christian

thought today that believes the rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation. The term for this is Pre-Tribulationism. They believe the rapture of the saints and the Coming of Christ will occur at 2 different points in time, between 3.5 to 7 years, and that the tribulation will come in the middle of these 2 events. They often call the first part of Christ's Coming the *secret rapture*, since Christ's Coming for the saints is 'as a thief in the night'. It will supposedly be accompanied by no signs, except the disappearance of the saints.

The second part of Christ's return, according to some churches, is the coming in great glory to establish the Kingdom of God and rid the world of the anti-Christ. In Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21, Christ says that the sign of the Son of Man will appear in Heaven and then all the tribes of the Earth will mourn and will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

Also, Christ compares the time just before His Second Coming as in the days of Noah when the everyday lives of people went on as usual: two men in the field one will be taken the other left; two women grinding, one is taken, the other is left.

Pre-Tribulation thought claims these events must take place at two different times. The upheaval in the heavens and the ordinary everyday lives of people on Earth can't happen at the same time, can they?

We read in Genesis, that in Noah's time there was widespread violence and corruption. Human calamity was so great that God was determined to destroy all flesh except, Noah and his family. Yet, even with all this mayhem around him, Noah and his sons were still able to build the Ark in relative peace. As we can see, life still goes on amidst tribulation. Look at today's news and we see floods, drought, famine, crime, war, global warming, injustice, and the threat of terrorism—nevertheless, life goes on. Here is the order of events leading up to Christ's return, as stated in the book of Matthew:

- 1 The Great Tribulation
- 2 Spectacular Heavenly Signs immediately follow the tribulation of those days.
- 3 The Day of the Lord—Christ is seen coming with power and great glory.

When we see all these things happening we will know that the end is near. The Kingdom of God is about to be established (Luke 21:28, 31).

Christ speaks of the day and hour when we will see Him coming in the cloud of heaven. But He also says,

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only..." (Matt. 24:36).

Only God, the Father knows the exact hour when Christ will return. So we are told to watch—not necessarily CNN or reading the newspapers to see what events are fulfilling prophecy, but to watch *ourselves* to make sure we don't fall for the pleasures of this world, rather to stay the course in Christian mind and deed. For those whom God is calling, your duty before God is to repent and be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The book of Joel also speaks of the signs and wonders that will appear in the heavens at the end time.

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound

an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness,



"...and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood..."

as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." (Joel 2:1-2)

We see in Matthew 24, Christ speaks of "tribulation" and "great tribulation" upon Jerusalem, then speaks of the events leading up to His Return.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:29-30)

Similarly, Mark speaks of the heavenly signs that occur in those days after the tribulation in Mark 13:24. Here is the sequence of events:

- 1 Tribulation and Martyrdom
- 2 Heavenly Signs appear
- 3 Men's hearts fail from those things that are happening on Earth as the Day of the Lord approaches.

The distress on the Earth during the tribulation is brought about by human actions,

inspired by Satan the devil. But God will step in and put a stop to it for the elect's sake. God does not cause the tribulation but He allows it to show the futility of humanity.

The book of Revelation makes mention of the time of tribulation and the signs of heaven.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:12-17)

As we see from the Old Testament, through to the New, there will be signs and wonders in the sky, all laid out in a linear fashion when the Great King Christ makes his triumphant return to establish the Kingdom of God. Humanity will be in fear when the wrath of God is unleashed on a sinning world, but these things must come to pass before Christ will appear. Remember also, the people of God *will be* caught up in the air—but not before all this trouble is upon us.

Therefore, when we see these events unfolding we must have faith and courage for we know our redemption is coming. Don't try to figure out which day He will appear. But stay awake, stand fast, keep your mind on the things that God is concerned about. Put on the full Armour of God so that you can take your stand on that day when the King comes. If you haven't repented of your sins, now is the time to answer God's call so you will be ready for the return of the King of kings.



“Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, saying ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand.’”

Jesus spoke these words more than 2,000 years ago; but as we have seen, the Kingdom of God has yet to be established in the earth. Just what did He mean when He said that the Kingdom was at hand?

Consider the following: Jesus Christ is King of the Kingdom. He is the ‘Way’ into the Kingdom and the ‘Door’ by which we may enter. He came to call sinners to repentance – to show them how they could enter the Kingdom. When He said, ‘The Kingdom of God is at hand,’ He meant the Messiah, the Savior – the only means under which men could enter the Kingdom of God – had come into the world of men and was in their midst.

This clarifies Jesus’ often misunderstood statement to the Pharisees: ‘The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.’ The words within you should be translated ‘among you,’ or ‘in your midst.’ Jesus Christ, the King of the Kingdom, was in the midst of the Pharisees when He spoke these words.

Often, ‘king,’ and ‘kingdom’ are used interchangeably. For example, the ‘head of gold’ in King Nebuchadnezzar’s prophetic dream (Dan. 2) represents the Babylonian kingdom – yet, it also represents the king of Babylon. The prophet Daniel explains, ‘Thou [Nebuchadnezzar] art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom...’ (verses 38,39).

In the seventh chapter, four beasts representing four kingdoms are described as ‘four kings which shall arise out of the earth,’ (verse 17).

So when Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as if it were present, He simply meant that the Kingdom was present in the Person of the King.

The apostle Paul’s reference to a present ‘Kingdom’ has also been misunderstood. He wrote, ‘Giving all thanks unto the

Father...Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son,’ (Col. 1:12,13).

God’s people are already ‘in’ the Kingdom in the same sense that an heir is already the possessor of his inheritance (see Gal. 4:1). They are ‘in’ the Kingdom in the sense that they have experienced some level of the power of the Kingdom, and have submitted to the rule to the King of the Kingdom.

Several other scriptures seem to suggest that the Kingdom is present. Please note

enter, and they receive you, eat such things as set before you: And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’

Revelation 1:7: ‘John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’

None of the above passages says that the Kingdom of God has already been established in the earth. Rather, they simply say the Kingdom is present in power, or in the Person (or Spirit) of the King of the Kingdom, Jesus Christ.

When the disciples went into the various cities casting out demons, healing the sick, and preaching the Kingdom of God, they said ‘The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’ They meant that the means of entry into the Kingdom had been displayed.

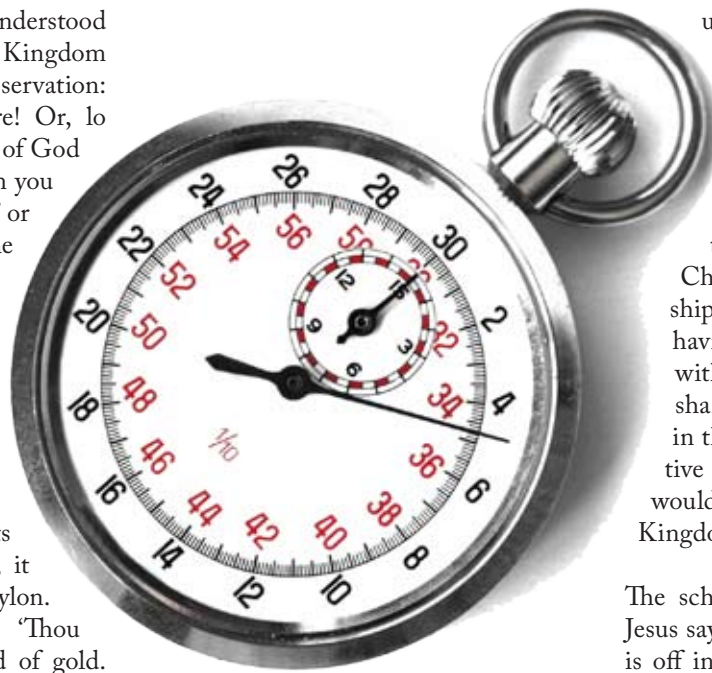
John acknowledged his companionship with fellow Christians ‘in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.’ He was speaking of the hardships he and other Christians were having to endure, but was speaking with a view toward the future. They shared in the Kingdom (or kinship) in the sense that they shared the positive assurance that the present distress would one day give way to the glorious Kingdom of God.

The scholars who claim ‘You can’t have Jesus saying both the kingdom is here and is off in the future,’ and who supposedly “take a very careful approach to how saying of Jesus were transmitted and to the evolution of the Bible texts,’ need to be much more careful in their evaluation of biblical references to the Kingdom.

Perhaps they are not ‘maverick scholars’ but who said the majority is always right.

Humanity is headed toward destruction. Unless Almighty God intervenes into the affairs of humankind, there remains no hope for the future of our plant, no hope for our children and our children’s children – no hope at all! That’s why Jesus Christ Must return!

Kingdom Countdown



An excerpt from our booklet:
Why Christ Must Return

the following: Matthew 12:20: ‘But if I [Jesus] cast out devils [demons] by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.’

Mark 12:34: ‘And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God...’

Luke 10:6-7: ‘And into whatsoever city ye

Jesus Christ Is Fulfilled Prophecy

continued from page 5

watched as His clothes were gambled away by lot. Also, some of the very last words Christ would roar from His crucified condition are found in verse 1. Psalm 69:21 mentions the vinegar that was given to Him when He asked for a drink. You can validate the fulfillment of these many prophecies by simply reading and comparing the record of Matthew 27, Luke 23, and John 19.

And of course it would be remiss not to mention Isaiah 53 and the detailed description of the events and reasons for these circumstances, explained and outlined so we can understand *why* this had to happen in the way it did. The plan of God is underscored and anchored on the foundational principle that remission of sins can only be achieved by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22-28). This is the pattern of things in the heavens—that which God the Father set in motion when it was decided that the *Creator God*, the Word manifested later as Jesus Christ, came to die for His Creation (Col. 1:9-20; John 1:10-16). Admittedly, this was the prophet that Moses also spoke of in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and of which the apostle Peter confirmed when he said,

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, [Jesus was Jewish, see Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5] ...Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days... having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” (Acts 3:22-26)

THE GOD ORDAINED MISSION

Throughout the course of the many scriptures already referenced, we are explicitly told that the Child, born of a virgin in Bethlehem is to be a “King” for a Kingdom linked to the Jewish Davidic lineage, destined to be eternal; *a Kingdom without end!* It is to be a Kingdom described by the prophets as a utopia: a Kingdom of Peace, ultimately, ruled by this Prince of Peace who will change the nature of not only human beings, but even that of the animals. There will be a complete reshaping of the social

order by virtue of re-instituting the laws of God, *resulting in* the “Kingdom of God.” This will finally bring peace to the Earth (remember, the reward of the saved is not heaven). Unmistakably, God’s Kingdom will be established on this Earth!

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” (Zech. 14:9)

The result of this God ordained intervention, will change the order of things:

“It’s always been about assuring mankind that we have the potential of becoming part of His God Family...”

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse [who was King David’s father], and a branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him... And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loin, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid... and the cow and the bear shall feed... and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s [or adder’s] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [nation]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse [Jesus Christ, He is the root], which shall stand for an ensign of the people...” (Isa. 11, emphasis mine)

The rulership of the “root of Jesse” was always at the foundation of the mission. From the initial announcement from Gabriel to Mary, fulfilling the prophetic utterance of Isaiah the prophet in chapter 9 we are decidedly told that this God incar-

nate Child, the Word manifest in the flesh as Jesus Christ (John 1:14; Rev. 19:11-16), would come and die for His Creation, go back to the Father as a High Priest, and “appear a second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 28). Remember, the disciples were told by the angel upon witnessing Jesus’ ascension that this same *Jesus would return* “in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

And when He comes thundering back, His mission will be to reshape the world order and bring peace to men of good will. Isaiah 2:1-4; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Micah 4:1-4 all speak of this God ordained project that the Father is determined to accomplish through Christ. He has a tremendous amount of investment devoted to this salvific program of redemption. He’s been telling us about it since the Garden of Eden when He created man in His own image. It’s always been about assuring mankind that we have the potential of becoming part of His *God Family* if we so choose to exercise our *birthright*. Sadly, so many don’t recognize the formula that results in atonement with God. Yet, God is eager for all of us to understand *why* He is so interested in us and more importantly, *how* we can achieve our potential. It all begins with accepting Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God and King of kings—the *promised* Messiah of mankind! (Heb. 2:5-18).

These specific **fulfilled prophecies** throughout your Bible are *unquestionably* the proof of this definitive fact!

FURTHER READING:

The following are additional prophetic scriptures you can use as a side bar if you would like, that would add further proof that Christ is indeed the promised Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament:

- Gen. 23:18 relates to Christ, confirmed by Paul, Gal. 3:8, 16
- Gen. 49:9-10; 1 Chron. 5:2: The Scepter will be from Judah, confirmed by Heb. 7:14
- Num. 9:12; Psalms 34:20: The Passover Lamb’s bones were not to be broken, confirmed by John 19:36
- Isa. 50:6; 52:14 illustrates Jesus’ beatings, confirmed by Matt. 27:26-31; Mark 15:15-20
- Hosea 11:1 illustrates God’s son would come from Egypt, confirmed by Matt. 2:15
- Zech. 13:6-7 illustrates Jesus was crucified resulting in the scattering of the sheep, confirmed by Matt. 26:31
- Psalms 35:11 illustrates false witnesses would be used against Jesus, confirmed by Mark 14:56

*"I'll be your guide and you will follow me,
And I will lead you through a world of pain,
Where dead souls writhe in endless agony and
clamor,
As they cry to die again."*

Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy

The doctrine of an eternal Hell was around at the time when Italian Poet Alighieri wrote the poem as an allegory of human life in the form of a vision of the world beyond the grave, with the hope of converting an evil society to righteousness. The poem describes Dante's imaginary journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise—but is there really an ever-burning Hell?

Dante's poem is not a correct reflection of the Holy Bible's teaching on the fate of the wicked. As we will see in this article, the true biblical teaching is not of an ever-burning Hell, but rather annihilation, the Second Death, from which there will be no resurrection.

Before we begin, we must first ask these questions: What is Hell? Does it exist? For who was it created? Is it a physical place, and most importantly, is it infinite? What does the scripture teach about Hell? *The Merriam Webster's Dictionary* defines Hell as, "a place of turmoil and destruction" while the *Farlex Dictionary* defines it as, "a state of separation from God, or a place of evil, misery, discord, and destruction." How does the Bible describe Hell and how

do we know it exists? (Matt. 5:30; 2 Pet. 3:7; Mal. 4:1).

2 Thessalonians 1:9 describes Hell as a place of punishment; Matthew 25:30 a place of banishment; Mark 9:42, a place of fire and worms; Jude 1:13, a place of darkness; Revelations 20:10, a place of torment; Luke 16, a place of consciousness, thirst—a place without hope, unfulfilled desires, unanswered prayers; Matthew 25:30, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. There are various meanings of the word 'hell' used in these scriptures. In fact, the Bible speaks of three different types of hell.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *sheol* is the same as the Greek *hades* in the New Testament, and refers to a place of the dead or the grave (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27; 1 Cor. 15:55). The other Greek words are *tartaroo* and *gehenna*. Tartaroo, used once in the Bible, refers to the place where fallen angels or demons are restrained awaiting judgment (2 Pet. 2:4). Gehenna refers to a valley just outside Jerusalem, and is derived from the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom, the Valley of Hinnom (Josh. 18:16). At the time of Jesus, it was a city dump, where garbage and other refuse were thrown and consumed by the fire.

It's interesting to note that Jesus used this particular locale, and what usually occurred there, to help us understand the fate the wicked and unrepentant sinner will suffer in the future (Mark 9:47-48).

This fiery punishment meant they will be consumed by the fire and *not* the eternal torment wrongly portrayed by Christianity throughout the ages. The text also referred to the worm that dieth not. However, the worm is not symbolic of sinners, but maggots among the garbage. No one is in Hell right now. Scriptures show that this Hellfire is *to come* (Dan. 12:1-12; John 5:25-29; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 20:13-15).

Various denominations have long held the view that Hell is an everlasting punishment based on Revelations 14:11, "...the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever;" Matthew 25:46, "...and these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life;" Revelations 20:10, "...the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire...and they will be tormented day and night forever;" Isaiah 34:5-10, "...the streams thereof shall become burning pitch...the smoke thereof shall go up forever and ever;" and Jude 13, "...to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

In all the passages above, the Greek word, *aion* translated 'forever,' does not mean eternity or infinity. Forever and ever simply means the object will continue to last *as long as conditions permit*—a limited time. The fire will burn until everything is consumed or destroyed.

Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:43; Luke 3:17; and Isaiah 34:10 speak of a fire that shall never be quenched. When we look at the Greek

IS THERE AN ETERNAL HELLFIRE?

By Stacy-Ann McGregor

for *unquenchable*, we realize Jesus was simply saying that the fire will burn until the bodies of the wicked are consumed. An unquenched fire is one that has not been extinguished. It burns itself out when it consumes everything and has no more combustible material to keep it going. Ezekiel 20:47 speaks of fire that consumes entirely. In Jeremiah 17:27, Yahweh said he would kindle an *unquenchable* fire in Jerusalem. This was fulfilled in 2 Chronicles 36:19-21. Is Jerusalem still burning?

The following scriptures speak of eternal judgment: Jude 7, "...even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them...suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;" Matthew 25:46, "...these shall go into everlasting punishment;" Matthew 25:41, "...depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" Hebrews 6:2, "...resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment."

In the above texts, the Greek for eternal is *aionou*, which means final and complete. Sodom and Gomorrah are not burning—they burnt to ash long ago (Matt. 11:23; 2 Pet. 2:6). Eternal destruction means the consequence is eternal. Once you are burned up, you will not return (Psa. 104:35).

Dr. Samuel Bachiocchi in his book, *Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* says,

"this can hardly mean that the wicked will be agonizing in the midst of inextinguishable fire."

In Jonah 2:6, the prophet cried out while in the belly of the great fish,

"I went down to the very roots of the mountains into the land whose gates lock shut forever."

In this illustration, *forever* lasted only three days and three nights. In Philemon 15, Onesimus was received by Philemon *forever*, but when he died he could no longer be a servant. Deuteronomy 15:17 speaks of a servant serving his master forever, but this *forever* ended with the death of the servant. 1 Chronicles 28:4 said David was to be king *forever*, but he ruled for 40 years.

The story about Lazarus in Luke 16 is baseless regarding everlasting punishment. Jesus was merely using a parable to explain the torment unrepentant sinners will experience before they are totally consumed by fire. The rich man was in *hades* (the grave) about to be thrown into the lake of fire.

Anti-annihilationists argue that in order to be fair there must be extremes for good and evil—everlasting life vs. everlasting

"Why are so many willing to accept the idea that the God they worship and hold in high esteem would willingly inflict such punishment on a great multitude of people?"

ing punishment. However, Romans 6:23 destroys that argument: the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life (see John 3:16).

The Apostle John saw the vision of a new Heaven and a new Earth in Revelation 21, following the vision of the lake of fire in Revelation 20, where death and Hell were cast into the fire. Now, after all is burnt up and the Earth is renewed, where would that everlasting place of fire be? Notice Revelation 21, the New Jerusalem and God come down to Earth after sin, sinners, and the effects of sin, are destroyed.

It's clear from the rest of scripture, that the final fate of the wicked is complete destruction. The unrighteous will be destroyed: Ezek. 18:20; Psa. 37:38; Psa. 92:7; Psa. 145:20; Matt. 10:28; 1 Tim. 6:9; Prov. 13:13; Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9.

The wicked shall surely perish: Prov. 9:19; Luke 13:3; 2 Thess. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:12

The wicked shall be burned up: Mal. 4:1-3; Isa. 33:12; Matt. 3:12; Matt. 13:30; Heb. 6:8.

The wicked shall be consumed: Isa. 1:28; Psa. 37:20.

The wicked will be devoured: Psa. 21:9; Heb. 10:27; Rev. 20:9.

The unrighteous will be cut off: Psa. 37:2; Psa. 37:9; Psa. 37:22; Psa. 37:34; Prov. 2:22; Obad. 15-16.

This is what the Bible teaches: the unrighteous will receive their eternal punishment, not eternal *punishing*, they will be completely destroyed—annihilated. The question then is: will a loving God punish people forever in Hell? Why are so many willing to accept the idea that the God they worship and hold in high esteem would willingly inflict such punishment on a great multitude of people? How can such a belief go hand in hand with the Bible's description of Yahweh, who is forever loving and merciful?

The Church of England's Doctrine Commission 1995 report entitled, *The Mystery of Salvation* states,

"Christians have professed appalling theologies, which made God into a sadistic monster. Hell is not eternal torment, but is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God, so completely and so absolutely, that the only end is total non-being." (p. 199)

Remember the story of Noah and the flood. When God saw the bodies, He made a resolve that He would never again destroy the world by water but by fire instead.

Theologian John Wenham, an advocate for the annihilation doctrine wrote:

"I believe that endless torment is a bidious and unscriptural doctrine, which has been a terrible burden on the mind of the church for many centuries and a terrible blot on her presentation of the gospel. I should indeed be happy, if before I die, I could help in sweeping it away."

Editor's note: This article was adapted from the winning speech at the annual *Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Speaking Competition*, held by the Church of God International, Jamaica, at the Feast of Tabernacles in Ocho Rios, on October 3, 2007.



By Steve Agnew

THE KING'S MARINE

A PROMISE IN THE PARADE GROUND

Many of us are familiar with the Hollywood plot line common to military movies which involve a recruit, the drill sergeant, and a special mission thereafter. Several war movies made after the Second World War were of this genre. One such example was the *Sands of Iwo Jima* (March 1950), starring John Wayne. In this movie, a tough drill sergeant successfully prepares his marines for their future missions against the enemy on Tarawa and eventually Iwo Jima. In particular, the drill sergeant's tough, but unpleasant methods pay back with results and saved lives.

In real life, a marine is a soldier with a special kind of motto. His name conjures up the ideas of duty, honour, and commitment. His military prowess is also legendary, and he is often asked to go beyond the norm.

Comparably, in the spiritual realm, God

also has an army (Rev. 19:19). They are considered 'Christian soldiers.' In fact, every Christian is commanded to put on the full Armour of God (Eph. 6:10-11) as though he were a soldier preparing for combat (Eph. 6:13-17). However, God also has His special forces (1 Cor. 12:27-31). You could say they are the 'King's Marines.' They are divinely called, appointed, and chosen by God's own recruiting office (Matt. 22:14; Isa. 44:24; Jer. 1:5).

The King's Marines are trained in the public 'parade ground' of the Church, and in the context of faith, preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as duty bound loyal soldiers regardless of the cost to their personal comfort (Rom. 10:17). This is the Christian's mission: to preach the Gospel and witness to the truth so humanity may have the opportunity to repent and be saved (1 Tim. 2:1-7; Jude 1:20-23; Heb. 12:1-2). The mission of the King's Marine is to do so without hesitation, fear, or compromise, even when it hurts. Some of these special soldiers were the twelve apostles. In addition,

we are waiting for two more of these specialists and their support staff at the end time (Rev. 11:3-8).

A popular televangelist made a statement about the sequence of events that generally guide the path of a true Christian as this: "promise, problem, and provision." Jesus spoke more specifically by promising that those who left the comfort of this life to serve the cause of the Kingdom would be rewarded now and in the future (Luke 18:29-30). Of course, as the televangelist says, with a promise there often comes a challenge before the reward is received.

HAULING DOWN THE JOLLY ROGER

What is the challenge for the 21st century Christian who lives the life as a King's Marine? We are told that every Christian must witness to the truth so that all might come to understand the truth and be saved (Acts 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). We are also told, as Christians we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual enemies

in high places (Eph. 6:12). This is why we must put on the spiritual Armour of God and learn how to use it in this spiritual warfare we are confronting (Eph. 6:10-20). Especially, since we live in a world of 'deception and spin' where wrong is right and right is wrong (Isa. 5:20) and few seem to care (Matt. 24:11-12).

The spirit of rebellion or antichrist is everywhere (1 John 4:1-6). This is true not only in the secular world but in the religious world as well. It's apparent that some organizations that call themselves Christian are plainly not. How can you identify yourself as a Christian, but deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ? (Luke 6:46-49; John 14:15-17). In essence, there are many renegades—some might even say pirates—who boldly fly the ensign of the ship, the 'Jolly Roger.' Each Christian, as a King's Marine, has a divinely inspired mission to engage in 'spiritual warfare', confronting these 'Jolly Roger pirates' with an encounter of the Truth. We can never know how that may affect them. Frankly, only our King knows.



"Each Christian, as a King's Marine, has a divinely inspired mission to engage in 'spiritual warfare', confronting these 'Jolly Roger pirates' with an encounter of the Truth"

Remember, a true marine does not choose his mission or mission length, but instead simply obeys. He does not complain, and if he does, he quickly recalls his mission and commitment, undoubtedly knowing he has the full resources of his commander. As 'Christian Marines' we too are assured we have the full resource of God's Spirit and our Godly King's provisions to complete the mission we find ourselves confronting. We are assured in God's army, contrary to 'real life,' no true Christian soldier gets left behind (John 14:18-21; Rev. 3:7-13).

One such story described in the Bible is the story of the prophet Elijah, which has all the elements described above. In this story, against all odds, a King's Marine,

Elijah, is sent to the heart of the enemy to combat spiritual wickedness in high places and the religious deception of false priests who serve the pagan god Baal. But despite the danger, because God's strength is with him, he succeeds. Yet, throughout the course of this event, we see evidence of Elijah's depression and doubt before the victory. We are reminded that he is human

remain of them (Rev. 19-20).

THE REWARD

What is the reward for a lifetime of risk and commitment as a Christian soldier of Jesus Christ? Jesus said that those who left the comfort of this life to serve the cause of the Kingdom would be rewarded now and in the future (Luke 18:29-30). Practically speaking, all faithful Christians will have some part in the rulership of the Millennial Empire of our King, Jesus Christ. It will finally be a time to set things right. Except for a brief rebellion (Rev. 20:3), the war will be over (Isa. 2:4, Micah 4:3). The joy for these Christian Marines, turned rulers, will be like that of a farmer who makes a sick tree yield good fruit in due season or like that of an architect who sets straight a leaning structure. Subsequent to the Millennial Kingdom, the greater joy will be an eternal life of perfection with God Himself.

This world's scientists, educators, media, and governments talk about the evolutionary nature of perfection. They say

it will be attained by the accumulation and use of knowledge. In particular, some popular science-fiction shows so loved by the masses suggest that this view of perfection is our future—but God has a different plan. *Only* the Christian with God's Spirit in him will truly live a life of eternal perfection in the not too distant future...

So consider your life's results. How do your works, as a soldier for Christ's Coming Kingdom measure up? If tested by God's fire would they be burned up as hay, wood, and stubble, or would they endure as though they were diamonds and gold? (1 Cor. 3:10-15).



after all, but God does not desert him or forsake him. Instead, God strengthens him and provides a helper and eventual replacement—Elisha (1 Kgs. 17-19). In due time, the 'Jolly Roger' of this situation, Jezebel and her Baal worship, is taken down in Samaria (2 Kgs. 9).

A similar problem faces today's Christian Marines. North America is enslaved by many modern day Baals. They are: capitalism, secularism, feminism, socialism, intellectualism, hedonism, humanism, and in general, all forms of self-centered human thinking. In due time, the Baals of North America, and the laws that create and protect them, shall also be brought down. One way or another, nothing shall

The Return of the Twelfth Imam

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Peter Bergen, author of, *Holy War Inc.* gives us the answer:

"The continued American military presence in Arabia, U.S. support for Israel, its continued campaign against Iraq, and its support for regimes such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia that bin Laden regards as apostates from Islam. Bin Laden is at war with the U.S., but his is a political war justified by his own understanding of Islam, and directed at the institutions and symbols of American power such as the Pentagon and the World Trade Center."

There are many sides to the Islamic religion, and the existence of a strong element of militant fundamentalists is a threat not only to Americans but also to moderate Muslims. Tarek Fatah, who hosts *The Muslim Chronicles* on Canadian television, told *The Toronto Star* he has kept his bags packed since criticizing Muslim extremism on television. He said he has been getting death threats, and moderate leaders in the U.S. have also faced fierce criticism for opposing extremist regimes.

The moderate voice is almost nonexistent. Ahmadinejad and Osama bin Laden are two high profile cosmocrats. They have access to millions of dollars to promote their jihad agenda. Their charismatic popularity is most certainly exacerbated by our well-known adversary, Satan. The Dragon is assuredly influencing, taunting, and whispering to the Jihadist extremists. Paul writes to Timothy in the context of the Christian, but is applicable to the Islamic Jihadists as well,

"...And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
(2 Tim. 2:26, emphasis mine)

They are flaunting their venomous threats to the entire world with impunity. If they were to be killed it would only serve as a catalyst for more virulent threats, because they thrive on martyrdom.

Our current prophetic insights do not

include the United States. The Middle East, however, is a 'mushroom factory' for any and all prognostications in prophecy. The Beast and the False Prophet, for example, are certainly cosmocrats. The Apostle John writes:

"Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty-two months... And all that dwell upon the Earth shall worship him..." (Rev. 13:4-8)

“...Therefore let us not sleep,
as do others;
but let us watch
and be sober...”

(1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Matthew also writes:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
(Matt. 24:24)

Ahmadinejad will continue his 'divine' calling to ensure the revelation of the Twelfth Imam. He is determined to bring the Twelfth Imam out of occultation and present him as the 'savior of mankind.' With the second coming of the Mahdi, Shi'ites expect to realize the final triumph of Islam around the world. At present, there is no force able to stop his relentless pursuit of nuclear bombs and missiles to destroy Israel and cripple the U.S. In like manner, Osama will proceed with his al-Qaeda operatives around the world. The final triumph will not come without an intense struggle. The Ayatollah Khomeini firmly believed that only a proper structured Islamic theocracy could create the

conditions needed for the return of the Twelfth Imam. Khomeini also believed he was on a mission from God. We have two things we can do in the interim of these end-time developments.

The first thing we can do is watch! Watch that we do not grow weary in well doing. Watch that we do not run out of oil or become unprofitable. Watch that we do not backslide. Watch that as we increase in goods we have need of nothing. Finally, Luke writes:

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)

The second thing we can do is work while it is day, lest the night come when no man can work. Paul writes to the Thessalonians:

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thess. 5:5-11)



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STORM TROOPERS

By Ken Allen

There are many references in the New Testament of conditions described as warfare, the need for armour, and appeals to be a Christian soldier. We hear about battles and warnings not to let anyone steal your crown for the coming reward of immortality and rulership. So, some say it's no wonder Jesus mentioned, "the violent take it [the Kingdom of God] by force" (Matt. 11:12). But, what was it that Jesus really meant by this? Many times we struggle to understand the context of a statement, because we are so far removed from the time and culture in which it was originally spoken. Let's take, for example, this scripture mentioned above, located in Matthew 11:12:

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force..."

What does this mean? Is physical violence being committed against God's Kingdom? Are we supposed to be like a battalion of 'storm troopers' employing all necessary force—even *physical violence* in order to take the Kingdom?

Jesus originally uttered these words in Hebrew. Therefore let's look at the text in its original cultural setting. The connecting link is an old rabbinic interpretation of Micah 2:12-13 which reads:

"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their

fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them."

Micah paints a picture of the ancient Jewish practice of a shepherd building a makeshift rock fence to pen up or coral his sheep.

"The next morning, to let the sheep out, he makes a hole or breach in the fence by tossing some of the stones aside. He steps through this 'gate' with the sheep following close behind. Because they have been penned up all night, they push and shove, several trying to get through at once, literally breaking through, and further breaching the little gate in their eagerness to get out and into the green pasture. Finally they burst out into the open spaces, rushing headlong after the shepherd."¹

With this picture, a more accurate rendering of Matthew 11:12 would be:

"the kingdom of heaven is breaking forth and every person in it is breaking forth [literally, 'those who are breaking out break out in it'].²

So the Kingdom is bursting out into the world and the citizens of the Kingdom are finding freedom. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, is the breach-maker. Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Kingly Shepherd leading His sheep to freedom and green pastures. Compare the parallel

account in Luke 16:16,

"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it." (emphasis mine)

In one sense, the Kingdom of God has and continues to suffer *physical violence* from the enemy as evidenced by persecution and the martyrdom of saints down through the historical ages. But, on the other hand, what we need is *not* physical violence against others, but rather, spiritual determination *against* our sinful carnal nature. And therein lies the distinction between where our 'break out' efforts should be directed—to *spiritually* resolve and be *spiritually* determined to overcome our carnal nature!

However, Jesus showed His continued awareness of our proclivity to do *physical violence* when He told Peter to "Put your sword into the sheath" (John 18:11) after the apostle slashed off the high priest servant's right ear. Later, while being interrogated by Pilate, Jesus emphatically dissociated Himself and His disciples from any form of *physical violence* when He answered,

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews..." (John 18:36).

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Archaeology Corner

By Waine-Ann McLaughlin



KING HEROD'S TOMB FOUND?

Has the tomb of King Herod been found?

King Herod was the reigning King of Judea, from around 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. (during the time of Jesus' birth).

Professor Ehud Netzer, an archaeologist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, says he located Herod's tomb at Herodium, just south of Jerusalem. The description of ancient historian Josephus Flavius' details of Herod's funeral procession is what led Prof Netzer's team to the burial site. A smashed limestone sarcophagus was found measuring approximately 8 feet long with ornate rosette decorations on the fragments. The ornate rosette decorations played a major part in identifying the coffin's significance.

Unfortunately there were no bones in the coffin. Professor Netzer believes that the bones may have been removed by Jewish rebels who fought against Rome between 66 A.D. and 72 A.D.

ISRAEL MUSEUM PUTS MEDIEVAL HEBREW MANUSCRIPT ON DISPLAY

The Israel Museum, in Jerusalem, has put a medieval manuscript on display. The manuscript was in the hands of a Lebanese born American who turned it over to the Rare Book Manuscripts and Special Collections Library at Duke University. It is now on loan to the Museum Shrine of Books, in Israel, for display and is housed with the Dead Sea Scrolls. The manuscript is a Hebrew manuscript containing the "Song of the Sea" section of the Old Testament book of the Exodus, dated to around the 7th century A.D. This comes from the time in history known as the 'Silent Era' that spanned for a 600 year period between the 3rd and 8th century A.D, from which there are almost no surviving Hebrew manuscripts.

The parchment is believed to have been part of a vast depository of Medical Jewish Manuscripts discovered in the late 1800 in Cairo's ancient Ben Ezra Synagogue.

EGYPTIAN TOMB INSCRIPTION MAY BE OLDEST PROTO-CANAANITE TEXT YET

Professor Richard Steiner a Semitic language expert at Yeshiva University, in New York, has solved the mysterious inscriptions found on the tombs of ancient Egyptian Kings. These were religious texts inter-spread throughout the underground chambers of the pyramids south of Cairo. The texts remained a puzzle until 2002, when an Egyptologist emailed the undeciphered parts of the text to Professor Steiner. Steiner deciphered it and identified the texts to be of a Semitic origin and connected to a language used by the Canaanites at some point between 30 B.C. to 25 B.C. According to Steiner, the Semitic language of the texts is said to be a very archaic form of the language that later developed into Phoenician and Hebrew. This is interesting as it makes a connection between the Canaanites, Egyptians, and the Hebrew peoples.

The Voice of One Crying

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"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of

God, even to them who believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

John the Baptist prepared the way for this Good News (Gospel) Message! He was one of the greatest prophets who ever lived (Luke 7:26-28).



The First Failure, Second Triumph

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...—and consequently death spread to all humanity, Christ's righteousness and consequent life can spread to everyone. 1 Corinthians 15: 21-22 puts it this way,

"For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

Like Adam, Jesus was fully human, born of the seed of man, but God incarnate (Heb.

2:16-18). Unlike the first Adam, Christ was perfect in obedience. He possessed perfect wisdom and humility. Adam was given dominion over the created world, whereas Christ was given dominion over *all things*. Where the first Adam failed to overcome Satan, the ruler of *this* world, Christ succeeded! He was triumphant over sin, the flesh, and the devil (John 16:33).

While the first Adam was made in the image of God, Christ "is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). While the first man was of the earth, made from dust, the second Man is the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). While the first Adam brought

sin into the world, the second Adam took away sin from the world. While the first Adam brought sin and death, the last Adam brings eternal life!

Thus, this King of kings and Lord of lords, Christ, the Saviour of Mankind, is the better Adam, the Second Adam, and the Last Adam who will return at the end of the age. Indeed, the *King is coming*—the only one worthy to rule and redeem humanity.



Storm Troopers

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Instead of using *physical violence*, the Kingdom of God is breaking forth, spiritually, throughout the entire world by the mediums of publishing, preaching, and personal witnessing as the Good News of Jesus Christ's return with rewards of Eternal Life as an Immortal Spirit Being. Just as the sheep break out through the hole in the fence, we human beings, like hungry pent up sheep must go after the Good News of the Kingdom with zeal and our whole heart (Jer. 29:13). We must "hunger and thirst for [God's] righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) and make the pursuit of understanding how to aspire to His Kingdom and His righteousness our highest priority (Matt. 6:33).

We must,

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

This Way calls for unusual sacrifices including the willingness to lose our lives for it if necessary (Luke 14:26-27). Jesus issued a stern warning to the religious elite of His day in Matt. 23:13:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

While they were busy splitting hairs over doctrine and trying to discredit and destroy the King (Jesus Christ) of the Kingdom, sinners (prostitutes, publicans, thieves), sick folks, demoniacs, the hungry and depraved were thronging Him with reckless abandonment to get what they desperately needed: food, hope, healing, and deliverance. They were like the hungry sheep 'breaking out' through the small hole in the wall running after their Shepherd to lead them into the green pastures of His Kingdom.

As we reflect on the Hebraic perspective of Matthew 11:12, let us rejoice in the sure promise from the Good Shepherd, our Messiah and King, Jesus Christ:

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)



By Jasmin Smith

BORN TO BE KING



*"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet
head..."*

For many, this image of baby Jesus is burned into their minds each time they think of our Saviour. Others liken Jesus to a gentle lamb—delicate and docile. But how accurate are these representations of our Lord and Saviour?

JESUS: THE LAMB OF GOD

Jesus is called the Lamb of God in John 1:29 and John 1:36.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29)

"And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'" (John 1:36)

Jesus was born with the distinct purpose of being the Saviour of mankind. When sin entered the world, so did the necessity for the atonement of sin. As we know from Hebrews 9:22, the shedding of blood is required for the atonement of sin. Under

the Old Covenant, unblemished lambs were often used as an atoning sacrifice to *cover* the sins of Israel. However, the blood of animals was not enough to wipe clean the exhaustive sins of mankind (Heb. 9:12-14). Therefore, Jesus shed His divinity and came to the Earth to shed His blood as the *Lamb of God*—the ultimate and perfect atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

"...He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth." (Acts 8:32)

When a lamb is brought to slaughter it is docile, and quiet. The lamb remains calm because it doesn't know it is about to be slain. Like the lamb, Jesus remained calm and silent as He was led to slaughter. Thus, for some, Jesus' silent humility portrays a Saviour who was weak as a lamb—feeble and docile in the face of His accusers. However, His actions were anything but those of a "weak and docile" person. Unlike a lamb, Jesus *knew* His fate, and boldly sacrificed Himself to die for the sins of mankind. In fact, His short life on

Earth exemplifies both humility and boldness.

JESUS: THE CONQUERING LION

In addition to Jesus' silent humility, His love and compassion towards those publicly accused of sinning, adds to the misrepresentation of Jesus as a *weak* Lamb.

When the Pharisees brought the woman who had been caught in adultery to Jesus, rather than condemn her to stoning, He had mercy on her (John 8:3-11). His compassion expressed here was matched with courage as He stood up to the Pharisees declaring:

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do... there is no truth in him... for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (John 8:44-47)

These are certainly *not* the words of a weak and docile Saviour!



Photo by: Peter Shanks Source: flickr

Other examples of Jesus' boldness include:

Jesus overthrowing the tables of money changers in the temple:

"...It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Matt. 21:12-13)

Jesus healing on the Sabbath:

"Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?' And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame..." (Luke 13:15-17)

Jesus' many scathing condemnations of the Pharisees:

"...Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness..." (Luke 11:39-44)

"...Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?..." (Matt. 23:13-36, Read: "Is There an Eternal Hellfire" on page 16 for more information about the condemnation of hell)

"...You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

Indeed, Christ's patience and mercy is matched with His powerful boldness! When Jesus shed His blood He fulfilled the first stage of His mission for mankind by becoming the ultimate atoning sacrifice for our sins. In stage two, when Jesus returns to the Earth He will not come as a gentle babe, or as a docile lamb. Praise God, for the Lamb who was slain will gallantly return as a Conquering Lion to establish His Kingdom on the Earth! (Rev. 5:1-10).



Letters to the Editor

CHRISTMAS TREE REPLACES CHRIST

Honestly, in my opinion, I would not have a Christmas tree in my home, simply because I do believe that it has nothing to do with the birth, death, even the life of Jesus Christ. The whole reason or point of me being a Christian is to follow Christ; so adding pagan practices is kinda wrong. The Bible says in Exodus 11 that you shall have no other God but ME. Believing that a green tree gives everlasting life replaces the real Christ.

C.Z., United Kingdom

LOVES THE MAGAZINE

I just received *Tomorrow's News* [now *Prevail*] magazine and was very glad you did really consider sending it to me here in the Philippines by mail. I read it from cover to cover on the day I got hold of it. I really appreciate the work you all have done. I hope I'll be able to get hold of the next and succeeding issues by mail. Again, thanks a lot.

Nelson Francia, The Philippines

VERY ENLIGHTENING

I got a copy of your magazine *Tomorrow's News* [now *Prevail*] and enjoyed it very much. I found it most enlightening. Please, I would like to continue getting copies in the future.

Erlene Benigar, United States

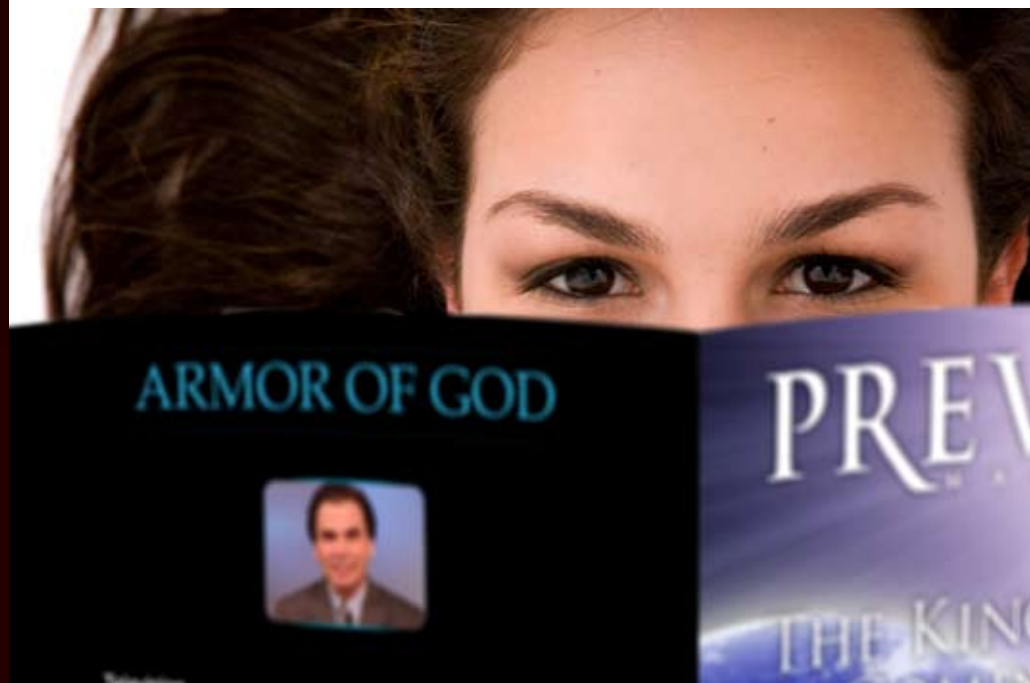
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Change is coming...