

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



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The Lord Bless You & Keep You.



The Lord  
Make His  
Face Shine  
Upon You &  
be Gracious  
to You.

Numbers 6:24-25

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Wally Winner - Kent Ross



### If Not Now, When . . . If Ever

Last month, Mr. Harold Camping was shown wrong when the end of the world did not occur as he insisted it would on May 21. Interesting was a story from Malaysia of a man reporting his father dressed for that day and sat quietly awaiting the event.

He first thought it very foolish of his father, but began to realize the implications of the faith shown by his father, misguided or not. If he believed the end of the world was to come, he was not worried, as he was a Christian, and he was sure of his security in Christ, come what may.

Mr. Camping has now opted for a date on October 21, 2011, strangely coincident with the October 22, 1844 date of the Great Millerite Disappointment. Likely he will also be wrong in this date-setting. It is so strange to think any person has the audacity to think he knows when Jesus said He, Himself, didn't know . . . that date. That, of course, is also extremely strange that Jesus said He didn't know, as many who call themselves Christians declare that Jesus was Almighty God, and to admit He didn't know makes their doctrine of the trinity very difficult, if not impossible to retain.

But should October 21 be the date that YHWH decides to send His Son, Jesus back, it would be wonderful. I might not dress and sit quietly that day, waiting, but what ought I do in the intervening months of July, August and September.


We are told to Occupy until that Day. We are told to go and make disciples of all nations, and we are to proclaim the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God. Whether or not it will be October 21, July 21 and into 2012 or beyond, it is very clear that I need to be ready for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man will return. I need to be about His Father and my Father's business while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.

### The Need for Laborers

Atlanta Bible College took a very large step of faith at the General Conference just recently concluded. The voting membership and the Board of Directors made a decision to bid on the entirety of the four-story building where they had been leasing but one of the floors.

This is very exciting and if it is of God it will succeed, though the price is very high, not in the value of the building itself, but in light of the dramatic and dire financial situation in which the College has been. It has lost cash reserves of some \$2,000,000 in the last several years.

While \$2,000,000 lost and then a bid of over \$1,000,000 seems daunting, it will not be if this is what God desires of our College.



## Encouraging the Faith

As the college moves ahead by faith the need for laborers is imperative. Last year the Korean Extension (a part of Atlanta Bible College) had nine graduates, which is laudable, but most of these will seek service in Korea, not the U.S.

The main campus only had five receiving their two-year certificates, and none actually graduating and moving into ministry. This evidences the great need. The college needs to do more, BUT so do we. If we do not encourage our young women and men to prepeare for ministry, it is unlikely those numbers will change significantly.

This year the college is making a major effort to provide free tuition under, certain circumstances, an offer that is being responded to by some, but needs to be heard by many more.

Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into His Harvest, and then do your part!

## Ominous Signals

Just this month the state of New York passed and their Governor lauded the passage of a law that makes same-sex marriage legal there. It is surmised that those so inclined can come from other states to have this ceremony performed and then go back to their respective states, where a quid pro quo would deem it also recognizable.

The federal court in the San Francisco ordered that there be no further delay in the military in abandoning the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, for a policy of forthrightness in allowing people of homosexual orientation to live that way openly and without censure.

Congress, which is the Constitutional arm that must declare war, has not been asked to do so since our involvement in Libya. The president, which is supposed to ask Congress to declare any war after ninety days, has declared we are not really at war there because there are no ground troops. Of course our airplanes and bombs come to the ground, but from the air, so supposedly that exempts this action from being war.

Congress and the President seem stale-mated on moving ahead, each blaming the other. Our government is some \$14,000,000,000,000+ in debt. Yes, that’s trillion! But they can’t find a way to stop spending. It comes down to some 536 men and women who seemingly don’t know how, or won’t do the job, so we slide deeper and deeper, as a nation into this financial morass.

Our land is burdened with sin, morally bankrupt, and now we compound everything by seemingly moving away from being Israel’s friend. You know how God feels about that.

Ominous indeed. The “dark” is rising!

## General Conference Action

Our churches here in the U.S. meet annually (since 1921), to take action by representation from our churches. This year it took a bold step of action. While losing the college campus in Morrow, Georgia, and most of the \$2,300,000 that was received for it, entering into lease arrangements that cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000 per MONTH for the McDonough campus, it was decided to make an million dollar plus offer on the building now being leased, with money we do not have!

This doesn’t make sense to some, but if this is God’s Will, it could be a brilliant strategy and a wonderful step. I will be sending my check to help raise the funds we do not have so we can make a legitimate bid. We will know shortly if this succeeds.

Also a congratulatory note to Greg Demmitt and Rick McClain who were elected to our Board of Directors. This is Greg’s second time on the Board. Rick is a fine young man from the Grand Rapids, Michigan area. Happens that as I began pastoring a church there, he was a little child in our Sunday School. Good family background from which the Lord should receive fine service.

# “God Bless America.”

By Delbert Rankin

“God Bless America.” On the surface there is a ring of patriotism in this song. That was its intention.

There is something to this song that goes deeper, beyond that emotion, however. A perspective not often considered. “...And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up [the persecution].” Read Revelation 12:15-16.

The LORD God promised blessing to any who would bless God’s people of promise and cursing to any who would curse them. Read Genesis 12:1-3. Who are they? First, there was Abram (later named Abraham), from whom would then come the great nation, the people of promise. Abraham, then to Isaac (Genesis 17:19, 21). Isaac, then to Jacob and the children of Israel (Exodus 2:24-25). The people of promise (Romans 9:4), from whom came Christ (Romans 9:5), who confirmed the ancient promises (Romans 15:8), so that we (today in the church) might share the privilege as a people of the same promise (Galatians 3:29). The “woman” from whom Christ came (Revelation 12:1-5) is the faithful people of promise. The “woman,” being the people of promise, thereafter would be persecuted, but she would be hidden and protected against annihilation in the struggle of it all and find victory, even in the cases of martyrdom, through the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:6-14). From the First Century looking forward, there would be those outbursts of persecution of the powers that rose to be against any dissenters or marked peoples but first and foremost against the Jews from whom Christ came and whom God has not cast away from His plan (Romans 11:1-2a) and the Church who are heirs of the same promise (Romans 15:9-10; Acts 20:21, 25, 32). Both groups are connected inseparably with the Christ.

There is a symbol of a nation who is called the “Mother of Exiles.” She says “with silent lips, ‘Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to be free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me...’” Let the “ancient lands” keep their pompous ways who have treated their people poorly through intolerance and persecution. Let the ‘new world’ provide for a time a haven for all those persecuted in the ‘old world,’ especially the wandering Jew and the faithful Church. If America would do that, there would be blessing. America has done that in large part, providing a sense of rest not found elsewhere for those peoples. The “earth” helped the persecuted “woman” whose legacy lay in her connection with Christ (Revelation 12:15-16).

In addition to the available blessing of Genesis 12:3, God always had the option of answering spiritual and acceptable prayers of His people by providing rest to the people of promise, according to 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

Our story goes back to the time when the Czars ruled Russia, when the Russian Orthodox faith carried sway in the country’s affairs and when political activists were dissatisfied with the situation and were seeking change in the latter 1800s. After Czar Alexander II (ruling Russia, Poland and Finland, 1855-1881) was assassinated, anarchy and chaos promoted by the revolutionary assassins led the Russian government to exact discriminatory regulations against the Jews. They were being blamed for the nation’s problems. In the 1880s and 1890s, they were expelled from Moscow, their living locations were restricted and only a small percentage of their children allowed an education. This was the time when the first Jews emigrated to Palestine, purchased land and began productive farming. Pogroms (Russian term for devastations) wreaked havoc on Jewish communities. Military personnel

would randomly come in and harass, loot, rape and burn homes and businesses. This was a time when the Jewish population in Russia grew from 2.3 million to 5 million. Their presence was being felt as they were proficient in banking, mercantile, legal and other professional positions.

Moses Baline and family lived in Temum, Russia. It was during this social and political unrest, this anti-Jew backdrop of sporadic pogroms, that the Baline family moved out. They wanted to escape persecution. And guess what? They emigrated to New York City, a place that promised rest from their turmoil.

Times were tough for emigrants in America but in comparison it was freedom from the pogroms and social genocide of the old world. They arrived in New York in 1893, just a year before the last Czar took the Russian throne. The situation in Russia would continue to deteriorate into civil war till the Communist Revolution succeeding in putting the Red Communists in and casting out the religious but corrupt empirical government in 1917.

Israel Baline was but five years old when his family moved to the New World. He was the youngest of eight children. His father scratched out a living working in markets and also served as a cantor in various synagogues.

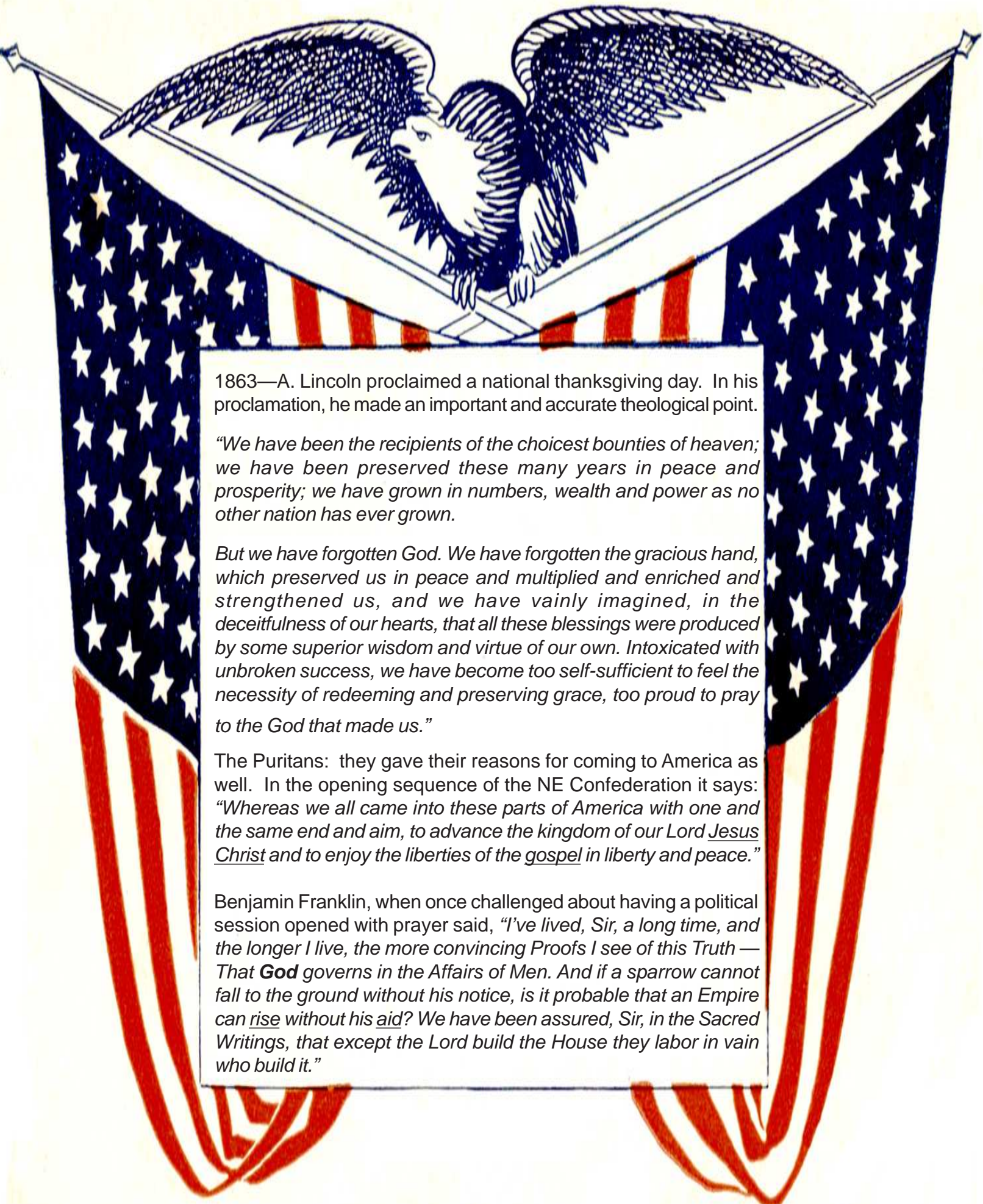
Israel Baline was left, however, to his own devices. As a youngster he was rather wild, unsupervised, street-smart, finding his recreation with other street-wise kids. He father died in 1896 and the youngest Baline ran away. At 7 and 8 he was out on the streets. There, early on, he developed something of a livelihood in street singing, though among unsavory companions, then hanging around cafes and singing in some of them. Israel was somewhat of a musical genius and eventually began writing lyrics to music and then basic tunes themselves. For one of his first pieces of music which got published, he earned 37 cents in royalties. He could play the piano, but rather poorly and only in F Sharp, mainly using the black keys. He would come up with ideas for lyrics and music and then have others do the musical arrangements.

After arriving in America from the anti-Semitic atmosphere of Russia, Israel Baline's mother so appreciated the freedoms here that she frequently expressed her thankfulness to her God and desired His blessings on this kinder country. Israel remembered that and in 1918 he wrote a song to go with a musical score and theatrical presentation that echoed the idea. By that year he was writing popular hits as well as musical scores for the theatre. In the musical of 1918, though, he didn't use the song that recalled his mother's gratitude, when she would often say from her Jewish lips, "God bless America."

It was 30 years later that Israel Baline\* dusted off that piece, wrote new lyrics to it and had it published. In 1938 God Bless America hit the American musical scene...when "Jew Hate" (a phrase "softened" into the coined term antisemitism) was gearing up into full swing in Germany and was already spreading beyond its borders, yielding a holocaust that would slaughter 6 million Jews and 6 million other unfortunates (gypsies, the elderly, the sick, the mentally deficient, the dissenters and other uncooperatives). And, of course, the song became popular toward its intended patriotism, although its words are a solemn prayer for His blessing.

To me the song God Bless America essentially echoes, unwittingly, the promise of God's blessing to any who would bless and provide protection for the people of promise (Genesis 12:3). And it would indicate there were some places, a portion of the earth, that would help "the woman" of Revelation 12 by countering, or "swallowing up," for a time the persecutions of the persecuted, be it the wandering Jew or the faithful Church, both of whom have a historic connection to Christ and both of whom have found refuge in America.

**BUT NOTE!** Revelation 12:17 indicates that the people in connection with Christ are yet to be persecuted. Paul told the church, "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), and "That in latter Days trying Seasons will come" (2 Timothy 3:1 Diag.). And "the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) is far from complete, though even that is in a context of a future hope for Israel (Jeremiah 30:1-10). Does this suggest that national policies may reduce freedoms, liberties, protections and blessings? If so, will God's blessings ultimately be withheld?



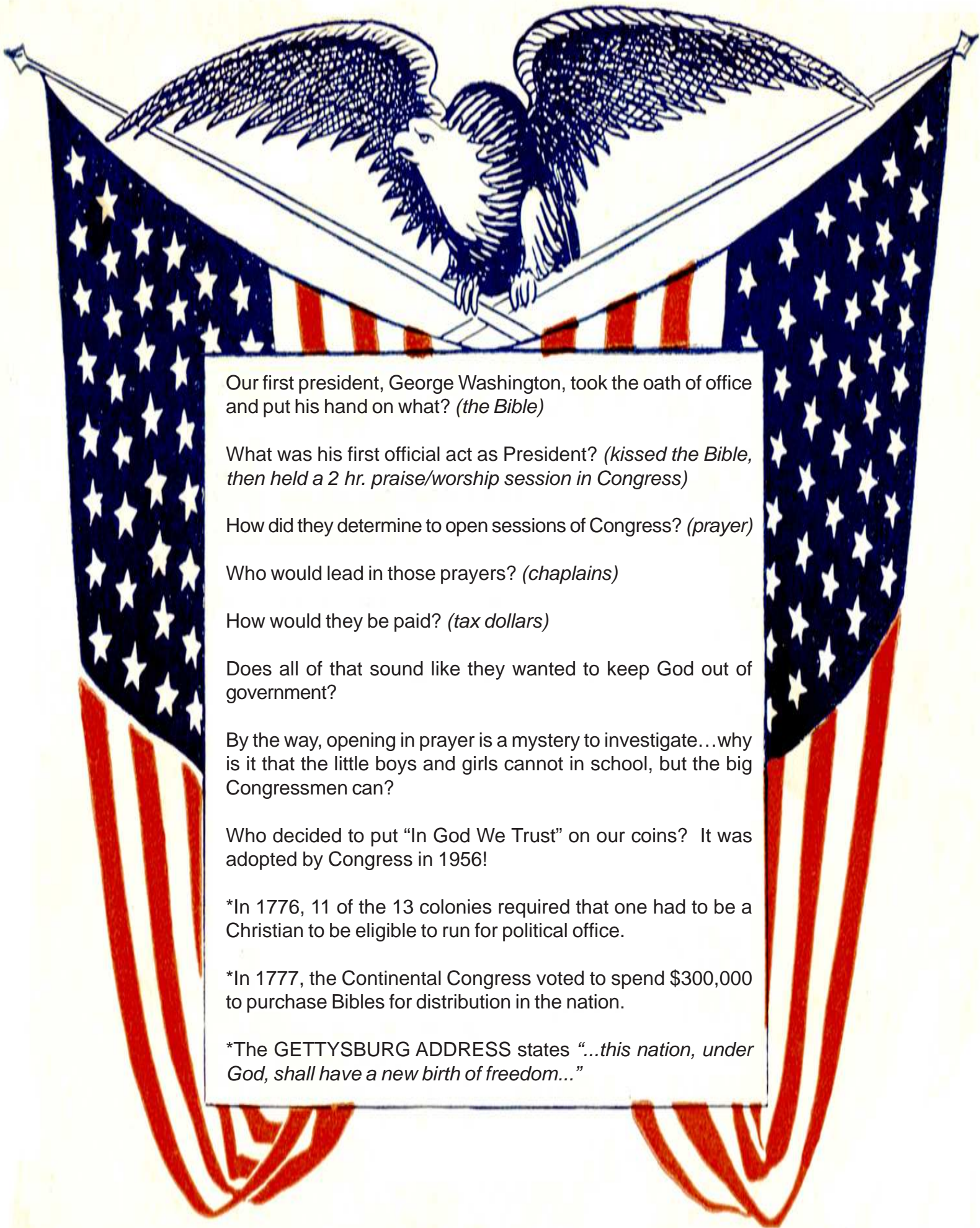
1863—A. Lincoln proclaimed a national thanksgiving day. In his proclamation, he made an important and accurate theological point.

*“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.*

*But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.”*

The Puritans: they gave their reasons for coming to America as well. In the opening sequence of the NE Confederation it says: *“Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in liberty and peace.”*

Benjamin Franklin, when once challenged about having a political session opened with prayer said, *“I’ve lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing Proofs I see of this Truth — That **God** governs in the Affairs of Men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an Empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that except the Lord build the House they labor in vain who build it.”*



Our first president, George Washington, took the oath of office and put his hand on what? (*the Bible*)

What was his first official act as President? (*kissed the Bible, then held a 2 hr. praise/worship session in Congress*)

How did they determine to open sessions of Congress? (*prayer*)

Who would lead in those prayers? (*chaplains*)

How would they be paid? (*tax dollars*)

Does all of that sound like they wanted to keep God out of government?

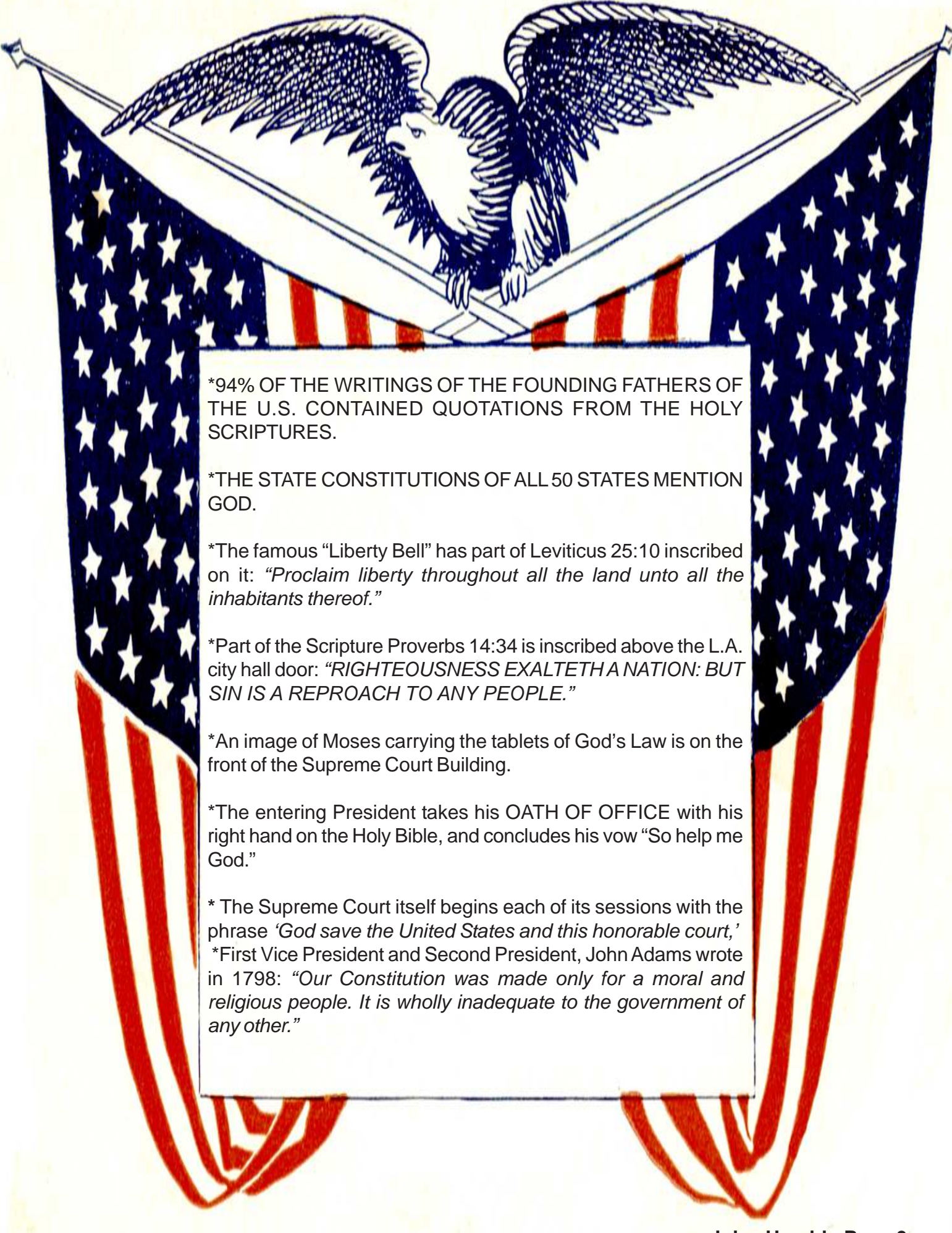
By the way, opening in prayer is a mystery to investigate... why is it that the little boys and girls cannot in school, but the big Congressmen can?

Who decided to put "In God We Trust" on our coins? It was adopted by Congress in 1956!

\*In 1776, 11 of the 13 colonies required that one had to be a Christian to be eligible to run for political office.

\*In 1777, the Continental Congress voted to spend \$300,000 to purchase Bibles for distribution in the nation.

\*The GETTYSBURG ADDRESS states "...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom..."



\*94% OF THE WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE U.S. CONTAINED QUOTATIONS FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

\*THE STATE CONSTITUTIONS OF ALL 50 STATES MENTION GOD.

\*The famous "Liberty Bell" has part of Leviticus 25:10 inscribed on it: *"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."*

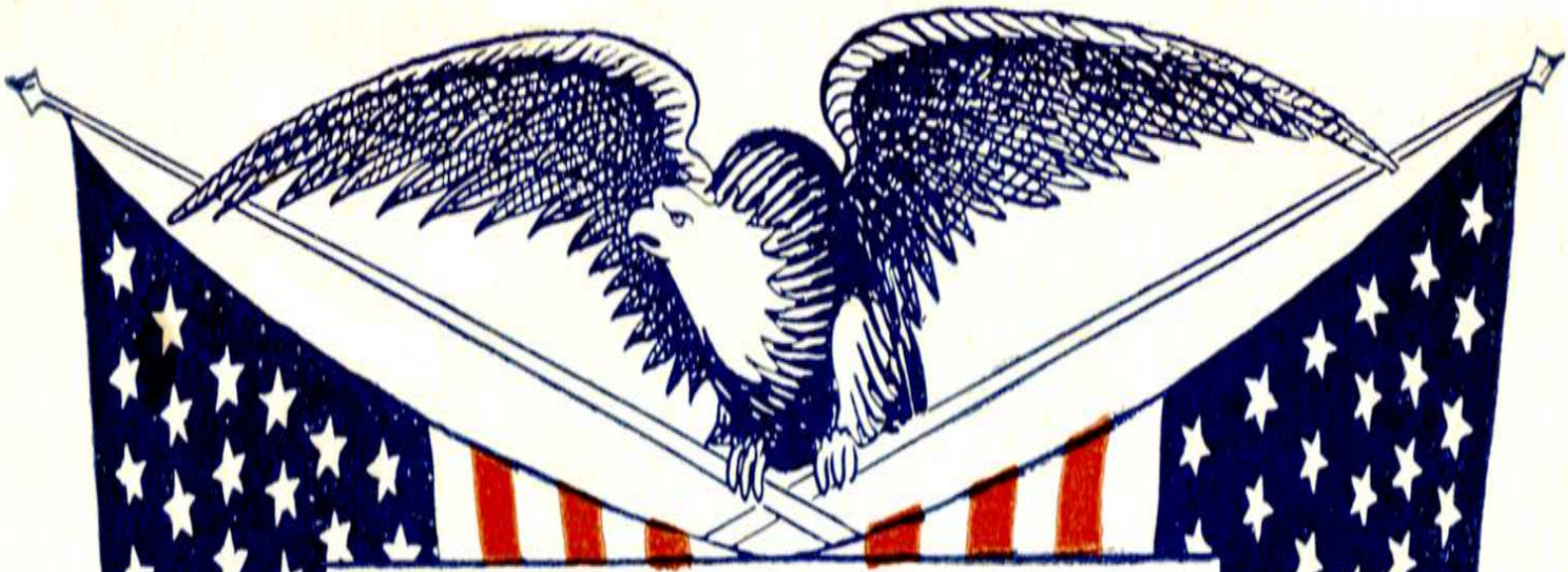
\*Part of the Scripture Proverbs 14:34 is inscribed above the L.A. city hall door: *"RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION: BUT SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE."*

\*An image of Moses carrying the tablets of God's Law is on the front of the Supreme Court Building.

\*The entering President takes his OATH OF OFFICE with his right hand on the Holy Bible, and concludes his vow "So help me God."

\* The Supreme Court itself begins each of its sessions with the phrase *'God save the United States and this honorable court,'*

\*First Vice President and Second President, John Adams wrote in 1798: *"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."*



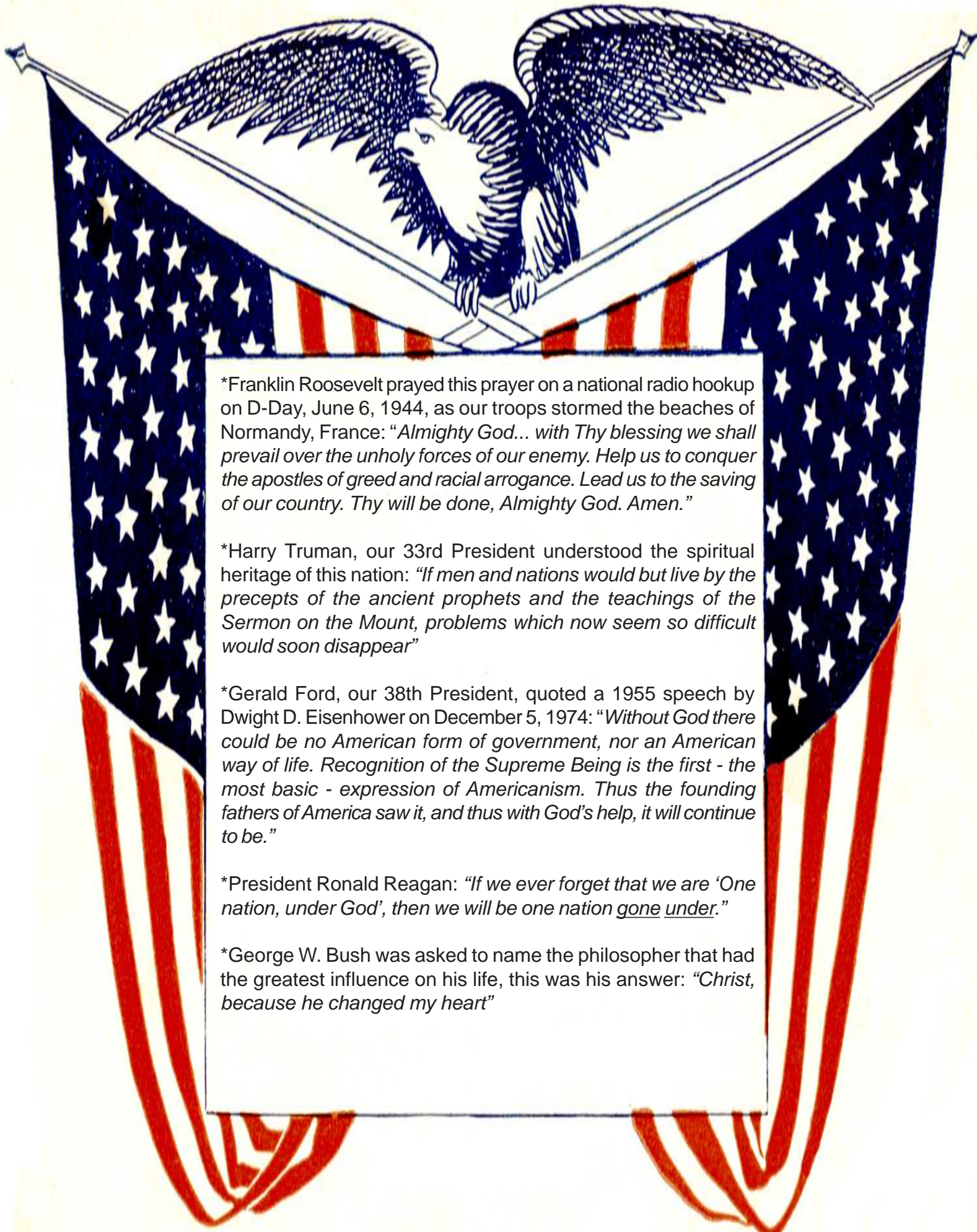
*\*His son and our sixth President, John Quincy Adams said: "No book in the world deserves to be so unceasingly studied, and so profoundly meditated upon as the Bible."*

*\* President Thomas Jefferson: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever." - 1781*

*\*Theodore Roosevelt, America's 26th President, wrote: "In this actual world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at, or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid down-grade." - 1917*

*\*Woodrow Wilson, our 28th President and Governor of New Jersey, said this: "America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of the Holy Scripture." - 1911*

*\*Calvin Coolidge, our 30th President, said this about our founding fathers: "They were intent upon establishing a Christian commonwealth in accordance with the principle of self- government. They were an inspired body of men. It has been said that God sifted the nations that He might send choice grain into the wilderness... Who can fail to see it in the hand of destiny? Who can doubt that it has been guided by a Divine Providence." - 1923*



\*Franklin Roosevelt prayed this prayer on a national radio hookup on D-Day, June 6, 1944, as our troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, France: *"Almighty God... with Thy blessing we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogance. Lead us to the saving of our country. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen."*

\*Harry Truman, our 33rd President understood the spiritual heritage of this nation: *"If men and nations would but live by the precepts of the ancient prophets and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, problems which now seem so difficult would soon disappear"*

\*Gerald Ford, our 38th President, quoted a 1955 speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower on December 5, 1974: *"Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first - the most basic - expression of Americanism. Thus the founding fathers of America saw it, and thus with God's help, it will continue to be."*

\*President Ronald Reagan: *"If we ever forget that we are 'One nation, under God', then we will be one nation gone under."*

\*George W. Bush was asked to name the philosopher that had the greatest influence on his life, this was his answer: *"Christ, because he changed my heart"*

# DECEIVED BY ALL

## The Story of Modern Israel

### Part Two

#### From the Roman Diaspora to the Eve of Statehood

By Wally Winner

The Jews are some the most interesting people on the face of the earth, Palestine the most memorable of all lands, and Jerusalem the most renowned of all cities. The history of the Jew is the romance of ages. In the land of Israel the most thrilling events of time have been witnessed. The crucifixion of the Lord outside the city walls of Jerusalem, and the subsequent siege of the city by the Romans are enough to make Jerusalem immortal in history and of undying interest to all.

The respective systems of Judaism and Christianity have been each attested and divinely accredited by miracles. But were we asked for external proof of the truthfulness of the divine records as a whole we would point to the Jew today. In the history of this wonderful people we have the most ample fulfillment of Scripture, not in some particulars, but in hundreds, and down even to minutest detail. The Messiah and the Jew are enshrined in the pages of the Old Testament, equally so are Christ and the Church in the New.

The Jews as a people are unique in this respect, that they alone possess a body of laws and ordinances—the wonder of the world—in which is wrapped up an easily read anticipative history. Commemorative monuments and institutions characterize other nations. The history of Israel is written in advance. This is a fact undeniable by even the enemies of revelation, and is a truly remarkable one.

The Jews had revolted once again against the Roman rule in 132. The revolt had some temporary success, but was eventually put down by the strong arm of Rome.

Rome's response to the Bar Kochba revolts was to destroy Jerusalem in 135. Hardrian orders it plowed under. He builds the Aelia Capitolina. Rome places a Temple to Jupiter over the Jewish Temple site. The name of the land is changed to Palestine after Israel's enemy. Most of the Jews either leave or are relocated. It is the diaspora.

Christianity's response to the Bar Kochba revolt was to put distance between themselves and their Jewish roots. Christians were suffering already under the Roman Empire and by association with the Jews since it was considered to be a cult of Judaism. Christians made some dramatic declarations to try and separate themselves from their Jewish roots. The seeds for different practices and different theology are sown here. Eventually, Christianity's practices become their theology. They searched scriptures to try validating their practices. The organized church begins a course of anti- Semitism that will eventually lead a holocaust.

Christianity seems to make a great leap forward when Emperor Constantine legalizes it in the Roman Empire by issuing the Edict of Milan. It was an edict of cooperation with all religions in the empire. Tradition tells us that he was converted to Christianity suddenly, and by a miracle. One evening during the contest with



**Constantine**

Maxentius, he saw a radiant cross appearing in the heavens, with the inscription, “By this thou shalt conquer.” The tradition is first mentioned by Eusebius, in his *De Vita Constantini*, written after the emperor’s death. Constantine then defeated the superior forces of Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

A triumphal arch — the Arch of Constantine — was built after the victory in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge to celebrate it. The arch is decorated with images of Victoria and sacrifices to gods like Apollo, Diana, or Hercules, but contains no Christian symbolism.

Constantine’s conversion was a change of policy, rather than of moral character. Long after that event, he killed his son, his second wife, several others of his relatives, and some of his most intimate friends. His relationship to Christianity was cool and calculating. He kept pagans in the highest positions in his immediate surroundings, and forbade everything which might look like an encroachment of Christianity upon paganism.

In 321, Constantine instructed that Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the venerable day of the sun, referencing the esoteric eastern sun-worship. His coinage still carried the symbols of the sun cult until 324. Even when Constantine dedicated the new capital of Constantinople, which became the seat of Byzantine Christianity for a millennium, he did so wearing the Apollonian sun-rayed Diadem. He retained the office and title of *Pontifex Maximus* to the last, and did not receive Christian baptism until he felt death closing in upon him although he called out to the sun god on his death bed.

Constantine himself disliked the risks to societal stability that religious disputes and controversies brought with them. Constantine used the dispute over Arianism to try and unify religious worship throughout the empire. In 325 he summoned the Council of Nicaea. The council altered the time of the celebration of the resurrection of Christ (later called Easter in another move away from Jewish feast days). Constantine enforced the prohibition against celebrating the Lord’s Supper on the day before the Jewish Passover. Constantine issued new laws regarding the Jews. They were forbidden to own Christian slaves or to circumcise their slaves.



Perhaps the greatest damage from the Council was their directed creed concerning the relationship of Yahweh and His son, Jesus Christ. In reacting to Arianism the Council moved in another direction. Their conclusion was Jesus Christ is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.” Jesus Christ is said to be “begotten, not made”, asserting his co-eternality with God, and confirming it by stating his role in the Creation. Basically, they were saying that Jesus was God, and God’s son, not a creation of God. He is said to be “from the substance of the Father.” Eusebius of Caesarea ascribes the term *homoousios*, or *consubstantial*, i.e., “of the same substance” (of the Father).

These conclusions were later refined and defined by succeeding councils into the trinity (especially, Council of Constantinople in 381 which gave a full-fledged form). The trinity was viewed by some as a plurality of

gods and in defiance of the strong monotheism of Israel. Reaction to this teaching of Christianity led to the development of another world religion and conflict, war and death that continues to the present century.

Constantine had paved the way, but it was Emperor Theodosius in 378 that made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Church attendance becomes compulsory. Jews were told to convert or die. For good or bad (mostly bad), the church and the empire would be linked together for years to come.


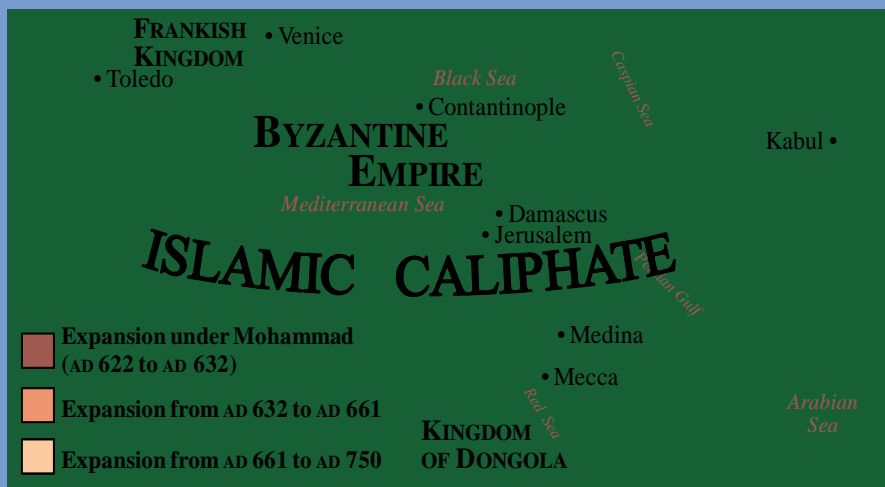
In 570 in Mecca, Mohammed is born. Mecca is a spice caravan route with people from all types of religious persuasion journeying through it. The moon god was the resident god of Mecca. As part of their worship to the moon god, they would march seven times around a protected black stone. It is certain that in the period before the rise of Islam it was a polytheist sanctuary and was a site of pilgrimage for people throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

The rise of Islam was Mohammed's response to the idolatry he saw. He reacted to the polytheism of the locals. Introduced to Christianity through the caravans, he viewed it as just another form of polytheism. The part he saw in Judaism that appealed to him was the monotheism.

In 610 Mohammed declared himself to be a prophet and says he is receiving visions from the angel Gabriel. He writes these words down forming them into the Islamic guide book, the Qur'an. His preaching of a monotheistic religion leads to him being forced to escape to Medina 622. The climate there is better for him to advance the Islamic religion and continue his writing. By 629 Muhammad was victorious in the nearly bloodless Conquest of Mecca, and makes a treaty. He then proceeds to kill all the opposition. By the time of his death in 632 (at the age of 62) he united the tribes of Arabia into a single religious polity. The Islamic religion now becomes a factor in world politics.

*The Nature and Triumph of Islam*  
 MUHAMMAD

- 632 CE: Muhammad died unexpectedly
  - he had united all Arabia as it had never been before
  - and had forged a powerful new army of fanatic fighters
  - beginning of the **Pax Arabica** ("Arabic Peace")

The Persians sacked Jerusalem in 614 and the Byzantines recapture Jerusalem under Heraclius in 628. The Dome of the Rock is built in 637. It is not the Jews that usurp the Arabs. It is the other way around. Then in 638 Jerusalem is conquered by Caliph Omar and the Muslim domination of Jerusalem begins.

The Muslims did not stop in Jerusalem, but Syria fell in 634, Egypt in 638,

Persia in 640, North Africa in 689 and Spain in 711. The advance was stopped by Charles Martel when he defeats the Moors at Tours, France, in 732 arresting the spread of Islam into Europe.

The Al Aqsa Mosque is built in 715 while Jerusalem continues to change hands. In 750 Abbasid Dynasty of Baghdad seizes control of Jerusalem. Then the Egyptian-based Fatimid Dynasty conquers Jerusalem in 950 and destroys all synagogues and churches. It is the Seljuks turn in 1071 to conquer Palestine and vandalize Jerusalem, persecuting both Jews and Christians.



**Pope Urban II**

With the Seljuks Turks in control of Jerusalem, Pope Urban II called for a crusade to free the city. He gave the following reasons for starting the First Crusade:

- The Turks were severely persecuting the Christians in the Middle East, even murdering them.
- The Turks had taken over territory previously belonging to Christians, including Jerusalem and sites which were considered holy
- Christ commanded it

A masterpiece of shrewdness, Urban appealed to the highest and lowest motives of men. He preached to the throng of the faithful to help their brothers in difficulty, and the hardships that faced pilgrims to Jerusalem.

Since they would be murdering, plundering and even raping along the way and when reaching Jerusalem, the Pope assured them of indulgences. Should a Crusader die in the pursuit to free Jerusalem he was guaranteed immediate entrance into heaven. After all, to liberate Jerusalem would certainly be a holy cause.

The first Crusade to Jerusalem was lead by Godfrey de Bouillon on 1097. This crusade was the most “successful”. They actually captured Jerusalem.

The Jews and Muslims fought together to defend Jerusalem. They were unsuccessful though and on July 15, 1099 the Crusaders entered the city. They proceeded to massacre the remaining Jewish and Muslim civilians and pillaged or destroyed mosques and the city itself. The Crusaders had a contest to see how many babies (Jewish and Muslim) they could get on one sword. Almost 40,000 Jews and Muslims were murdered. Crusaders declare Jerusalem capital of their Latin kingdom.



The Crusaders killed many Jews as they crossed Europe en route to the Holy Land. In the Rhine Valley alone, about 12,000 Jews were killed in the First Crusade. Such persecution continued through the ninth and last Crusade in 1272.

Having massacred the Moslem and Jewish civilians in the Holy City, thereafter, the massacre of Jews was to become a normal feature of crusades. It was said that whoever killed a Jew who refused baptism had all his sins forgiven him; and there were those who felt unworthy to go on a crusade until he killed one. Back in

Europe many fighting men who could not conveniently go to Palestine to kill Turks, thought the next best thing was to kill Jews.

In 1187 Muslims recapture Jerusalem under Saladin, who encourages Jews and Christians to settle in Jerusalem and help him fight Latin Crusaders. Saladin dies in 1241. His heirs battle each other. Germany brokers a deal to return all of Jerusalem except the Temple Mount to Crusader control. In just a few years the Crusaders are expelled from Jerusalem by mercenaries hired by the Egyptian Sultan.

### **Crusades (Summary):**

- 1<sup>st</sup> 1097-1099: Captured Jerusalem.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 1147-1149: Postponed the fall of Jerusalem.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 1189-1191: Army failed to reach Jerusalem.
- 4<sup>th</sup> 1201-1204: Captured and plundered Constantinople.
- 5<sup>th</sup> 1228-1229: Took Jerusalem, but soon lost it.
- 6<sup>th</sup> 1248-1254: A failure.



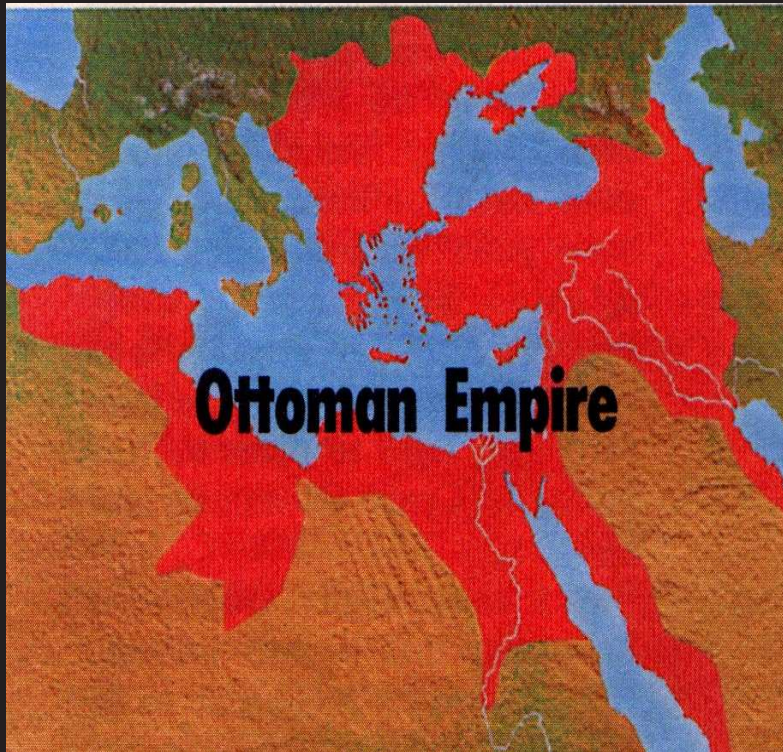
The Mamelukes begin to rule from Cairo in 1291. Jerusalem becomes city of exile for dangerous criminals and disfavored government officials.

In the mean time, the Inquisitions begin. In 1232 the Catholic Church established a court known as the Inquisition. The Inquisition was charged with the responsibility of seeking out and punishing heretics. Heretics included anybody associated with Judaism, Waldensianism, Hussitism, Lollardy and the Muslims.



Often individuals were charged with heresy with little or no proof. The courts would then torture these individuals in order to acquire a confession from them. If these individuals would confess, and repent, they would be forgiven. If they would not, then they would be punished. Punishments included imprisonment, loss of land and property, loss of titles, and even death.

The Church's Inquisition was so profitable that soon counties were conducting their own inquisitions. For instance, the Spanish Inquisition brought enough money from confiscated Jewish and Islam property that Queen Isabella was able to finance a trip to America by one Christopher Columbus.



The Inquisitions continued in one form or another until the mid nineteenth century. Historians distinguish four different manifestations of the Inquisition: the Medieval Inquisition (1231–16th century), the Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834), the Portuguese Inquisition (1536–1821) and the Roman Inquisition (1542 – c. 1860).

Turnover is once again going on in Jerusalem. The Ottoman Empire succeeds the Mameluke Empire in 1516. Jerusalem will be in Turkish hands for next 400 years. During this time the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt under Suleiman the Magnificent (1537-41) and Muslim authorities seal the Golden Gate because of a prophecy that the Messiah would enter through this gate (1544).

The Ottoman Turks regarded Palestine as part of Southern Syria. It was divided into three separate districts. It was sparsely populated and remained a non factor economically. For the most part, it was inhabited by nomads looking after their own needs.

Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the first Jewish neighborhood built outside Jerusalem walls, was built in 1860 in West Jerusalem. The name Mishkenot Sha'ananim means "Peaceful Habitation". The name of the neighborhood was taken from Isaiah 32:18: "My people will abide in 'mishkenot sha'ananim' (peaceful habitation), in secure dwellings and in quiet resting places."

There were widespread pogroms in Russia beginning in 1881. The Jews were cast as trying to overthrow the government. Mobs gathered to hunt down and kill Jews like hunters after game. Ninety percent of the Jews that left Russia during this time eventually found their way to the United States. It reinforced the Jewish national awakening.

As a result of the Russian pogroms, a Russian Jew named Leo Pinsker, tried to organize a movement for a Jewish state. He was willing to settle for any territory given to the Jews for a state even if it wasn't Palestine. He recorded his thoughts in the publication *Auto-Emancipation* in 1882. The Jews that didn't relocate to the United States tried finding their way to Palestine.

The "Dreyfus Affair" in 1894 became a pivotal episode in the establishment of the Jewish state. Alfred Dreyfus was a captain in the French Army. He was a model soldier picked for the fast track to leadership. He just happens to also be a Jew. Abruptly, in October 1894, after he had recently begun his training

assignment in the General Staff, Captain Dreyfus was arrested and charged with passing military secrets to the German Embassy in Paris.

The accusation against Dreyfus was based on a piece of paper retrieved from a waste basket in the German Embassy. The handwriting was similar to that of Dreyfus containing information he would have known. By the time of the trial the charges were realized as bogus, but the court had come too far to lose face now. Void of any merit (aside from the recovered document in handwriting similar to that of Dreyfus), He was convicted of treason by a military tribunal in December 1894 his rank, marks and buttons were ripped off his uniform and his sabre was broken and promptly incarcerated in solitary confinement on Devil's Island.



In June 1899 the case was reopened, following the uncovering of exonerating evidence and of the fact that Dreyfus had been denied due process during the initial court-martial. Despite the new evidence presented at his new military trial, Dreyfus was reconvicted in September and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was subsequently pardoned by President Émile Loubet and freed, but would not be formally exonerated until July 12, 1906, when the Court of Cassation annulled his second conviction.

In August 1914, at the age of 55, Alfred Dreyfus was recalled to active duty. He served mostly behind the lines of the Western Front as a Lieutenant-Colonel of Artillery but also performed frontline duties in 1917. He was raised to the rank of Officer of the Legion d'Honneur in November 1918. This recognized that he had served his nation in time of war with distinction and well beyond his normal retirement age.

Theodor Herzl, a Jewish-Austrian journalist, attends the trial of Alfred Dreyfus in Paris and witnesses outpouring of French anti-Semitism. This anti-Semitism and the injustices revealed in France by the conviction of Dreyfus had a radicalizing effect on Herzl, showing him that Jews could never hope for fair treatment in European society, thus orienting him toward creating a Jewish state. Soon afterward, Herzl wrote *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State* 1896) and founded the World Zionist Organization, which called for the creation of a Jewish State.

In the Middle East, the Muslim Arab press was sympathetic to the falsely accused Captain Dreyfus, and criticized the persecution of Jews in France.

In 1897 Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress, representing Jewish communities and organizations throughout the world, in Basel, Switzerland. The congress formulated the Basel Program, which defined Zionism's goal: "to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law." The congress also established the movement's administrative body, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and authorized it to establish branches in every country with a substantial Jewish population.

The first Jewish fighting unit in centuries is formed by Joseph Trumpeldor in 1915. The Zion Mule Corps of British Army enter World War I.

In 1916 the Sykes-Picot Agreement is signed by Britain, France and Russia. It carves up the Ottoman Empire for a post World War I community. Britain gains control of Palestine and France gains control of what is now Lebanon and Syria.

The Balfour Declaration commits Britain to supporting a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration was actually a 67-word statement contained within a brief letter by Lord Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, dated Nov. 2, 1917 to Lionel Rothschild. The declaration recognized the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The statement read as follows:

*“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”*



British forces under General Sir Edmund Allenby liberate Palestine from the Turks in late 1917. The forces under Allenby march into Jerusalem through the Jaffa Gate on December 11<sup>th</sup> on foot out of respect for the Holy City and its importance to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Allenby’s official report states:

*“...I entered the city officially at noon, 11 December, with a few of my staff, the commanders of the French and Italian detachments, the heads of the political missions, and the Military Attaches of France, Italy, and America... The procession was all afoot, and at Jaffa gate I was received by the guards representing England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, India, France and Italy. The population received me well...”*

The Versailles Peace Conference convenes in 1919. United States President Woodrow Wilson argues for self-determination of peoples. The Jews claim Jewish home in Palestine. The Arabs claim Arab state from Iraq to Yemen (excluding Palestine).

The San Remo Conference of 1920 grants Britain Mandate over Palestine with the aim of encouraging immigration and settlement of Jews and establishment of Jewish National Home. British officials on the other hand instigate Arab riots in Palestine. The rioters demand an end to Jewish immigration and incorporation of Palestine into Syria. The result is Vladimir Jabotinsky founds *Haganah*, the Jewish self-defense force in Palestine. Some of Israel’s future leaders are members of the Haganah.

Herbert Samuel, the first commissioner of Palestine and a British Jew, appoints Haj Amin al-Husseini as Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921. Al-Husseini was born in Jerusalem in 1893, and went on to serve in the Ottoman Army during World War I. He was strongly anti-British and anti-Jewish. Al-Husseini in fact had been sentenced to ten years in prison by the British for inciting riots in 1920. None of that sentence was served, as al-Husseini had fled to Transjordan, and was soon after amnestied by Samuel himself.

One of the Al-Husseini most successful projects was the restoration of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque. With funds collected from India and various Arab states, the Dome was plated in gold. It enhanced the status of Jerusalem in the eyes of Muslims throughout the world. The Mufti’s status increased as an influential Arab leader.

The appointment leads to more conflict. The Mufti, fearful that increased Jewish immigration to Palestine would damage Arab standing in the area, engineered the bloody riots against Jewish settlement in 1929 and 1936.

On June third of 1922 a paper was issued from the office of British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill. It really was a document written by Herbert Samuel, the Commissioner of Palestine. It is to be a British clarification on their intentions. It begins:

*“The tension which has prevailed from time to time in Palestine is mainly due to apprehensions, which are entertained both by sections of the Arab and by sections of the Jewish population. These apprehensions, so far as the Arabs are concerned are partly based upon exaggerated interpretations of the meaning of the [Balfour] Declaration favoring the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, made on behalf of His Majesty’s Government on 2 November 1917.”*

That set the stage for the July 1922 announcement by the British to divide Palestine into two districts. The British decide to install a Hashemite ruler Abdullah who had been expelled from the Arabian Peninsula in the “Transjordan” (eastern Palestine). Jews were only permitted west of the line. It reduced the original mandate to 22% of the land first promised for a Jewish homeland.

A proposed constitution called for the creation of a legislative council of elected Muslim, Jewish and eleven members of the British High Commission. It was opposed by the Arabs. They never lost an opportunity to lose an opportunity.

In 1929 Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, encourages the Arabs to riot in Palestine. There is a massacre of Jews in Hebron and Safed. Arabs then demand an end to Jewish immigration.

Another British White Paper was issued on October 21, 1930 called the Passfield White Paper. It was issued by Colonel Secretary Lord Passfield and was another British policy statement on the Palestine Mandate, the result of studies ordered following the 1929 Arab riots. Clearly pro-Arab, anti-Zionist in tone, the Passfield White Paper limited Jewish immigration and land ownership.



In 1933 an Austrian-born German politician and the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party comes to power. What appeared at first to be just an incidental event in history will later throw the world into another war and bring people, one way or another, face to face with the Holocaust. He was, of course, Adolf Hitler.

From 1936-39 there is a campaign of Arab violence in Palestine. Arab rioters murder 500 Jews and thousands of Arabs while demanding an end to Jewish immigration. Arab nationalist movements riot to stop the Jewish homeland in Palestine and eventually throw their support to Hitler in World War II.

The British Peel Commission in 1937 asserts that Jewish National Home cannot be built in Palestine. The Commission recommends repartition of Palestine into a tiny Jewish state (5% of total area) and an Arab state in the remainder. The Peel Plan is rejected by *both* Arabs and Jews. Britain then halts Jewish immigration to Palestine which will condemn millions of European Jews to the Holocaust.

In Germany, Hitler's first objective is to lead Germany out of the depression by manufacturing a war and advancing his ambitions. He knows he also must gain the army and arms industry of Czechoslovakia if he is going to conquer Europe. However, Czechoslovakia has the natural protection of a mountainous region with fortifications called Sudetenland with narrow roads running through it. A small army could keep a larger one from advancing.

He devised a plan to gain control. On March 28, 29 1938, Hitler held secret meetings in Berlin with Konrad Henlein of the Sudetenland. It was agreed that Henlein would provide the pretext for German aggression against Czechoslovakia by making demands on Prague for increased autonomy for Sudeten Germans that Prague could never be reasonably expected to fulfill.

Henlein was able to get enough of the three million Sudet Germans to believe they were not prospering like the rest of the Czechs. Henlein convinced them that they were being persecuted. He organized the Sudeten Liberation Movement that made demands on the government and encouraged uprisings.

The world press wanted Sudetenland returned to her rightful owner, Germany. The truth was, Sudetenland was never a part of Germany. Hitler had his crisis. Germany, he said, had no alternative but to come to the aid of their brethren living in intolerable occupation. Hitler runs his biggest bluff when he says the choice is between war and peace. Germany was prepared to go to war to release Sudetenland from the occupied territories.

The west agrees with Hitler. It is an injustice not letting Sudetenland return to Germany. So the Munich Conference is held. A deal was reached on September 29th, and at about 1:30 am on September 30th 1938. Adolf Hitler, Neville Chamberlain, Benito Mussolini and Édouard Daladier signed the Munich Agreement. The agreement was officially introduced by Mussolini although in fact the so-called Italian plan had been prepared in the German Foreign Office. The German army was to complete the occupation of the Sudetenland by October 10th, and an international commission would decide the future of other disputed areas. It was a try at giving up land for peace.

On the same day, after some rest, Chamberlain went to Hitler and asked him to sign a peace treaty between the United Kingdom and Germany. After Hitler's interpreter translated it for him, he happily agreed. Later in the day, upon his return to Britain, Chamberlain at Heston Aerodrome spoke to the crowds there: "*The settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem, which has now been achieved is, in my view, only the prelude to a larger settlement in which all Europe may find peace. This morning I had another talk with the German*



*Chancellor, Herr Hitler, and here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine. Some of you, perhaps, have already heard what it contains but I would just like to read it to you: ... We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.”*

Later that day he read from the document and stated: *“My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.”*

Less than six months later, on March 15, 1939, Hitler overruns Czechoslovakia, declares it a German protectorate and seizes all assets. He meets little resistance since the previous barrier of Sudetenland is under Germany’s control. France, Britain and Russia had all guaranteed Czechoslovakia her borders and said in treaty that they would come to her defense. They were nowhere to be found.

In the same year, a conference of Arabs and Jews was called by the British to discuss the Palestine problem. The Jewish delegations were under the leadership of Chaim Weizmann. The Arabs were led by the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Arab delegates refused to meet directly and formally with the Jewish delegates, since they did not recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish representatives. The British were forced then to negotiate with each delegation individually. British proposals at the conference were met with resistance on both sides. Since no agreement was reached, the British formed their own policy.

Gaining no consensus, the British acted by issuing the McDonald White Paper. The White Paper announces an end to Jewish National Home and promises control of immigration into Palestine to the Arabs. Seventy-five thousand Jewish immigrants would be allowed to enter Palestine with restrictions on the purchase of land over a five year period and any subsequent increase would require the permission of the Arabs. It had an appeal to the Arabs, but compromised the Balfour Declaration. The enforcement prevented the free settlement of refugees who desperately needed to leave Europe at the time of greatest need for a sanctuary for Jewish refugees. To enforce it, the British blockade Palestine against “illegal” Jewish immigration.

The next designated target for Hitler’s ambitions was Poland (her independence guaranteed by Britain and France) and, to avoid a two-front war, the Nazi dictator signed a pact of friendship and non-aggression with Soviet Russia. On September 1, 1939 German armies invaded Poland and World War II begins.

Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini moves to Berlin in 1941 and is a special guest of Hitler. They announce the creating of a “fascist” Arab state. Al-Husseini advocates the extermination of Jews in radio broadcasts back to the Middle East and recruits Balkan Muslims for the infamous SS “mountain divisions” that tried to wipe out Jewish communities throughout the region.



## **The Mufti and Hitler**

The testimony of at the Nuremberg Trials of Eichmann’s deputy Dieter Wisliceny was:

*“The Mufti was one of the initiators of the systematic extermination of European Jewry and had been a collaborator and adviser of Eichmann and Himmler in the execution of this plan. ... He was one of*

*Eichmann's best friends and had constantly incited him to accelerate the extermination measures. I heard him say, accompanied by Eichmann, he had visited incognito the gas chamber of Auschwitz."*

Hitler himself was still "a member in good standing of the Church of Rome" and endorsed their teaching that the Jew was the killer of God. In his day, hatred of Jews was the norm. In great measure it was sponsored by the two major religions of Germany, Catholicism and Lutheranism. He greatly admired Martin Luther, who openly hated the Jews. Luther condemned the Catholic Church for its pretensions and corruption, but he supported the centuries of papal pogroms against the Jews. Luther said, "*The Jews deserve to be hanged on gallows seven times higher than ordinary thieves,*" and "*We ought to take revenge on the Jews and kill them.*" "*Ungodly wretches*" he calls the Jews in his widely read Table Talk. Said Hitler, "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*"

On January, 20, 1942, Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's second in command of the SS, convened the Wannsee Conference in Berlin with 15 top Nazi bureaucrats to coordinate the Final Solution in which the Nazis would attempt to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe, an estimated 11 million persons. "Europe would be combed of Jews from east to west," Heydrich stated.

Jews were fighting in various Allied armies. However, there was pressure to let them have their own Jewish Fighting Force fighting under the Jewish nation flag. Winston Churchill was receptive to the idea. His predecessor, Neville Chamberlain was not. Chamberlain disapproved fearing that it would give more legitimacy to Jewish national independence.



Finally, on September 1944, the British government agreed to the establishment of a Jewish Brigade. It consisted of Jewish infantry, artillery, and service units—approximately 5,000 soldiers. It took part in the final battles of the war in Italy. In May 1945, the Brigade was moved to North East Italy where, for the first time, they encountered survivors of the Holocaust. In the summer of 1946, the British authorities decided to disband the Brigade.

World War II ends in 1945. The liberation of the death camps reveal six million Jews have died. There is an increase of Jewish underground actions against the British blockade and the British administration in Palestine. Holocaust survivors are "illegally" smuggled into Palestine. The Arabs again demand an end to Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Britain announced its intention of recognizing Transjordan as a "fully independent state" on January 17, 1946, and this was welcomed unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on February 9th. On March 22nd, the United Kingdom and Transjordan concluded a treaty of "friendship and alliance" which terminated the mandate. On April 18th the final meeting of the League of Nations Assembly unanimously passed a resolution welcoming the termination of the mandated status of Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan, "which have ... become independent members of the world community."





The underground activities hit a crescendo on July 22, 1946 when the King David Hotel was bombed. The hotel housed most of the officials and business offices of the British administration over Palestine. On what became called Black Sabbath (Saturday), Menahem Begin received a letter from Moshe Sneh (chief of the Haganah General Headquarters) with instructions to blow up the King David.

Fighters and explosives arrived at the King David Hotel on Monday morning. The explosives were placed around the supporting pillars in the kitchen area and set to explode in 30 minutes. The kitchen workers were to leave in 10 minutes. A phone call was placed to the hotel telling them that a bomb had been placed and they needed to evacuate the

premises. A similar call was made to the French Consulate next door to open their windows to lessen the effects of the blast. The French heeded the warning, the British did not. As a result of the bombing 91 people were killed in the explosion: 28 Britons, 41 Arabs, 17 Jews and 5 others.

The attack sent shock waves in Britain and throughout the world. Jewish authorities hasten to separate themselves from the action fearing retaliation from the British. Even David Ben-Gurion, who was then in Paris, joined the chorus of condemnation. In an interview to the French newspaper 'France Soir', Ben-Gurion declared that the Irgun was "the enemy of the Jewish people". However, the success of the Jewish underground in striking at the heart of British presence advanced their timetable to get out of Palestine.

The spectacular archeological find of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 might have been enough news from the Middle East for most of the world. But Israeli statehood is quickly and sometimes quietly advancing when Britain announces they will withdrawal from Palestine.

In November, under disguise, Golda Meir crosses over the Jordon River to meet secretly with Jordan's King Abdullah in Naharayim. Abdullah wants the "Jewish State" to become part of Transjordan. Meir refuses. Abdullah proposes to take over the Arab part of any partition offered by the UN. Meir indicates that the Jewish state will not actively support this move, but would acquiesce in it as a temporary measure.

The United Nations announces partition into Jewish and Arab states (UN Partition Resolution GA 181). Palestine was to be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The resolution was supported by both the United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Russia. The Jews accept partition. Arab countries and Arab league refuse to recognize the resolution.

A major Biblical prophecy is about to be fulfilled. A prophetic clock, once paused, is about to be restarted. The rebirth of the nation of Israel as mentioned in Isaiah 66:8: "*Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?*" It is unheard of for a nation to spring into existence overnight, isn't it?



# *THEOLOGY MATTERS*

By Angela Moore

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2DUKPUKgAI&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2DUKPUKgAI&feature=player_embedded)

The above clip is a promo for a book by Josh Harris about orthodoxy theology. The promo states, "We're all Theologians. The question is, is what we know about God true?"

This past Saturday night at KidZone (a small group Bible study I teach to elementary aged students), the Bible lesson was about Gideon from the book of Judges. Of course, when it came to the teaching time, we went off script. It's amazing what you hear, when you let kids ask questions. Many grown ups would be surprised at the depth of their understanding and the seriousness of their questions. I take each question and each child seriously, and I often allow the discussion to take on a life of its own, while still steering them, to a certain extent, back onto our topic. But this past Saturday night, one child asked, "Who made God?"

You see, the study of God is called Theology, and I believe that many adults, when they were young children, never quite got their questions adequately answered, and as they grew, they marked God down as a fantasy, like Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, and then moved on with their lives. They got busy with life, and then never paused to wonder again, about who made God; where did He come from; has anyone ever seen Him before; where does He live; How can He be in heaven and be in everyone's hearts at the same time; What does He look like, and many, many more questions! I think that if people really did pause occasionally to ask some of these questions, to a person who really cared to listen and would help them grapple with these issues, there would be a whole lot more believers in the world, than there are now.

Oh, a lot of adults have an 'idea' of what God is like, but many of the things that they think or have imagined, aren't based on the Scriptures at all! Even people who proclaim to be Christians, are sitting in the pews, oblivious to who God really is. It's incredibly sad and this fact should motivate all of us! It should challenge us to go on a mission to study our Bibles and learn who God really is, according to Scripture! It should move us, to want to share what we have learned, with others, who are just beginning their pursuit of knowing the Almighty God!

So many people take for granted that they know God, but do they really? Have they really sought to know Him, what He's like, what pleases Him, what His purpose is for us, what He expects us to have faith in, and what the whole point of creating us was all about? To find out is life changing! To not know, and remain ignorant of God and His great plan for mankind, is maybe the easy thing to do, but what are you missing? Is God real? If He is, will you be missing something great if you don't believe? What exactly will you be missing?

I sincerely believe that if we begin to look into these bigger, deeper, wider concepts of the Bible and seek to know and love God with all our hearts, souls, mind and strength, we will not be disappointed. Our relationship with our God will be intensified, become more intimate, and make more sense than it did before we pursued our knowledge of Him. God knows every hair upon our heads and knows us each by name. Sadly, many Christians don't even know His Name! This should not be! How can this ignorance of who God is, possibly be in the information world we live in today? It's a cryin' shame is what it is, and every believer should be ashamed of ourselves for not making getting to know the one and only true living God awesome, and instead look so dry, boring and crusty that no one ever wants what we have!



We should show kids and adults alike, what an amazing, exciting, thrilling, fun, awesome thing it is to study and know the Creator of the universe! To see Him with eyes that yearn for the day in which He will come to dwell with mankind on the earth and brush away our tears. We should be so in love with this God, who we know so intimately, that we cry out to Him, “Daddy!” and feel His Presence comforting us, when our hearts ache and our lives feel too overwhelming to live without faith in Him. This type of knowledge and understanding of our Heavenly Father takes an investment of time on our parts, and we have to do the hard thing, and spend some time with our nose in our Bible, looking and seeking to know the one true God.

That is Theology, my friend! And if you haven’t studied it before, I do not recommend Josh Harris’ book, but rather suggest Greg Deuble’s book, “They never told me THIS in church” along with studying the Scriptures with a fine tooth comb, as if turning over every rock looking for every possible clue that you can find, to see who this great and awesome, holy God is, who alone is good! If your relationship with God is stale and boring, it certainly isn’t HIS fault! Only your own concept and understanding of who God is will make our Maker appear dull. How well do you really know Him?

So, are you wondering how I answered the child who asked “Who made God?” Do you want to know? Do you think I knew the answer? Why, of course I didn’t know! And I told him so! This is what I said: “No one knows how God came to exist, we just know that the Bible tells us that He always has. He had no beginning and He has no end. The Bible also tells us that no one has ever seen Him before. (1 Tim. 6:16; Exodus 33:20). So, if someone tells you that they don’t believe in God, what do you say? Is there a God? Why, absolutely! How do we know this to be true? Just look at creation. How many different kinds of flowers are there? Trees? What about the human body?” I spent some time exclaiming how cool our eyeballs are constructed, and our legs are made up of muscle, tissue, ligaments, etc! You get the picture! And then I told them, that the Bible says, “that man is without excuse, because of creation. (Romans 1:20). We KNOW there must be an intelligent Creator behind all of this, and that’s our God.” Of course, we went on to talk about other things, but it was a very good question, from a child who wasn’t afraid to ask. Or doubt. Or wonder. We adults need that freedom to do the same thing. Ask. Doubt. Wonder. Care! And then grapple with the answers. Search our Bible diligently! Ask people you know, who you know have studied their Bibles to discuss things with you. Find good resources out there to study. There are a plethora of books and websites available that have more information than we can ever consume in a lifetime. [www.kingdomready.org](http://www.kingdomready.org) & [www.christianmonotheism.com](http://www.christianmonotheism.com) are great places to start. Begin to study God (a.k.a. Theology). Don’t be intimidated. Yes, it’s a little overwhelming, but you have to start someplace. Why not start with studying who God is, for if we are to believe in Him, worship Him, love Him, serve Him, and obey Him, shouldn’t we know Him? Getting to know God is never boring and it will change your life when you get to know the one true God, Yahweh. Theology does matter.

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you,” declares YHWH.”  
Jeremiah 29:13-14a. (emphasis mine).

# OUT OF STEP WITH GOD

By Dennis Baldwin

I've been out of step with you for a long time, in the wrong since before I was born. 6 What you're after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life. 7 Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean. Psalms 51:5-7(MSG)

God has a plan and a program to bring about that plan. David felt he had been out of step with God for a long time. Marching soldiers must stay in step with one another. Otherwise the marching looks bad and is extremely disorganized.

Peter warned that in the last days men would be out of step with God's program because they either forgot his plan or were unaware of it to begin with. That program would seem to have been to some degree evidential from the beginning.

- Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 2 Peter 3:3-7 (NASB)



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DEAD?

I would suggest this to you: Unless and until we get a firm handle on what exactly death is all about, we will be out of step with God and his program for the future as revealed to the Apostle and Prophets. Perhaps the first logical thing to do is to determine a good definition of the term "death". In my "Family Word Finder" the following is said about dead:

- The doctor pronounced him dead on arrival at the hospital: deceased, expired, perished, lifeless; no longer living, having no life.
- Scientist believe the planet Mercury is a dead planet; devoid of life, having no life.
- A language that is no longer spoken is called a dead language: defunct, extinct; obsolete; no longer in use.
- The battery was dead and the car wouldn't start: inoperative, inactive; not working, not responsive; out of operation.

- There was a dead silence after the announcement; total, complete, utter, absolute, thorough, entire.
- The opposite of dead is alive, living, animate; breathing, existing, working, responsive, operative, in motion, productive, useful.
- In the religious realm however, death is thought of as only a façade where only the body dies—the soul is deathless: immortal, eternal, perpetual, everlasting, not subject to death.

But if we are to be in step with God and His program by understanding and accepting His plan we need to take a good look at this phenomenon called death. Is there a Biblical definition for death? Before we do that however, let's examine its reality:

- Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; Joshua 1:1-2 (NASB)

Death, according to God, is a reality. Joshua, if he was to go about fulfilling God's plan for the nation and people of Israel, needed to understand and accept that actuality. Sometimes it takes us a while to come to grips with the death of a loved one. Life cannot move on until we are able to accept the certainty that our loved one is dead and will not be a part of our life as they were. They will not sit down and have a meal with us as they once did. That easy chair that had their invisible name on it will not be their resting place again.

### **HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE "DEATH"**

By far the best definition of death I have ever come across in the Bible is found in Isaiah 38:1: and in 2 Kings 20:1. Notice in the verses following this passage that King Hezekiah did not welcome the idea of death. He pleaded with God and wept. This does not sound like a person who was looking forward to dying and going to be with God in heaven. It sounds like a man who recognized the blackness, the darkness and the emptiness of death. Like someone who did not want to die. He evidently knew what happens to a person when they die.

- In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' (NASB)

Simply put: TO DIE IS NOT TO LIVE. A person who is dead is devoid of life, having no life, deceased, expired, perished, lifeless, no longer living, inactive, not working, not responsive, out of operation. TO DIE IS NOT TO LIVE.

### **WHAT IS THE PROCESS INVOLVED IN DEATH?**

Let's understand the process that brings us to a state of not being alive. It is difficult for us to comprehend because it is something we would have to experience to understand fully. If we were able to experience death and then to experience life again we then could tell what our experience was like. Jesus actually was able to do that. Having come back to life again Jesus said to John:

- “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Rev 1:17-18 (NASB)

What did he say about death? He assured John and you and me that “he was dead”. *I was dead*, he said. Was he involved in some preaching project during that time between when he was alive—and he was alive for evermore? No, he said, I was dead? I should think not. If he was then he wasn’t dead and that presents a real problem. If Jesus did not die, but only appeared to be dead; who died for our sins?

Let’s understand the process as we are enlightened through the Bible:

- Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”; 2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; 3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; 4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly. 5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. 6 *Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; 7 *then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.* 8 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “all is vanity!” Eccl. 12:1-8 (NASB)
- Notice the factors that lead up to the end:
- Lethargy: *years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”*
- Depression: *clouds return after the rain*
- Physical deterioration: *watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop*
- Teeth come out: *the grinding ones stand idle because they are few*
- Deterioration of vision: *those who look through windows grow dim*
- Hearing loss: *the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low*
- Fear of height: *afraid of a high place*
- Afraid to travel: *afraid of terrors on the road*
- White hair: *the almond tree blossoms*
- Medicine is ineffective: *the caperberry is ineffective*
- *The grasshopper drags himself along*
- Do you get the picture drawn by Solomon?

## WHAT ABOUT THE SPIRIT?

- 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.” Genesis 3:19 (NASB)
- Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 *While I live will I praise the LORD*: I will sing praises unto my God *while I have any being*. 3 Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Psalms 146:1-4(KJV)

All this happens; then the spirit returns to God who gave it. What does that mean? What is that spirit? Is it a spook; an apparition; a ghost? Again let's look at the process which is explained in the Bible; remembering what has been said:

- His breath goes forth (*That's what God breathed into Adam's nose*)
  - He returns to the earth
  - His thoughts perish (*So when we are dead we are not thinking*)
  - I will praise the Lord while I'm *living* (*So, when he are dead we are not living*)
  - I will praise the Lord *while I have being* (*Being signifies existing*)
  - He returns to the ground (*Just like God told Adam*)
- Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Gen. 2:7 (NASB)

The process of death is the reverse of life. Just as God created man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nose the breath of life; even so, the process reverses; the spirit or the ability to breathe, live and think returns to God who gave it and the dust returns to the earth as it was. Job described the process this way:

- “Man, who is born of woman, Is short -lived and full of turmoil. 2 “Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain. Job 14:1-2(NASB)
- “For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And its shoots will not fail. 8 “Though its roots grow old in the ground And its stump dies in the dry soil, 9 At the scent of water it will flourish And put forth sprigs like a plant. 10”But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and *where is he?* 11 ”As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, 12 So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his *sleep*. Job 14:7-12(NASB)

## WHEN A MAN EXPIRES—WHERE IS HE?

Two other scriptures come to mind which help explain this process in even more detail. Job asked “*when a man expires* (breathes his last) *where is he?*” He lies down and does not rise till the appropriate time when he is called; when he is awakened out of the sleep of death.

- For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. 6 Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, Eccl. 9:5-6(NASB)

- Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. Eccl. 9:10(NASB)

We are alive today knowing that ultimately we are going to die but when we die we do not know anything. Love, hate, zeal, activity, planning, knowledge and wisdom for the one who dies will cease. (This word *Sheol* is translated *grave*, 31 times in the OT; *hell*, 31 times in the OT; and *pit*, 3 times. *Young's Analytical Concordance*) These references do not refer to a place where people go who appear to be dead but are more alive than they were when they were alive. (*Have you noticed just how ridiculous that sounds?*)

- For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity . 20 *All go to the same place*. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Eccl. 3:19-20 (NASB)

Job's other comment (Job 14:12) holds the secret to understanding death, for it is in that thought that we find hope. *He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep*. It is only in understanding death as a sleep that we can find hope.



- But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout , with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. I Thess. 4:13-18 (NASB)

There is no need to be uninformed or ignorant as the KJV puts it about people who have fallen asleep or who are dead. Paul wasn't talking about someone who is taking a nap. Those who are asleep can be awakened. Death is like sleep. From sleep we can be awakened. Like Lazarus, Jesus will call and we will answer. He will call as he called Lazarus...Lazarus come forth. As a result of that call Lazarus came forth to life.

- “You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. Job 14:15 (NASB)

### **DON'T FORGET JESUS AND LAZARUS**

- After that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.” 12 The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover .” 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal

sleep. 14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead... 17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days... Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said\* to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said\* to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:11-26 (NASB)

Of course the hope aspect can be seen in this instance. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. A thought we would do well to seize. You will remember Paul's admonition to "*examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;*" 1 Thess 5:21 (NASB)

To fail to do so is to be out of step with God and his plan.

- Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled... 38 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." John 11:32-44 (NASB)

### MARTHA KNEW A SECRET YOU NEED TO KNOW

Martha knew the secret to death. Future life for those who have died requires a resurrection. "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.*" Jesus wanted Martha to understand that he is the resurrection and the life. When Paul gave information to keep us from being uninformed about those who sleep in death, he made it plain that the future for them can only come through resurrection. "*The dead in Christ shall rise first.*" 1 Thess. 4:16. Those who are in Christ but will not be alive at the coming of the Lord will be dead and in need of a resurrection to live.

To miss out on the information God has given relative to death is to be out of step with God and to fail to be on the same page he is. God has a program, a time-table and a wonderful plan. Why not join God to become a positive part of his plan by accepting is program for the future of the dead in Christ. *They will rise first.* Like Martha, do you also "*know that your brother, you father, your mother, your child, your wife will rise again in the resurrection at the last day*"? Those who are dead in Christ, even though they have died, will live again when Jesus comes and those who are living when Jesus comes will never die.



# The Bible: Authoritative and Sufficient or Not?

By Arlen F. Rankin



The source of faith is the Word of God through hearing, understanding and belief (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:15). The Scriptures were inspired of God as He moved the writers by His Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21). The Prophets wrote down what they were told whether they understood it or not (1 Pet. 1:10, 11; 1 Cor. 2:13). God spoke through the Prophets, His Son and those that heard him (Heb. 1:1, 2; 2:3, 4). Being thus inspired, it is profitable and enabling for godliness, service and salvation (2 Tim. 3:16,17). In the knowledge of it we have all that is needed as pertains life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Biblical knowledge, however, must be mixed with active love (Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 13:1-

7). The Scriptures are inspired, therefore authoritative, therefore sufficient for us.

Yes, I realize that these statements are found within the pages of the Bible. Are they simply unsubstantiated claims? I think not. There is adequate evidence both internal and external.

There are several lines of evidence. We will only mention a few.

- 1) We would point out the overall consistency and unity of the message written by 40 individuals over a period of 1500 years. This would indicate that God's hand superintended its production and preservation.
- 2) There are many details spoken before in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah—his birth, ministry, passion, its the time and purpose—which were minutely and exactly fulfilled as recorded in the New Testament. That so many prophecies should point to and are fulfilled in one individual is astounding when the laws of probability are considered.
- 3) We would note also the corroboration of events, places, people and objects by profane history and archaeological findings.
- 4) Specific predictions concerning Tyre, Babylon, the succession of empires, events in Israel's history, as well as other prophecies have been substantiated as coming to fruition as written.
- 5) The textual documents—fragments as well as complete or nearly complete manuscripts—are more in number and harmony than those of readily accepted secular history. There are in existence 5000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament alone. The Dead Sea Scrolls corroborate large portions of the Hebrew text.
- 6) Scientific truths are expressed in the Bible in non-scientific and often poetic terms long before modern scientist discovered them.
- 7) In recording the lives of men, it does not gloss over their foibles and sins, but tells things as they actually were.

## Warnings For The Last Days

We are living in a time when men in general will not endorse sound doctrine but rather turn away from the truth in favor of fables (2 Tim. 4:3, 4) even scoffing at what they are “willingly ignorant” of (2 Pet. 3:3-6). The deceptions of Satan cause religious people to follow counterfeits—another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel, another morality—in exchange for “the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:1-4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9). Some have even arisen within the Church which diminish and speak against the truth for their own purposes or gain in order to lead away followers after themselves (2 Pet 2:1-3, 15; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 John 2:18, 19; 2

Thes. 1-4; Jude 4). Many have been, and are, influenced by supposed manifestations of the Spirit subjectively experienced (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thes. 2:9, 10; Deut. 13:1-3; Matt. 24:24; 2 Tim. 3:1, 13). What of the claims of dreams, visions, revelations, messages and illuminations?

### Testing The Claims

There are *truth claims* and there are *experience claims*. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians advising them to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21). How are we to do that and what is the standard or criterion for such effort? Claims of either type are testable by an objective comparison with the authoritative and sufficient Scriptures.

Paul had visited Thessalonica and later visited a town not far away by the name of Berea. He evaluates each saying of the latter, “These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Their nobility was in that they listened eagerly and intently to what Paul taught, then checked it out by comparing it with the Old Testament Scriptures. That body of revelation was and is the standard for establishing validity.

The same test of truth claims was to be applied to the words of Prophets of old or any other who claimed special knowledge—”to the law and to the testimony” (Isa. 8:19, 20). If the claim was of a prophetic nature, the additional test was whether or not it came to pass or whether it led away from the true God to an idol or false god (Deut. 18:22; 13:1-5; Jer. 28:9).

The Apostle John said that there would come false teachers who should not be believed. They would be as an anti-christ standing against the truths which the Apostles had taught (1 John 4:1-6; 2:1-9). The believers were to test them to ascertain whether the truth was being proclaimed or not.

Since entering the ministry nearly fifty years ago, and especially on the mission field we have been faced with these claims of truth and experience. For instance, years ago I was approached by a man in Mindanao who claimed he had a vision in which he was “told” that I would be the one who would provide him with the means to build a chapel. It was soon realized that he had told the same scenario to a fellow missionary not long before. How many times he had been “told” this by revelation and to how many people he had used this approach for money we can only guess. We went to the Word of God to establish the standard to objectively test the validity of such a claim. Here is what we found,

- 1) Each “message from God” claim must be accompanied with a belief of the truth. The Spirit of God is also biblically know as “the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:13). This man neither believed “the gospel of the kingdom” nor other truths we consider to be basic—one God, Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Christ, the necessity and hope of the resurrection to life from the dead. A “word from God” must not in any way contradict the word he has already given in the Bible. Any inconsistencies disallow that it was from God.
- 2) The New Testament pattern which parallels our immediate situation is found in two stories in Acts. First, the word given to Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:1-48) and secondly, the word given to Ananias and Paul (Acts 9:1-22 w/ 26:9-20). In the first, both Cornelius and Peter were told the same thing—go to each other that truth might be heard and spoken. We were not recipients of such a revelation which the other claimed. In the second scenario Paul had received his vision from the Lord Jesus and a vision corroborating it was given to Ananias that the gospel might go forward. We were not given corroborating visions. This is not to say that the LORD does not direct His people for those who trust in Him are given wisdom (Jas. 1:5-7). They have their paths directed of Him by opportunities, by circumstances, by wisdom, by providence through the Holy Ghost (Prov. 3:3-6; Acts. 16:6).

- 3) “Special information” might be derived from Satan himself. He is a deceiver and liar with counterfeit messages who may by them influence even believers. Read 2 Cor. 11:1-3, 13-1) 15; 1 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9 and Eph. 6:11. We do not say from this that all claims are instigated by Satan, but that they may be, so we ought to compare them with what God has already given us.
- 4) These may also come from within ourselves—our mind or desires—as seen in Jeremiah 23:16. “They speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the LORD.” In our scenario, we were certain that the “claim” was put forward as a self-initiated ploy to get us to give money. It was for us neither a valid claim nor an expedient use or stewardship of the resources we had on hand.
- 5) John says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ...They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us [the inspired Apostles]; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1-6; cf. 2 John). Read also 2 Pet. 2:1-3; Gal. 2:4, 5 and Acts 20:29, 30. Many “wrest” the Scriptures by erroneous interpretation to fit their own theological bent (2 Pet. 3:16, 17). To be “Berean” in all situations is wise, expedient, and biblical.
- 6) Among the “experience claims” would fall “signs and wonders” by which men seek to establish God’s Word outside His Word. This was not the case in our scenario, but is appropriate to note here. The Jews had a penchant for seeking signs outside of the Scriptures and in so doing rejected the truth of gospel preaching. So says Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:22. Jesus derides them as being an “evil and adulterous generation” in seeking signs (Matt. 12:39). In light of this should we seek beyond the pages of the Word for divine truth? Yet this is what many do. This leads many astray from the sure foundation and makes them vulnerable to deceptions. Signs are not needed to confirm the Word for it has already been so confirmed along with the evidences noted above (Heb. 2:3, 4; Mark 16:19, 20). As I editorially observed many years ago in *The Bible Faith* (1979), “Miracles and wonders are not the criterion nor proof of acceptability with the Lord. They are not evidences of a regenerated life nor of salvation itself. They do not stand aside from truth or give the doers the credentials of validity. Throughout the biblical record we note that false teachers often times deceived the people with their works and claims. See Deut. 13:1-5; Rev. 13:13-15; 16:13, 14; 19:20. Even the magicians of Egypt duplicated the miracles of Aaron to a limited extent (Ex. 7 & 8). Paul speaks of the ‘wicked one’ whom the Lord shall ‘destroy with the brightness of his coming’ and describes him as ‘whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders’ (2 Thes. 2:8-10). Some who profess the name of the Lord are not permitted to enter the kingdom of God though they did prophesy, cast out devils and in the Lord’s name did many ‘wonderful works.’ To these the Lord replies, ‘I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity’ (Matt. 7:21-23).” By this we do not deny actual miraculous events which are from the hand of God, but we should not be gullible to the unproven claims of men.

Knowing this information why would we set as a criterion of faith and life any other foundation than that which the LORD has already given us? Why would we accept as valid subjective claims which do not conform to God’s sure Word? Should we succumb to misleading teachings rather than test all by the truth of Scripture? After all our life—*eternal life*—depends on the choices we make and the things we believe. Read 2 Thes. 2:10-14; John 17:17; 8:31-34; Acts 20:32. All claims should be closely scrutinized under the light of God’s Word—inspired, authoritative and sufficient to the task as it is. Discernment is the operation of a sound mind and sound interpretation as we compare claims with the Scripture. May God enable us to draw clear, certain and fair conclusions and stand firm in the truth. Then speak that truth in love, gentleness and honesty. Read Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:3-6; 2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; Jas. 4:17, 18.