

E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom

"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.
Change the way you think and act, and believe the Good News."
Mark 1:15 GW

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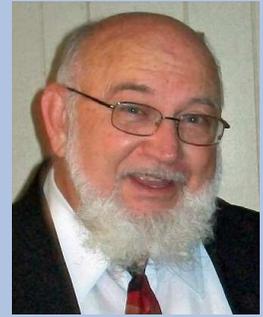
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**DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S COMING
KINGDOM TO BE ESTABLISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS**



EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Kent Ross - Wally Winner



Welcome to this issue of our E-Herald. This is a combined issue for May and June. With both editors involved in many ministry-related events and efforts, we decided this was the best option.

This issue is filled with good articles that will be a blessing. They are written by leaders in our churches from across the country, and include a writer from the England, via the Caribbean (Alan Eyre), Michael Hoffman (Illinois), Arlen Rankin (Washington), Daniel Siderius (Maryland), Dennis Baldwin (Virginia), Paul Rankin (Washington) and Rex Cain (Ohio)

Theological Conference

That was one of the events in which one or both of us were involved. This gathering is our people from all over and from without our churches, all believers in the One God. This began many years ago, which the Bible college was still located in Illinois. Anthony Buzzard and I collaborated to put together the first program.

It continues to bring people together, many of whom did not know each other before. As in the past years, there was a baptism of one who wanted to seal her faith. What great faith stories we heard, including a professor of Philosophy who is also a believer. It is unfortunate that so few of our ministers avail themselves of this opportunity.

NCD

The initials represent Natural Church Development and is the latest program promoted by the Church of God General Conference to enhance the health of local churches. By assessing eight areas of health, diagnosing how they can be worked with, each church should find itself stronger as a result.

Several churches have begun working on this and more are considering it. Gary Burnham is the man in charge of this new program. It was presented at Christian Worker's Seminar this year, and will be given more exposure at the General Conference this summer.

Evangelism

It is explained that with Natural Church Development giving churches stronger health and that "church growth" will be the natural result. It's interesting that that term "church growth" has such a negative connotation for many.

Yet if something is alive, it grows. Normally a church that is alive through the power of the Lord's Spirit will grow. It is unnatural for a church to stay small. Perhaps NCD will help reveal those things that hinder church growth.

We remain convinced that God is not willing that any should perish; that He wants His lost people found; and that the Church is the vehicle Christ established and that should be growing, for even the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

With those teachings before us, it is inexplicable to accept non-growth over decades. To begin small is understandable, but to remain small, with little or no growth is unacceptable.

We must remain true to the Bible, and contend for the faith once delivered to us (Jude 3), but the story of the small New Testament church exploding across their world is clearly portrayed for us in the book of Acts.

College(s)

Atlanta Bible College will be holding its graduation the end of May, but the results are disappointing. It was hoped with the blessing of the new building, and the offer of free tuition, there would be a strong increase in the student body. While there was a numbers spurt, those students did not stay nor finish.

Certainly what they did gain will be used by the Lord wherever they go to minister. It is just far too few are entering into our church ministries when the need is so great. Prayer is needed for the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into that Harvest.

The other college, Rock River Christian College, which also grew out of our churches, is also struggling to produce the laborers needed to expand the work, but we are at a critical crossroads. Now is not a time of weakening in our efforts.

There is talk of another Bible Institute beginning which would not try and compete as a college, but would work with local lay people to give them some training to enable them to function and plant new works . . . Bible studies, home churches, especially with the specter of Great Tribulation looming over us.

Heritage Conference

This Fall, September 22-24, 2012, there will be a Gathering of like-minded believers to consider our Heritage and the challenge of the future. David Krogh, past president of both Oregon and Atlanta Bible Colleges, will be one of the featured speakers. More speakers are being confirmed as the program develops. Two days filled with strong presentations, touching details from missions, special evening programs and spirit-filled sessions.

More details will be coming. The Heritage Conference is to be held at the North Hills Church of God, outside Springfield, Ohio. Block those dates out and join us for this important meeting as we Look to the Past, Consider the Present, and Plan for the Future.



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The DNA of the Church

Daniel W. Siderius

(adapted from a sermon given at the Fair Oaks Community Church of God in Fairfax, Virginia)

I. Introduction

We often find that certain believers and ministers have a topic or family of topics that are particular emphasis in their teaching and writing. Although I do not try to preach or teach in strict series where there is a clear integration of the topic of each sermon, mine often tie together in what I think is the scripture topic that God has laid on my heart. That topic is the role and nature of Christ's church in this present age, how the church as a corporeal entity bridges the gap between the earthly ministry of Jesus and his return to establish the Kingdom of God. Previously, we examined two pieces of the puzzle: "The Ministry of Reconciliation" and "The Mystery of Christ's Church." Today's topic, the next in that puzzle is "The DNA of the Church," DNA referring to deoxyribonucleic acid, the script of genetics. In studying what the Apostle Paul calls the mystery of the church, scripture showed us that the mystery of the church was that the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus made it possible for the holy spirit of God to indwell believers and that the holy spirit is available to all men and women regardless of ethnicity or descent. The goal in this teaching is to present how God's holy spirit is figuratively the DNA of the church, and that the same spiritual DNA is in every believer and makes us part of one body (the church), but that it is also manifested differently in individual believers, leading to diversity of gifts and roles in the church.

II. Scripture Reading

Today's message is based primarily on 1st Corinthians chapter 12. We should keep in mind that the letters to the Corinthian church are "reproof" epistles that address shortcomings in that church due to misapplication of doctrine, for the most part doctrine in the epistle to the Romans, which addressed right believing. So, as you may recall, much of both 1st and 2nd Corinthians comes across as "you are applying this aspect of your faith incorrectly, here is what you can do to fix it." In the previous chapter, Paul instructs the church how to properly celebrate communion. In chapters 13 and 14, Paul teaches how to effectively conduct fellowship among believers. First, let us read verses one through 12:

¹Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. ²You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

¹²For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. **[I Corinthians 12:12-13 (NASB)]**

Verses 12 and 13 are the foundation of today's main point, that God's holy spirit is like the DNA of the church; it is common to every believer, yet with a variety of expressions.

III. One Spirit in all Believers

These verses in 1st Corinthians can be used for a variety of teachings, but I want us to focus on its statements that "by one Spirit we were all baptized [and] we were all made to drink of one spirit" and "there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit." We need to be careful with the text here because the word "spirit" is capitalized; I would prefer a lower case "s" so that it is clear that the reference to the holy spirit here is the indwelling power of God in Christian believers, not a person. The text unambiguously teaches us that God's holy spirit is unitary, it is identical in all believers, not having different parts with different natures. All believers receive and contain God's holy spirit, were baptized in, or dipped in, that spirit, from one source, God himself. And yet, this one same spirit is manifested in different ways. Verses eight through 10 list what may be generally called "the manifestations of the spirit." Those manifestations are speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, and the discerning or distinguishing (depending on the translation) of spirits. These are all different ways that God's holy spirit is expressed in the natural world, but derive from one same spirit. I like to think of the spirit as DNA because a single strand of DNA, such as a chromosome, leads to different protein expressions; there is one source, yet a multitude of results. And I think we need to remember that these manifestations of the spirit are expressed by the church as a whole. I tend to take a "low" view of this part of scripture in that the manifestation of the spirit is less formal than some, such as Pentecostals, take it to be. For example, in some church formats, there are specific times in which these manifestations of the spirit are requested, as though they are only used at certain times and in formal conditions. But I would argue that when a person brings or manifests the nature of God or declares His truths, it may be one or more of these nine manifestations of the spirit. For example, if a new believer or even an unbeliever asks me or anyone else in the Church a question that allows for Christian instruction, that instruction could be a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, prophecy, an expression of faith, or any of these together! But the point is that we are manifesting one spirit, and that every believer in the church has this capability that derives from that same source, God's holy spirit.

IV. One Body of Christ with Many Members

After establishing the singular nature of the holy spirit and its diverse manifestations, Paul continues in verse 14 to teach that the church, those people indwelt with the holy spirit, is one corporate entity, yet contains many members. Let's continue reading through verse 27:

¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body

were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴whereas our more presentable members have no need of *it*. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

²⁷Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. **[I Corinthians 12:14-27 (NASB)]**

I think that this part of chapter 12 is where the metaphor of the holy spirit being the Church's DNA is most appropriate; to fully explain it, I need to divert into a short science lesson. We are all aware that DNA is the chemical, genetic, script that encodes how our bodies are assembled, down to the base organic chemicals that form up the cells, tissues, and organs, and the enzymes and proteins that operate all of the processes that distinguish us from a dead body or, ultimately, dirt. In a person, that genetic code is contained identically in the nucleus of every cell in his or her body. Though the DNA in each cell is identical, we have different types of cells that make up tissues and organs. It is consequently true that each cell has the base, genetic, capacity to be any other cell in the body, but ultimately becomes a specialized cell with functions that are extraordinarily different. This is why there is so much interest in research on stem cells, or those cells that have not yet been programmed or modified to become specialized tissue cells. Through appropriate manipulation, a stem cell can be converted into a muscle cell, or the cornea cells of an eye, heart tissue, skin cells, pancreatic insulin-generating cells, or (in principle) any other cell type. The analogy that Paul makes between human anatomy and the church is more informative than he or his readers in the first century knew or could even comprehend. The entire human body has the commonality of DNA just as the church has the commonality of the holy spirit. I think it is exciting to reread this passage of scripture with the scientific understanding of this era, since it allows God's word to stand out even more than it did two thousand years ago.

This analogy in God's word teaches us that, though we are individuals with different characteristics, we compose a single church, the Body of Christ, and that those different parts are put together to accomplish all the necessary functions of the church. All of the functions and characteristics expressed by one part of the body compliment those of the other parts, sustain and provide for the other parts, and work together synergistically to make the whole body stronger than its individual parts. Furthermore, no single member of the church can, in a spiritual sense, survive without the rest of the church, just as verse 21 points out that all parts of the human body rely on the others for both survival and increased capability. God's holy spirit, the DNA of this body (the church), is the common characteristic among all the different people that compose this body and empowers all the spiritual skills, gifts, and functions, expressed by those people.

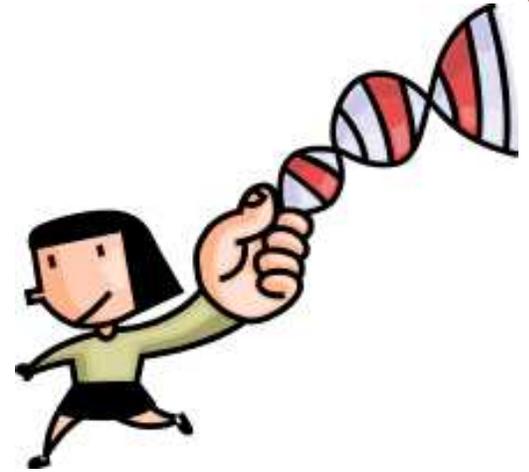
V. Use your gifts in the church; grow in faith and into new gifts

Since the different members of the church have different specializations, it makes sense to list some of those specializations and then, for each member, identify their special characteristics. Let's continue reading in verse 27, continuing to verse 31:

²⁷Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues. ²⁹All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers,

are they? All are not *workers of miracles*, are they? ³⁰All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? ³¹But earnestly desire the greater gifts.
[1 Corinthians 12:27-31a (NASB)]

Paul clearly declares that the ministries gifted to individual members are not common to all, but this does not imply a hierarchy in the Body of Christ according to those gift ministries. The list of ministries (which is not comprehensive) simply categorizes some of the skills and gifts of believers that are given for the benefit of the whole church, just like the individual parts of a human body that aid the others; and all those gifts are empowered by the DNA of the Church, God's holy spirit. A complimentary text is found in Romans chapter 12:3-8:



³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **[Romans 12:3-8 (NASB)]**

One goal of a believer, as a part of living a life of faithfully obedience to God, should be to exercise the gifts granted to him or her in a manner consistent with their measure of the gift. The “amount” of spirit in a believer is not at issue, each of us is overflowing with an abundance of the spirit, but the extent to which we manifest the spirit through our gifts and spiritual vocations will vary, even in a believers’ lifetime. We must recognize that God’s holy spirit is the characteristic in each of us, that common DNA, that empowers the gift we express. To do that, though, I would only ask that each of us examine our present life and express the gifts that the holy spirit is empowering today. The expression of that gift will grow, gifts may change dramatically throughout life, but the same spirit in every believer, the figurative DNA of the church, is the source of every gift.

VI. Summary

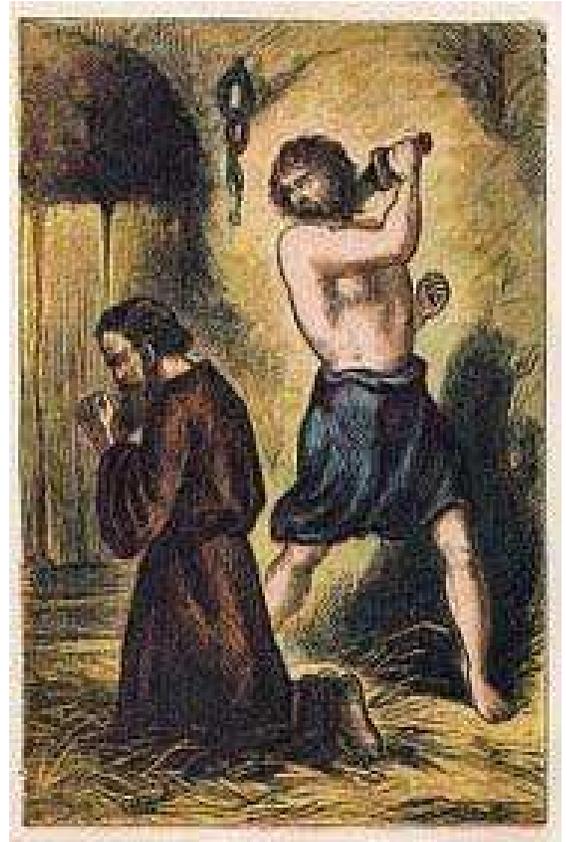
Finally, to summarize this exposition on 1st Corinthians 12:

1. God’s holy spirit inhabits all believers identically; one Christian believers’ spirit is not different in measure (since we all have God’s spirit in immeasurable abundance) or in nature. This spirit is expressed or manifested in different ways in individual believers, but is the one and same source, like DNA is to a person.
2. Individual believers compose one Body of Christ, which is the Church, though each believer has a different role and function in that body, just like the parts of a human body. Together, each part of the church adds up to more than the simple sum of the parts, just like a human body. Each believer, through his or her strengths, makes up for the weaknesses in other parts. Individual believers cannot survive without the rest of the Church.
3. Gifts empowered by God’s holy spirit differ in individual believers in the church, and those gifts are meant to be a blessing to the rest of the church. Since we are granted those gifts by God’s grace, living a life of obedience to God means using those gifts for His glory and to bless the rest of the church.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Paul Rankin

We know that God's desire for all of mankind is to obtain salvation and come to the knowledge of His truth (1Tim. 2:4). God's desire for this couldn't be shown more evident than by the way he allowed his Son to die, though he wasn't deserving of it, that we might have the opportunity for eternal life in the coming resurrection and kingdom (Rom. 6:23, 1Jn. 2:2). Even though God has freely offered to all a free gift of life through his Son (Rom. 5:18), does this mean it is given without any cost to us? How much does it really cost to follow Jesus and receive the free gift of eternal life?



Becoming a Christian isn't just meant to be a knee jerk reaction to hearing the good news of the Kingdom, but a calculated, logical, counting up of what it truly takes to follow Jesus sufficiently to the end. We can see this in the words of our Lord "For which of you intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it" (Lk.14:28). Building a house half way, without the supporting walls or without an adequate roof is useless. It will not provide any protection or safe shelter during threatening times. Jesus is speaking, of course, of a spiritual house and the sheltering of our faith from the wicked elements that weather against us in our everyday lives as Christians. Remember the parable of the sower in Matt.13? The seed that fell next to the road side, the seed that fell on the stony ground and the seed that fell on the thorny ground all became unfruitful. Some lost their faith easier than the others, but all fell away nonetheless, except for the good ground. It says they all understood the message of the kingdom, but because of tribulation, persecution, the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches they couldn't maintain that faith. If we don't take the time and effort to count the costs for following Jesus, and understanding what might lie ahead of us for doing so, we could find ourselves unable to cope faithfully in times of hardship or difficulty. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn.16:33).

Jesus said in Lk.14:26-33 that we must be willing to forsake all to be his disciple. The first and greatest commandment, of course, is to love God with all our hearts, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37, 38), nothing short of our whole being as a human. Jesus asks nothing less of his disciples. He is God's Son and as the Son he is doing the will of his Father and he requires his followers to give it their all to follow him into his Father's kingdom. He asks that we be willing to give up our parents, our spouses, our children, our brothers, our sisters and even our lives, if it comes to that, to be his disciples. The word "hate" is used in Lk.14 in reference to us forsaking all for Jesus, "Hate" your parents, "hate" your spouse, "hate" your children, "hate" your brothers and sisters and "hate" our own lives. The word "hate" is an extremely harsh word for us to use in our vocabulary today. It creates a picture of utter disdain and contempt for others. However, this is not the point that Jesus is making or the way in which it is meant to be understood. He's not asking us to be maligned towards others or carry contempt or hatred in our hearts toward anyone. It's a matter of degree or the level of love we have in comparison to him. He simply wants us to love him more than all others to achieve success as his true followers. He wants us to love all others and all earthly possessions less by

comparison to him. Are we willing to put Christ first in our lives in everything, in all of our personal affairs, in business, and in our politics (as citizens of a coming kingdom)?

Man's natural desire is more carnal than it is spiritual. The natural man spends his time gratifying the cravings of his sinful nature and following its desires (Eph. 2:3), and he has much difficulty accepting the things that come from the Spirit or mind of God (1Cor. 2:14.) When we count the cost for following Jesus we realize we have to make changes in our lives, our habits and our thought patterns. We change ourselves

Look carefully
then how you
walk...making the
most of the time.
Ephesians 5:15-16



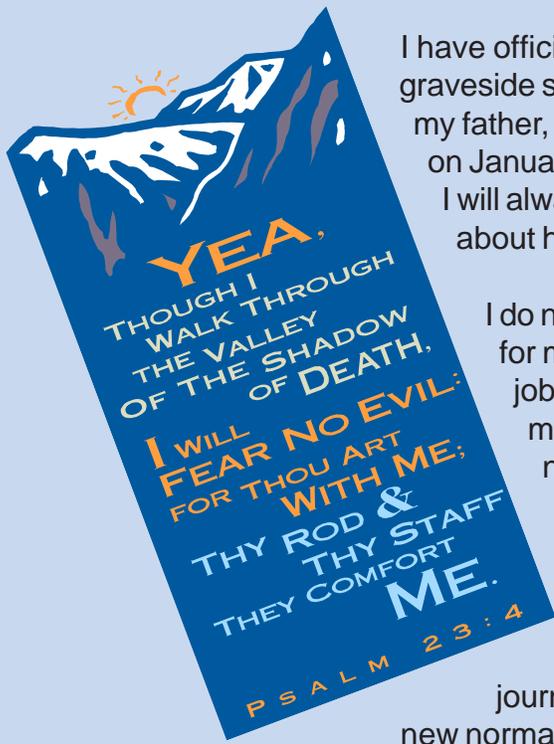
into "new" people seeking truth and righteousness, shedding off our "old" self serving life style, trying to renew the spirit of our minds in Christ, so we can be like him in all things (Eph.4:21-24). Change is not always easy and requires us to grow over time into mature followers of Christ. But we have to recognize what is acceptable and what is not, what is righteousness and what is wickedness, knowing what will qualify us for the kingdom and what will disqualify us. We shouldn't be ignorant of what sin is. "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person such a man is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God...Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness...This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (Eph.5:5-17).

Jesus told his disciples, "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them...All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." We do not find this high level of persecution sweeping over the church in the USA right now, but waves of it beat hard against the church during the lives of the Apostles and the early Christians. In fact a study of Church History will reveal many waves of persecution over the centuries on those who tried to stand for truth against blatant error. In many cases these people lost their lives for being faithful to the truth. We shouldn't be ignorant of the persecution of Christians today in many countries around the world. Sometimes it's other religions persecuting Christians and sometimes it's Christians persecuting other Christians. If we are counting the cost of following Jesus we can recognize that times of tribulation may be ahead of us, even in this country. Preparing ourselves now to forsake all for Christ, during any potential present or future tribulations, will enable us to be spiritually strong in the face of these threatening situations. "If you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened" (1Pet.3:13-15).

Following Jesus is not without its costs, but the final payment and reward for doing so far exceeds any loss we may suffer now. For our Lord has promised us that "at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne...everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matt.19:28). We may not be able to convince all of the people we know and love, our family and our friends, to come follow Christ with us because the cost may seem too great for them. But whatever sorrow that may cause us today, we shouldn't forget the joyous tomorrow that awaits. For we will meet the whole family of God which includes the multitude of faithful saints from all the ages from every tribe, language, people, and nation, that will be made kings and priests with us in the coming kingdom of God (Rev.5:9,10). Let us now count the cost of following Jesus sufficiently to the end.

CHRISTIANS FACE DEATH WITH HOPE

Michael Hoffman



I have officiated 183 funerals. I had never sat in the front row at a funeral or graveside service. I did not like being there. The occasion was the funeral of my father, Len Hoffman, who died on January 27th this year. His funeral was on January 31st; a crystal clear, warm and beautiful day in Phoenix, Arizona. I will always miss my Dad terribly but I have an all pervasive sense of peace about his death. Easter is coming. I will share my story with you.

I do not need to explain grief to anyone that "has been there." We grieve for many different reasons and in many different types of loss: deaths, jobs, relationships, esteem, freedom, trust. Death is what we think of most often in relation to grief. Some deaths are expected and seem natural because of old age, while others are tragic to the point of defying description. There is no mistaking the: hurt, heart-ache, loneliness, "what ifs", and the incredibly inappropriate things well intentioned people say. I have learned that often the objective in the first year of grief is simply to put one foot in front of the other and make it through. It can be a slow, meticulous and grinding journey. There is no "finish line" just a begrudging acceptance of the new normal and the gradual recognition of a quiet peace.

One of the difficulties I see with grief is the tendency to hang on to the past, to be constantly looking back at something that cannot and will not change. The Bible consistently urges our focus to be forward. It is normal, natural and in some ways healthy to look back, but we are not to stay focused on the past. I do not want, in any way, to diminish or be critical of the grief you may be feeling. I just want to point out that our hope is in the future. There may be immense pain of loss in the past but the focus of our hope and comfort lies before us. Easter is coming.

I have nothing but great memories of my Dad. My advantage in my grief is that I have not lived near him for the past 37 years. I spoke with him weekly by phone but averaged seeing him about one week a year if that much. My life goes on as before except that I cannot talk to my Dad. I think of things everyday that I would like to tell him. I miss talking to him about all kinds of things; hearing him laugh at a joke, ask me about the weather in Illinois or people he knew. I especially miss hearing the words I cherished at the end of every phone call when he would say, "I love you son." My Dad was an amazing man. He worked hard his entire life. Work was what he knew best. He did not mind it. He derived a very personal sense of satisfaction and joy from a hard day of work well done. He would easily out work men 30 years younger. He had a servant heart and epitomized serving like Jesus as Mark 10:45 says, "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (NIV) To my Dad being a good neighbor was not a concept, it was his mission statement. There were countless stories of things he had done for people. He loved the beauty of God's nature, especially the desert. He said, "Everything in this old desert pokes, sticks, scratches, stings and bites, and I love it." He should have worked for the Arizona Chamber of Commerce or tourism industry. I am reminded of him when I read Isaiah 35 about the desert being glad and blooming. He rarely complained about anything and no one that knew him can recall him ever saying a bad word about anybody. He was loved, appreciated and respected by all who knew him.

The Bible points us forward all the time. Examples abound:

Luke 9:61-62 – *“Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’”* (NIV)

Luke 22:15-16 – *“And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’”* (NIV)

Philippians 3:12-14 – *“Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead**, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* (NASV)

I Corinthians 15:19 – *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”* (NIV)

All of I Corinthians 15 points us forward because Jesus was resurrected, he lives and will return. The Kingdom of God will come. Easter is coming.

I miss my Dad and would have him back in a heartbeat if I could, but I do not focus on the past. I take my memories and his legacy with me into the future. I strive to work hard, serve people, laugh loud and often, respect nature and love my family and friends whole heartedly. To say that he lives on in me is not just a nice sounding platitude, it is very real. What matters most is before me. I will take the tremendous example my Dad gave me and go forward to honor my God and my Dad's legacy. I will also stay focused on my hope in the return of Christ.

In I Thessalonians 4, Paul says it is entirely appropriate to grieve. He tells the Thessalonian church to grieve but not without hope. Vs. 13 says, *“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”* Grief in death or other loss is entirely appropriate. As Believers, we grieve with the perspective of hope in our coming Lord and Savior. Vs. 16-18 say, *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”* (NIV) The toughest funerals for me to officiate are the ones for people with no hope, no future, nothing at all to look forward to after the funeral dinner. I have no idea how people cope with the intense emptiness and void of not knowing Christ or having any future hope. I grieve through the perspective of a coming kingdom, perfection in the very presence of Jesus and eventually God Almighty. In that truth, I find the comfort, strength and peace I need to keep going forward with confident purpose. Easter is coming.

Dad had his aortic heart valve replaced in September of 2011. In January he somehow contracted a staph infection that ruined the new heart valve and caused his liver and kidneys to shut down completely. He was in critical condition for about 10 days. He was told his condition would be fatal without surgery but the surgery to repair his heart was “extremely high risk.” It was the classic “between a rock and a hard place.” On Thursday, January 19th, Dad was so weak he could barely speak. It was the worst I had seen him. The heart surgeon came to ask him about his wishes on going through with the surgery. Dad mustered what little strength he had and softly said, “We believe in a higher power. We will put it in the hands of the Lord.” He was looking forward. The surgeon was visibly moved by the statement. The next day Dad showed remarkable improvement. He had far more energy, talked, joked and was much more himself. I asked if

he had enough energy to shave. He did. I asked if he wanted a mirror. He said, "No, it would scare me to death." That was my Dad. The surgery took place on Monday, January 23rd. It lasted for 10 hours. Dad never regained consciousness or responded in any way prior to his death the following Friday morning. Six of us were present for his peaceful death.

The stories told at his funeral were substantive of his character, influence, and the respect and love people had for him. It was a wonderful celebration of his life. His hope in the return of Jesus Christ was shared. As the Pastor concluded the service, he said that we knew about Len's future. He would be resurrected when Jesus returned and spend eternity in God's Kingdom. He then asked about the future of all of us there. He asked, "What trait will you take from Len's life and go forward with it to improve your life and make a positive difference for others?" He voiced many of Dad's best traits and challenged all of us gathered there to take just one of those traits and make it a part of our lives. I deeply appreciated what he said. He asked us to go forward in positive and productive ways because we have hope in Christ and because of the life and example of my Dad. I can go forward with hope and joy because I knew Len Hoffman, but far more importantly because I know Jesus Christ and because Easter is coming.

About three weeks after returning home from Arizona, my wife left for 17 days to go to Florida and spend time with her parents. She retired last September and now has far more freedom to invest in others. Time with family is always precious. While she was gone I experienced the deafening roar of a far too quiet house. I gained some appreciation for the enormity of the quiet widows and widowers experience in their grief. As I read through the book of Genesis, several passages about Jacob spoke to me in intimate and very comforting ways.

In Genesis 46:4 God tells Jacob (Israel), *"I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."* As Jacob goes forward toward his death, God reassures him that He would always be with him and that the hands of his favored son would close his eyes. I did not close my Dad's eyes, a very compassionate nurse did that, but I was thankful to be there as Dad breathed his last. I know God was there then and always. In Genesis 47:29-30 as the time for Jacob's death neared, he asked Joseph not to bury him in Egypt but to take him back to the land where his fathers were buried. He was looking forward past his death and wanted to "sleep" in the land promised as an inheritance by God. I enjoyed Genesis 48:11, *"Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.'" As a Grandpa, I can relate to Israel's joy in that moment. My Dad never saw my youngest Grandson. He would have enjoyed that immensely. Jacob knew he was going to die and he stayed focused on the future and the certainty of God's presence. Those were powerful lessons and examples to me.*

Since my Dad's death in January, I have had an abundance of the "peace that transcends all understanding". Dad would not have been happy if he could not have been active. I have seen plenty as a Pastor and Fire Chaplain to know that there are things worse than death. It was in some ways awkward for me to be the receiver of so much love and care. I am used to being the care-giver. I was bolstered often by all the expressions of love I received. Again, I cannot imagine going through life without hope in Christ and the support of a loving church family.

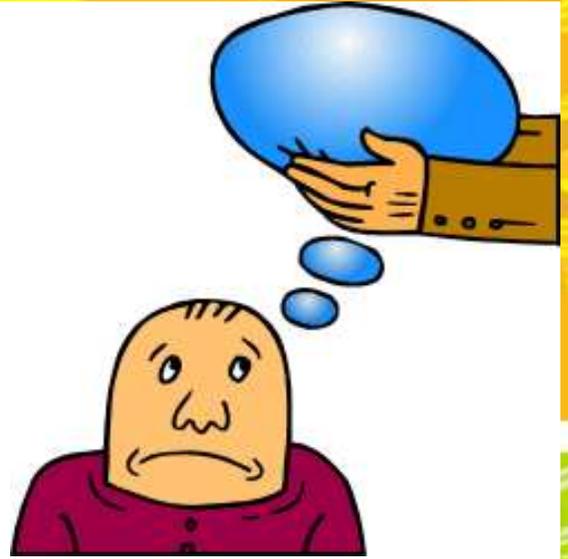
Life involves loss. By all means, grieve your losses. Express it. Let it out. Take the life, memories and lessons of others with you as you move forward, smile and live with joy because Jesus lives, Easter is coming and the Lord will return. Thank God for that. Go forward with this thought from Revelation 21:3-4, *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (NIV)*

WHEN ARE WE GOING TO BEGIN THINKING LIKE GOD?

Dennis Baldwin

To be godly is to be like God. I submit to you that a failure to grasp the truth about this issue, *“Is Going to Heaven My Reward?”*, might keep us from thinking like God. God warned Israel about this problem in Isaiah:

- *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:8-11 (NASB)*



May I suggest that at least one of the purposes of the Bible is to help us to think as God thinks? God revealed his Word to us so we might know what he is thinking. What we need to accept is that the way he thinks is the way it is and always will be. Does the LORD think in terms of bringing us to heaven? Or does he have another plan? If so, what is that plan and where is it to be realized?

- *The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: Isaiah 14:24 (KJV)*

God actually has a plan and it is revealed to us in his word, the Bible. The question is, are we on the same page as God. *“My word which goes forth from My mouth... will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”* Isa. 55:11 What God has thought; what God has said; is the way it is and the way it is going to be. That is the page on which we need to be. Let's get on that page. Let's agree with God's plan. The Bible says that *Enoch walked with God.* Genesis 5:22. If we are going to walk with God we must agree with his thinking and concur with his plan.

- *Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos 3:3 (KJV)*

We must, after all, agree with God even if it goes against everything we have heretofore believed, thought, or been taught.

- *May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, “THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS , AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.” Romans 3:4 (NASB)*

Would you repeat this prayer with me?

- **“Dear Father, I yield to you. I yield to your way of thinking. Your way will become my way. I will determine to let your thoughts become my thoughts. I want to think like you.”**

Why get excited? It will all be revealed in the end, won't it? It will be made plain in the end and then we will know. However, can we afford to wait for that day to attempt to make the changes in our thinking which need to be made today? *Why not get in step with God now? Why not get on the same page with him today?* That's a novel idea isn't it? Jeremiah found himself at odds with his prophet friends. But really, that was not the problem. The problem was that his friends were at odds with God's way of thinking. Jeremiah said simply: Let's see how it turns out. However, the problem is that then it will be too late.

- *But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true.* Jeremiah 28:9 (NIV)

THE FIRST MAN IS OF THE EARTH, EARTHY 1 Corinthians 15:47 (KJV)

Since here on earth is where we are living and inasmuch as it is from the ground that we are taken, "*Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return*", Gen 3:19, it very well could be that many have overlooked the obvious. What plan does God have for this planet on which we live; from whence we were all taken; unto which we shall return; and is that significant to our future? That might have a bearing on the outcome of our hope, don't you think?

- *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.* Romans 8:20-22 (NASB)

Because of sin the whole of creation was thrown into a tizzy: man returning to dust, thorns and thistles, the labor and sweat involved in producing bread, the pain involved in childbirth. That failure of our first parents did not deter God's overall determination for his creation. We must remember that "*God cursed the ground for man's sake*" or because of man:

- *Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."* Gen 3:17-19 (NASB)

WRAPPED IN HOPE WITH ALL OF CREATION

Not especially how that curse further treated in the bible. God has every intention of removing the curse placed on the ground because of man. "*Creation was subjected to futility, because of Him who subjected it in hope.*" The picture presented in the following passage is a beautiful mural of a time and place in the future here on the earth. Open your mind and visualize the **NEW EARTH**.

- *Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of*

the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. 6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; Rev 22:1-6 (NASB)

This is not giving a picture of heaven. It is a picture of the New Earth: a place where night will be no more. Isaiah provides us information about God's intention for the earth from which we were created. He helps us to be informed (*as opposed to being uninformed*) about our hope for the future and our questions about heaven:

- *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. Isaiah 45:18 (KJV)*

Remember this? *My word which goes forth from My mouth... will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11* When whenever one encounters a "**Thus saith the Lord**", his ears should perk right up. God offers us insight into his purpose, what he is thinking, for his creation, the earth. *He formed it to be inhabited.* Do you suppose that the idea of God taking his saints to heaven to live in eternity might not accomplish what he desires? That just might not be what God is thinking.

- *May you be blessed of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. Psalms 115:15-16 (KJV)*

When God says, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts*"; could he be saying, "*Come on now, think like me.*" God blessed the man and woman he created: from the earth, from the ground, from the dust of the ground: and *the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Gen 2:15 (NASB)* As we look around it is apparent we have not done such a good job as stewards of the earth which God has given to us. Not to worry however. God has a plan.

FULL OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD

- *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:9 (KJV)*
- *For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14 (KJV)*

The whole of creation awaits being set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Romans 8:22 How can that be? The creation itself will undergo a dramatic change. In a time when the blind will see, the deaf hear, and the lame jump about like young deer; the dramatic changes will occur. God will make all things new; a new heavens and a new earth *where Peter said, "righteousness would dwell". 2 Peter 3:13.* Are you beginning to get the picture? God's snapshot of his plan for the future of the planet: a time when the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, and the mute will sing; a day when streams will break out in the desert and springs of water will fill the land where once there was only thirsty land; a time when *the righteous will inherit the land and dwell therein forever. Psalms 37:29.*

- *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13 (KJV)*

- *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.* Isaiah 35:5-7 (KJV)

Do you remember the prophetic day which Malachi the prophet said would *burn like an oven*; a day that would *burn up the proud and all that do wickedly*? Malachi 4:1. May I suggest to you a great day of cleansing? Peter spoke about it as well:

- *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.* 2 Peter 3:10 (NASB) (**my note: not the annihilation of the planet but a cleansing of the heavens and the earth as they exist today**)

Did Peter want us to believe that the earth, the planet will be annihilated? Remember; *the earth abideth forever*. Eccl. 1:4. God purposes to prepare this earth for the saints to live in forever; a place where the throne of God and of the lamb can be placed. God purposes a cleansing, restoration, and **fulfillment of his intentions** which have been revealed from the beginning, so his creation might know what he is thinking and make preparations to share in the fulfillment of his plans. Acts 3:21

- *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:* Psalms 102:25-26 (KJV)

Having said all that let me conclude with Jesus' words which should help us to be informed about our hope for the future. Matthew 5, verse five:

- *"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."* Matthew 5:5

Did you know that Jesus was quoting from Psalms 37:11? David made that point a total of five times in that same chapter. (Verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34) We would do well to examine that idea.

- *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* Psalms 37:11 (KJV)

Do you get the picture! Will you agree with God? Can we walk with him if we don't? Amos 3:3 Won't you dare think as he thinks? Can we be godly if **we're not like God** or at the very least are seeking to be like him? If we are not attempting to be like God how can we be godly? If we don't think like he does; since he has given us his word to know what he is thinking; why aren't we attempting to do so?

God is thinking about renewing this earth for the inheritance of the saints. (Rev. 21:5) God has promised as much to us; shouldn't we be thinking like him? It caught Jesus' attention. That is why he said the *"meek will inherit the earth."*

John saw the holy city New Jerusalem, *coming down from God out of heaven*. (Rev. 21:2) Someone said, *"Well, you call it the new earth and I will call it heaven"*. What did God call it through his son and his prophets? Didn't he refer to it as the **New Earth**? Wouldn't that be better? Is this important? What do you think?

Come to the Saviour

Arlen F. Rankin

Recently I received a copy of a work by Wiley Jones* that I've been attempting to obtain for many years. It is songbook which he published in 1877—*Songs of Zion, or The Hymnal Casket*. The last of the 105 songs is one which he wrote, the words of which are his invitation to “*Come to the Saviour.*”

1. Come, sinners, join the faithful band,
And follow sin nor more.
Come journey to the Promis'd Land—
A bright and blissful shore.

Chorus—O come to the Saviour, O come to the Saviour,
O come to the Saviour, And be forever blest.

2. Your sin may red like scarlet be,
And as crimson glow;
Yet Christ from all can set you free,
And wash you white as snow.
3. O who can speak the joys divine
Which Christ the Lord will give!
His ransom'd ones like stars will shine
And endless life receive.

Jesus himself calls men to receive the blessings of faith by coming to him. After speaking of things delivered to him of his Father, he says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”—Matt. 11:28-30. This rest which he promises is not a temporal, physical rest, but rather an eternal and spiritual one. We rest (cease) from attempting to earn salvation by merit and anticipate full salvation and release from the struggles of mortality in the kingdom of God (Heb. 4:1-11; Isa. 11:10; Psa. 132:13-18). And even with the burdens of this life we walk with a peace of God which surpasses mortal comprehension which only experience in truth and faith and righteousness can know (Phil. 4:7, 9). We walk with a certainty of hope that is based upon an immutable, faithful and loving God who is a Father to us (Heb. 6:11-19; 1 Pet. 1:18-21). We rest our faith in Him and His Son, our Savior.

As Jesus promised the Samaritan woman the refreshing “living water,” we drink freely of the well that springs up unto life eternal through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God (John 4:10-14). The prophet Isaiah extends the invitation, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). It is promised in the Revelation, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Rev. 21:6). And again, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

Yes, Come to the Savior and receive the cleansing forgiveness of sins, being washed in his blood (Rev. 1:5; 7:14; Isa. 1:18; Acts 22:16 with Rom. 6:3-7, 18). “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:31-36).

* Jones (1835-1898) was a preacher of the gospel of the kingdom of God as was his father before him. He wrote quite a number of works concerning this message of good news from the 1860s on. The clarity, simplicity, earnestness and biblical nature of his writings is indeed a brilliant light shed on the shadowed paths of men.

THE PROTESTERS

Alan Eyre

(This comes from a book of the same name, which was once regularly used in the Church History Class at our college. It explained the high cost of following one's conscience. These citations were used in a class at the 2012 Christian Worker's Seminar)

PAGE(S)

55 – HUBMAIER & WIFE'S MARTYRDOM

On March 10, 1528, Hubmaier was led forth to death, Elizabeth "exhorting him to fortitude". An enemy eye-witness said that he remained to the last "fixed like an immovable rock in his heresy". He was urged to confess to a priest, but he steadfastly refused. There was no thought of compromise not, no hope of mercy. The whole sadistic atmosphere of the public burning sickened his deeply sensitive spirit, the morbid curiosity of the crowd providing an additional wound. But there was no bitterness or regret. "O dear brothers", he said as he was tied to the stake, "if I have injured any, in word or deed, may he forgive me for the sake of my merciful God. I will forgive all that have done me harm." With those who rubbed salt and gunpowder into his beard he jested: "O salt me well, salt me well", and as his clothes were removed from him, he muttered: "My Lord, they took your clothes off, too." His last words were his Lord's: "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

On March 13 his devoted Elizabeth, described by a court official as "hardened in the same heresy even more constant than her husband", had a great stone tied to her neck and was thrown into the water of the Danube.

57,59 – SATTLER

Later, referring to this formative period in his life, Sattler tells how he "beheld the pomp, pride, usury and great whoredom of the monks and priests". He was unable to reconcile his position as a "spiritual lord" with Jesus' ideal of the disciple as meek and lowly in heart, serving not being served, transforming men by example not dominating them by carnal weapons. The immoral celibacy of the priesthood, which winked at pleasure but accepted no responsibilities, sickened him, and he married. He made a good choice – "a talented clever little woman" we are told – for she proved to be a great help and source of strength to him in his later work and trials. He saw little similarity between either the worldly, tyrannical Roman church or the newly emerging national Reformed churches, and the simplicity and earnest fellowship of the New Testament Christians.

63 – SATTLER

The Roman Catholic church alone was valid on Austrian soil. The accused were charged with despising the Mother of God and refusing to swear by the Holy Trinity. The expression "breaking of bread", peculiar to the Brethren, was through the doctrine of trans-substantiation construed into a charge that they were guilty of breaking Christ!

64 – SATTLER

He began by pointing out that Austrian law only forbade adherence to the "Lutheran delusion", and of this they were not guilty. "I am not aware that we have acted contrary to the gospel and the word of God. I appeal to the words of Christ." He denied certain points in the charges and

admitted others, such as disbelief in trans-substantiation and infant baptism. On the charge of insulting the Mother of God and the saints, Sattler spoke with disarming frankness, carefully choosing his words and terms so as to make his beliefs clear:

We have not insulted the mother of God and the saints. For the mother of Christ is to be blessed among all women because unto her was accorded the favour of giving birth to the Saviour of the whole world. But that she is acting as mediator and advocate – of this the Scriptures know nothing. She is not yet elevated, but like all men, is awaiting the judgement. Christ is our mediator. As regards the saints, we say that we who live and believe are saints, which I prove by the epistles of Paul, where he always writes ‘to the beloved saints’ . . .”

On the two personal counts he spoke quietly of his own experiences: at his disgust at the conduct of the monks, their show, deception, covetousness and great fornication in seducing this man’s wife, daughter, maid irresponsibly. Finally, in an eloquent and challenging peroration, he denied that in word or deed the Brethren had ever opposed the Government:

In conclusion, ministers of God, I urge you to consider the purpose for which God has appointed you, to punish the evil and to defend and protect the pious. Since we have not acted contrary to God and the gospel, you will find that neither I nor my brethren and sisters have offended in word or deed against any authority. Ministers of God, send for the most learned men and for the sacred books of the Bible in whatsoever language they may be and let them dispute with us in the word of God. If they prove to us that we err and are in the wrong, we will gladly desist and recant and also willingly suffer the sentence and punishment for that of which we have been accused. We are ready to be taught from the Scriptures.

65 – SATTLER’S SENTENCE

Michael Sattler shall be committed to the executioner, who shall convey to him to the square and first cut out his tongue. Then he shall forge him fast to a wagon and thereon with glowing iron tongs twice tear pieces from his body, then on the way to the site of execution five times more in the same manner, and then burn his body to powder as an arch-heretic. The cutting out of the tongue was bungled, allowing Michael to pray for his persecutors. His last public words, uttered with difficulty, were a prayer for God’s help to testify to the truth. The ladder was thrown on the fire. As the fire burned through the ropes that bound his hands, he raised two fingers of his hand in a victory sign, a pre-arranged signal to his friends that he had been steadfast. He was thirty-seven.

66 – SATTLER’S WIFE

The Countess of Hohenzollern, the wife of Joachim, tried to persuade Sattler’s wife of the folly of persisting in her belief. She promised that if the condemned woman gave up her faith she could come and live with her at the castle. But she declared that she would rather be true to her Lord and her husband. Eight days later she was thrown into the Neckar river and drowned.

The grim proceedings provoked a wave of revulsion through Wurttemberg, and there was much conscience-searching by many people, as evidenced by some contemporary publications and letters. But the religious and civil leaders had their way, and bigotry and fear prevailed.

72, 73 – PERSECUTION

The response of the government to this appeal was to send troops, egged on by fanatical priests, into every communal settlement, into the woods and into every corner of the country in a methodical massacre of incredible ruthlessness.

Some were torn to pieces on the rack, some were burst to ashes and powder, some were roasted on pillars, and some were torn with red-hot tongs. Some were shut up in houses and burned in masses, some were hanged on trees, some were executed, some plunged in the water, many had gags put into their mouths so that they could not speak and were led away to death. Others were starved and allowed to rot in noisome prisons. Many had holes burned through their backs and were left in this condition. Like owls and bitterns they dared not go abroad by day, but lived and crouched in rocks and caverns, in wild forests, in caves and pits, where they were hunted down with hounds and catchpoles.

Not until the scientific horrors of Nazism was Europe to witness and suffer such brutal bigotry. Of the way in which this onslaught was met, we have testimony from both friend and foe. After reporting the death of 2,173 of his friends, one friendly writer comments:

No human being was able to take away out of their hearts what they had experienced. The fire of God burned within them. They would die ten deaths rather than forsake the divine truth.

They had drunk of the water which flows from God's sanctuary, indeed, of the water of life. Their faith blossomed like a lily, their loyalty as a rose, their piety and candour as the flower of the garden of God. The things of this world they counted only as shadows. They were so drawn unto God that they knew nothing, sought nothing, desired nothing, loved nothing but God alone.

The Lutheran pastor Feber, a bitter enemy, was amazed at the attitude of the Brethren. He wrote: They behold the glittering sword with undaunted hearts, they speak and preach to the people with smiling mouths, they sing psalms till the soul goes out, they die with joy as if they were in festive company, they remain strong, confident, steadfast even unto death.

He then goes on to suggest as the only possible explanation that they were dupes, possessed of the devil.

The depopulation of Moravia was so great that the Parliament in Vienna, with the support of the hierarchy, passed a special law permitting men in Moravia the extraordinary privilege of taking two wives so that the country could be repopulated.

Jerusalem in Turmoil, God in Control!

Rex Cain

I've invited the Prime Minister of Israel here today, Benjamin Netanyahu, to speak a few minutes for us. I thought I would read his address given last year at the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in Poland. I trust your interest span is strong because anything I might say in this time could not be much more informative politically than his words considering his military experiences in the Israeli army and his deep understanding of the Jewish people and his love for Israel's God and God's precious Word (which he often quotes when interviewed on TV) regarding his people. Indeed, he quotes from Ezekiel in this address. This may be a bit unusual, but I believe it is worth our while to hear his words.

Address By Prime Minister Netanyahu at Aushwitz Concentration Camp in Poland on the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz.



27 Jan 2010 (See document, Netanyahu Aushwitz speech)

*As we stand here to commemorate the past,
we are helping to build a future of decency,
truth and hope for our two peoples and for all
mankind*

**Address by Prime Minister Benjamin
Netanyahu at ceremony marking 65 years
since the liberation of the Auschwitz**

concentration camp (27 January 2010)

I want to thank the Government of Poland for the historic effort it is making to commemorate the greatest catastrophe that befell my people and the greatest crime committed against humanity.

We have gathered here, Poles and Jews, at the crossroads of tragedy. Our long shared history included tremendous cultural accomplishments and the lowest low humanity has experienced. We were here. We remember those who froze to death; if they did not freeze to death, they were executed by gas, burned in the ovens. We remember also that one-third of the Righteous Gentiles, those who risked their lives and their children's lives and those of their families in order to save others, were Poles. We remember all this.

As we stand here to commemorate the past, we are helping to build a future of decency,

truth and hope for our two peoples and for all mankind.

Now I will speak in Hebrew, the reborn language of the people whom the Nazis sought to exterminate.

[Translation]

The voices of millions of my people gassed, burned and killed in a thousand different ways rise out of this cursed ground. In the final moment of their lives, many whispered or cried out the timeless words of our ancient people: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." (Deut. 6:4) Perhaps a few used their final breath to chant another age-old prayer: "Remember what Amalek did to you. Never forget!" [This people fought Israel first in the Sinai and a few times after trying to keep them from the Promised land / Rex].

To those who were murdered here, and to those who survived the destruction, I come from Jerusalem today with this promise: We will never forget! We will never permit those who desecrated this monument to death to distort or wipe away your memory. We will always remember what Amalek's Nazi heirs did to you. We will be prepared to defend ourselves when a new Amalek appears on the stage of history and threatens again to annihilate the Jews.

We will not delude ourselves into believing that the threats, vilifications and Holocaust denials are merely empty words. We will never forget. We will always be vigilant.

The Holocaust author, K. Zetnick, in his testimony at the Eichman trial, called the death camps "another planet". But the horrors of the Holocaust occurred not in a far away world but right here on earth. It was not the work of beastly animals but of beastly men, of loathsome and despicable murderers.

The most important lesson of the Holocaust is that a murderous evil must be stopped early, when it is still in its infancy and before it can carry out its designs. The enlightened nations of the world must learn this lesson.

We, the Jewish nation, who lost a third of our people on Europe's blood-soaked soil, have learned that the only guarantee for defending our people is a strong State of Israel and the army of Israel. We have learned to warn the nations of the world of approaching danger but at the same time to prepare to defend ourselves.

As the head of the Jewish state, I pledge to you today: We will never again permit evil to snuff out the life of our people and the life of our own country.

I came here today from Jerusalem to say to those who perished here: The people of Israel live! We have returned to our homeland, to the land of our fathers, to our capital Jerusalem. We have come from every corner of the earth - Holocaust survivors and

Jewish refugees from Arab lands, Jews from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia, Poland and Yemen, Romania and Iraq, France and Morocco, Jews from seventy lands and five continents.

Some who came almost didn't make it. Barracks #16 at the Birkenau death camp, a few meters from here, housed a 17-year old Jewish youth who suffered from the 80 lashes he received in the Ghetto from his Nazi tormenters. No one believed the boy would live, but he survived and escaped from the camp. With the victory over the Nazis 65 years ago, he immigrated to Israel. Fifteen years later, he was the Israeli police officer guarding Adolph Eichmann when the Jewish state brought the Nazi henchmen to justice.

That young man is Michael Goldman. With his wife Eva, he raised a family in Israel, and they have five children and nine grandchildren. Michael is with us here today - a witness to the Holocaust, a witness to the redemption.

The Jewish people rose from ashes and destruction, from a terrible pain that can never be healed. Armed with the Jewish spirit, the justice of man, and the vision of the prophets, we sprouted new branches and grew deep roots. Dry bones became covered with flesh, a spirit filled them, and they lived and stood on their own feet.

As Ezekiel prophesized: ("Then He said unto me: These bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.' Prophecy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of your graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel."

I stand here today on the ground where so many of my people perished - and I am not alone. The State of Israel and all the Jewish people stand with me. We bow our heads to honor your memory and lift our heads as we raise our flag, a flag of blue and white with a Star of David in its center.

And everyone sees. And everyone hears. And everyone knows - that our hope is not lost.

Netanyahu expresses hope but scripture teaches us difficult days are not over until after Christ returns: Just a couple weeks ago in a Colorado newspaper, we read: (Denver, Colorado, December 28, 2010) — A serious new threat to the peace and security of Israel and the people of the epicenter is rapidly emerging - the prospect that the Palestinian leadership will unilaterally declare their own independent, sovereign state as early as the summer of 2011, and attempt to divide Jerusalem, and that the world will try to force Israel to accept this new state rather than require the Palestinians to sit down and negotiate a fair and just arrangement that both sides can accept.

Make no mistake: a unilateral declaration by the Palestinians is not a recipe for peace. It is a recipe for war. Over 450,000 Israelis live in the West Bank. They are not going to quietly accept a Palestinian government in Ramallah deciding their fate. Nor will these Israeli settlers allow the Palestinian police to forcibly remove them from their villages, towns and cities. Especially Jerusalem. They will fight back. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be under enormous domestic political pressure to back these Jewish citizens with the force of the Israeli military, and should violence intensify, he would likely order the IDF into battle. The results would not be pretty, and the Palestinian people would pay a heavy price.

Jerusalem and the volatile Middle East, gets the attention of the whole world. Why? Well, I suppose some of it is self-serving. We wouldn't want a war in the mid-east to interrupt our oil supplies. But, everyone knows nuclear weapons are scattered all over the sands of the Middle East. It would only take a small miscalculation on someone's part to set off a conflagration that would ignite the whole world.

Zechariah warns us: THE WORD OF THE LORD CONCERNING ISRAEL; THUS SAYS THE LORD, WHO STRETCHED OUT THE HEAVENS AND FOUNDED THE EARTH AND FORMED THE SPIRIT OF MAN WITHIN HIM: (Zechariah wanted us to understand exactly who is speaking – the God of creation, the one who created the cosmos, the earth and the miracle of human origin) LO, I AM ABOUT TO MAKE JERUSALEM A CUP OF REELING TO ALL THE PEOPLE. ON THAT DAY I WILL MAKE JERUSALEM A HEAVY STONE FOR ALL THE PEOPLES; ALL WHO LIFT IT SHALL GRIEVOUSLY HURT THEMSELVES. AND ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WILL COME TOGETHER AGAINST IT. (Zech. 12:1-3)

When will these things happen? When will the “nations of the earth” come against Jerusalem? It is no secret that the media and the world “have-it-in” for Israel. Even the Cleveland Plain Dealer takes the obvious side of the Arab world when writing about events there. Even the cartoons depict Israel as the bad guy? Recently, they had a cartoon of the Palestinian man and his boy huddled against the wall with bullet holes spelling out, “Holy Land.” Implicating it is Israel who starts these brush fires and who is the aggressor. Tell me why Israel, that tiny tiny nation compared to the Arab League Nations that is 50 times its size would want to provoke the whole world against them? To think they start these wars that turns nations hostile against them is ridiculous. Israel is struggling to survive let alone stirring up wars that could lead to World Wars. It's ludicrous to think Israel wants this ... especially after the Holocaust!

So, when will the “nations of the earth” come against Jerusalem? Well, many Arab leaders meet often with Russia, China, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and distant

countries like Korea and Libya who could provide them with weaponry and technology. When these powers can consolidate and feels confident that they could drive Israel into the Mediterranean Sea, then I think the nations will pounce on Israel with the pretense of maintaining Middle East peace...among other reasons.

Ezekiel spoke directly to this issue. Let's listen to him (inspired of God) to tell us exactly why these powers (Iran, Ethiopia, Libya, Turkey, Russia – all mentioned by name in the first 5 verses of Eze. 38) are coming down upon Jerusalem.

And for a different sound, let me read it from a paraphrase...

EZEKIEL 38:10-16 (The Msg.)

God is here speaking to Ezekiel about Gog whom virtually every scholar believes to be Russia in the "far north" as the scripture puts it.

¹⁰⁻¹² "Message of God, the Master: At that time you'll [Gog – Russia?] start thinking things over and cook up an evil plot. You'll say, "I'm going to invade a country without defenses, attack an unsuspecting, carefree people going about their business—no gates to their cities, no locks on their doors. And I'm going to plunder the place, march right in and clean them out, this rebuilt country risen from the ashes, these returned exiles and their booming economy centered down at the navel of the earth."

¹³ "Sheba and Dedan and Tarshish, traders all out to make a fast buck, will say, "So! You've opened a new market for plunder! You've brought in your troops to get rich quick!"

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ "Therefore, son of man, prophesy! Tell Gog, 'A Message from God, the Master: When my people Israel are established securely, will you make your move? Will you come down out of the far north, you and that mob of armies, charging out on your horses like a tidal wave across the land, and invade my people Israel, covering the country like a cloud? When the time's ripe, I'll unleash you against my land in such a way that the nations will recognize me, realize that through you, Gog, in full view of the nations, I am putting my holiness on display.

God speaks here of an "evil plot." The RSV puts it, "you will devise an evil scheme." The CEV puts it "evil plan." Somehow, some way, the allies of the nations, which immediately surround Israel, develop a plan that evidently clears U.N. approval – or at least the approval of all the allies. This could be in the works as I speak. As I said earlier, diplomats are constantly traveling and visiting other nations from the Middle East. We can be sure they're not discussing conservation of the whales in the Mediterranean Sea. Evidently, some nations will make a formal protest (v. 13) – maybe through the U.N. - but they won't get involved in this explosive conflict.

You'll notice God says he allows this multitude of nations to invade to do what? SO THAT EVERY NATION ON EARTH WILL KNOW THAT I, THE LORD, AM HOLY (v. 16). How does God do that? Well, if you read the rest of the chapter (and the next) you would see, but in a word, God brings judgment and brings Christ to destroy the nations and establish righteousness. So, if we should be living when this invasion occurs (and it could be at any time, I think), we will know the end of the age is upon us, God's judgment is ready to fall, and Christ's return is at hand.

It has been a long time coming but after 63 years of the existence of the state of Israel (1948), the key issue seems to have come down to the destiny of the city of Jerusalem.

We know Jerusalem will survive and be the capital of the world where Jesus will reign and sit upon His throne, but not before some difficult times. Let me read part of the verse I read before: ² "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. ³ On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. ⁴ On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the LORD. "I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. (Zech. 12:2-4 niv)

The unsolvable Middle East problem that brings the dawn of the Kingdom age begins with a storm and ends – thanks to God's intervention – in eternal peace. Even in this scientific, space exploration and space-station age, it's still the old stone walled ruins of Solomon's temple that keeps the eyes of the nations on alert to Jerusalem and many people's in constant fear for what could happen.

After we read about the nations invading Israel in Eze. 38, we read in Eze. 39 how God through Christ intervenes against the multitude of nations that came down to destroy Israel. At v. 12, God says people will be continually employed to cleanse the land of debris. At v. 14, God says after 7 months of general cleansing of the land, there will be 7 more months of a more detailed search of the land. This is the "mopping up" operations of bodies not found in the first recovery operations – this goes on for many months after the war is over.

We then read: Eze. 39: ²¹ "I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay on them. ²² From that day forward the people of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. ²³ And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴ I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid

my face from them.

²⁵ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. ²⁶ They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. ²⁷ When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. ²⁸ Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. ²⁹ I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

Fortunately for us, we know how it all ends. We give God the praise for that. If it weren't for His giving us His Word, we would be in total darkness about any of the events of this world we live in. We EVEN know what's going to happen to the dead! That's because God has given us Light and understanding and insight – providing for all His followers a peace that passes understanding. (Phil. 4:7)

Jerusalem may be in turmoil now, but remember, God is in control.



The Covenanted Earth

Arlen F. Rankin

The Church of God should refresh their studies of the Covenants of Promise (Eph. 2:12) for in them is God's program of redemption developed. In the promises made unto the fathers is the glad tidings or gospel of salvation (Acts 13:32; Gal. 3:8). What are these covenants? Chronologically they consist of the Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic and New.

In this article we will address only *one theme* found in three of these four, then connect in the last. The theme, in the words of David and our Lord Jesus Christ, is "Blessed are the meek for they shall *inherit the earth*" (Psa. 37:11, 22; Matt. 5:5).

The Covenant With Noah

When the wickedness of men reached beyond what God would put up with He poured out His judgment in the great deluge. When the waters had accomplished their designed purging and they abated from the earth, the God of creation made a promise to Noah and all mankind, saying,

"And, I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, ...I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations...I will remember my covenant, ...the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:9-16).

The "destruction" of the earth specified in verse 11 parallels the "perishing" of 2 Peter 3:6—"the world [*kosmos*, orderly arrangement] that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." It refers, not to the obliteration of the globe, but the near obliteration of breathing life upon it. To that refers the promise of the bow in the clouds. There were great changes in the surface of the earth, but the geologic sphere remained.

In God's long range plan the earth has a primary part. In the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else" (Isa. 45:18).

Hence, when God finally cleanses the earth by fire the wicked shall perish from upon it, but it shall remain to be the perfected habitation of righteous believers. See 2 Pet. 3:7, 13; Prov. 10:30; Psa. 37:9, 18, 20, 23, 34.

There are many promises for recovery of the earth which was cursed with imbalance, disorder and decay when man sinned and was himself cursed with suffering and death (Gen. 3:16-10; Rom. 8:19-25). There will be a grand restoration of all the earth, and all life upon it, to the original Edenic "very good." The prophets foretold this,

"For the LORD shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isa. 51:3).

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the waste places shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that

was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited” (Ezek. 36:33-35). See also Acts 3:19-21 (refreshing, restitution); Matt. 19:28 (regeneration) and Rev. 21:5 (make all things new).

The Covenant With Abraham

When God called Abram out of Mesopotamia he was to go into *the land* which God would show him. This was to be *the place of his inheritance* and that of his descendents who would follow him in faith, believing the great God who was faithful in promise. Read Gen. 12:1-3, 7 and 15:13-21 along with Acts 7:1-8 and Heb. 11:8, 9. The latter text reads,

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into *a place* which he should after receive for *an inheritance*, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the *land of promise*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the *heirs* with him of the same promise.”

This initial land promise was later expanded to include, as referred to by Paul, “*the world.*” He says,

“For the promise, that he should be *heir of the world*, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ...Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law [Abraham’s literal seed in Israel], but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:13, 16).

Read carefully and reflect on Rom. 4:11, 12, 20-25; 15:8-16 and Gal. 3:6-9, 13-16, 26-29 where it is explained that These promises extend to believers today—both Jew & Gentile—who are in Christ, the heir of promise.

The Covenant with David

Within the promises made to Abraham is the word that “kings shall come out of thee” (Gen. 17:6, 16). This portion of the Abraham’s covenant is expanded in the covenant made with King David of Israel,

“Moreover I will appoint *a place* for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in *a place* of their own, and move no more...When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy father [die], I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ...And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee [in thy presence]; thy throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:10-16; compare with Amos 9:14, 15 and Jer. 24:6).

The whole of these things is that, though the throne was overturned in the days of Zedekiah, eventually one would rise who would be rightful heir to that throne (Ezek. 21:25-27). Now the one who has the right (*basileia*, right to rule) to the Davidic throne and kingdom is Jesus the Christ. This authority to rule was granted to Jesus when he ascended to the right hand of his Father, the Ancient of Days. See Luke 19:11-15; Dan. 7:13, 14 and Psa. 110:1-3. It will be executed by him when he returns (Matt. 25:31). Prophet and angel testify,

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6, 7; compare Jer. 23:5, 6 and Acts 2:30).

“And, behold, thou [Mary] shalt conceive in thy womb [v. 35], and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:31-33).

This kingdom shall, though starting relatively small, shall expand to cover the whole earth, even as the stone of Daniel’s vision, after crushing the governments of men, shall “become a great mountain, and filled *the whole*

earth" (Dan. 2:35, 44, 45). Note "increase" in Isa. 9:7. It shall in the end encompass *the entire globe* as seen here,

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ...Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the *uttermost parts of the earth* for thy possession" (Psa. 2:6-8; compare with 72:8 [*unto the ends of the earth*"]) and 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

"And the kingdom and dominion, and the *greatness* of the kingdom *under the whole heaven*, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and *all dominions* shall serve and obey him" (Dan. 7:27; compare Rev. 11:15).

Abraham's connection with this kingdom is specifically referred to in Jesus' teaching where he states, "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11; compare Luke 13:29).

Our connection to that kingdom and the throne thereof is reflected in our being heirs of and entering into that kingdom and finally sharing in its "greatness...under the whole heaven" (Dan. 7:27). So James and Peter also signify,

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him" (Jas. 2:5 with Matt. 25:34 and Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 4:4-7).

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10, 11 with 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

As to the throne, we have Jesus' promise that faithful overcomers shall be given the privilege of administering that kingdom with him,

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21; compare 2:26, 27; Rev. 20:4; Luke 22:29, 30; Isa. 32:1).

"Thou [the Lamb of God, Jesus] art worthy...for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign *on the earth*" (Rev. 5:9, 10; compare 1:5, 6).

Heirs Through Faith & Forgiveness

As a critical footnote, we must point out the inseparable connection of these things to the New Covenant promised by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-36). The eternal nature of their inheritance necessitates a life which is likewise eternal. This is only possible for sinful man through the complete forgiveness of sins and the everlasting righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant promises and effects these two necessities. For further consideration of these things read and study these references thoroughly: Heb. 8 through 10 (particularly 9:12-15); Matt. 26:28; Gal. 3:13, 14; Eph. 2:11-19; Rom. 3:20-26; 4:13-15, 20-25.

The Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant will come to full fruition through the New Covenant. Our participation in the blessings of them will depend upon our faith and our faithfulness in Christ. All of these covenant promises will culminate in the new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness only (2 Pet. 3:13); when "God shall be All in All" (1 Cor. 15:28); when we, in full fellowship with all God's family, shall see His face and dwell in His presence forever (Eph. 1:10-12; Matt 5:8; Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:3, 4; Job 19:23-27).

May God in His grace grant to each of us the great and precious promises found in these "covenants of promise." He is faithful, will we remain faithfully committed to Him until we see their glad reality? (Heb. 10:23, 35, 36). If you are not yet in covenant relationship with God through Christ, it is time to consider heeding that call (2 Thes. 2:13, 14; 1 Thes. 2:12).