

E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom

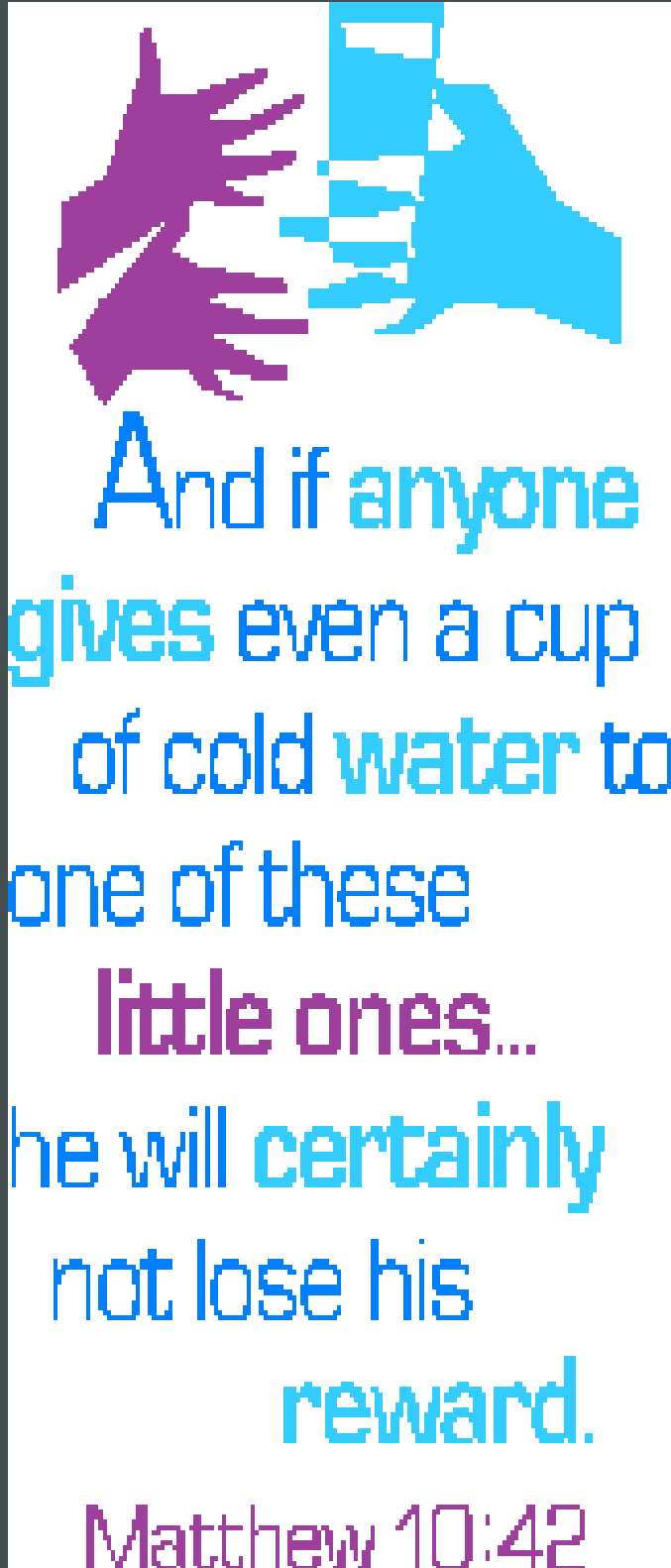
"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.
Change the way you think and act, and believe the Good News."
Mark 1:15 GW

In This Issue:

**The Great Tribulation
Living in Hope in a Fearful Age
When Russia Stretches
Adventures in the Great Exchange
And They'll Know We Are Christian By Our Love
What Is God's Purpose For You?**

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

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Kent Ross - Wally Winner



Signs Abound in the World

Years ago an early Christian artist, Larry Norman, had a song that still resounds. It was titled, "I Wish We'd all Been Ready." Its premise is that when, not if, Christ returns to this earth and the parousia occurs there will be many that will abruptly realize how they'll wish they had been ready.

The return of Christ is the wonderful hope of Christianity. It is such a hope that people have deluded themselves into thinking they have discerned dates for the event. Harold Camping had one in May, which was another in a multitude of disappointments going back to 1844 and even before that. Now he is assuring us that it will happen this month of October. While I hope he is correct, I think I'll wait for a trumpet to sound and other signs that show us that He is here, like a first resurrection, the one out from among the dead.

But Christ did tell us to be watching. Paul warns of that day catching some unaware. Let that not be true for Bible readers and believers.

With the world's economy beckoning us toward severe depression, with the wild inflation coming due to printing paper, which will prove worthless, with a seething inferno in the Middle East ready to explode even in nuclear war, why should we worry?

That was written facetiously. Don't worry for the Bible says these things will come to pass, and though it adds "but the end is not yet," we know it draws nearer and nearer. The U.N. appears ready to abandon Israel in favor of Palestinian statehood. Thankfully the U.S., perhaps surprisingly to some, still stood with Israel, but that too will end.

The Bible predicts a day in which Israel will be surrounded by ALL the nations of the world. That must come, but when it does, the Lord God will send forth His Anointed One to battle and the world will see and know that God is on the throne of heaven.

Year of Evangelism

Which is why we need to declare this a year, of even THE year of Evangelism. In our calling to present the Bible's message from God, our Father. We've started hearing of people coming to faith in small churches, in isolated situations, as Jude has written –

¹⁷ But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. ¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." ¹⁹ These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ²² Be merciful to those

who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

The stories that were promised didn't arrive. They were intended to be an encouragement to all to continue to, as Jude said, “snatching them from the fire.” We need to do that, not to keep a record, for the record that counts is the one kept in heaven in the Lamb's Book of Life.

This Issue is Filled

There are several articles in this issue focused on the coming time of trial, which is in some measure will test our faith. The Great Tribulation, alternately called the “time of Jacob's trouble,” is featured in several articles challenging God's people to, in fact, be ready.

There are also articles from two of the “Peter's” family, coming from the old Camper's Reunion Conference in Minnesota this June. We have two more sister's to feature in November.

Pastors Dave Hixon and Merry Peterson round out this issue. Our prayer is always that you will be blessed, strengthened and encouraged in your faith. Co-Editor Wally Winner has another prophetic article to continue his wonderful research. See the ad for Dot-to-Dot, if you're interested in more.

MARANATHA, COME, LORD JESUS

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION

By William M. Wachtel



In Revelation 7, the Apostle John is shown “a great multitude” clothed in white robes and made up of people from all nations (v.9). When he asks the identity of this great mass of people, he is told that “these are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (v.14 NIV). The word here translated “tribulation” is *thlipsis*, a word found frequently in the New Testament for “oppression, affliction, [and] persecution” (Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon).

Jesus had warned His followers to expect tribulation as part of the cost of Christian discipleship. In the landmark Parable of the Sower, He spoke of “trouble or persecution [that] comes because of the word” (Matt. 13:21). Those who seek to live in obedience to the gospel will find that this message can bring them tribulation from those who oppose it. Not everyone is happy about Jesus and what He stands for! Nor are they pleased with His followers! In fact, He said, “All men will hate you because of me” (Matt. 10:22; cf. Lk. 21:16,17; John 15:18-20; 17:14).

Historically, that hatred has expressed itself—and continues to express itself—in acts of cruelty and rage against Christian believers. They have been burned, fed to lions, beaten, stoned, starved, imprisoned, flogged, impaled, hanged, beheaded, shot—down through history—for the simple reason that they bore the name of Christ. Even now in many lands it is a crime to confess faith in Jesus, especially if one has been reared in some other faith. In the eyes of leaders in those countries the ultimate insult to the national religion is to be baptized. They will see to it that any who dare take *that step* will pay dearly!

When the apostles went out to evangelize the Roman world, they did not hide the truth about the price to be paid. Paul told the new believers of Asia Minor that “we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). The Greek text says that we must endure “many tribulations,” using the same word as Revelation 7:14.

This suggests that the present age, preparatory to entrance into the Kingdom when Jesus returns, is to be characterized as a time of tribulation and suffering for Christ's sake. This "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) is not designed to be a time for Christians to regard themselves as being immune to—or sheltered from—troubles, trials, persecutions, hardships, and sore oppression. On the contrary! Yet, in the midst of it all, we have Christ's precious promise: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble [*thlipsis*]. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians, he commended them for their perseverance and faith despite all the persecutions and tribulations they were going through (1:4). These trials were intended to make them "worthy of the kingdom of God" (v.5.) Their time of "rest" from such difficulties would not come until that future time when God will repay tribulation to those who are causing tribulation to His people—that is, "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels" (v.7). Again, a clear demarcation is seen between this present age of tribulation and the future age of rest for God's people. (Heb. 4:9.)

Sources of tribulation against God's people

The earliest persecutors of the church were the Jewish leaders. The Book of Acts reveals the actions that were taken by synagogue and Sanhedrin against the early Christian believers. Jesus had warned that His followers would be scourged and expelled from the synagogue and persecuted from city to city (Matt. 23:34). These early persecutions would add to the guilt of that generation and help to bring down the wrath of God upon the nation and its Holy City (vv. 35-38; cf. 1 Thess. 2:12-16).

After Israel's "house" was left unto them "desolate" (v.38) in A.D. 70, the Jews were no longer the principal source of tribulation for Christians. The Roman government now began to fill the void! As long as Christianity had been considered merely a sect of Judaism, the Romans considered it a "religio licita" (legally recognized religion) and therefore did not trouble the Christians. But when Judaism officially banned followers of Jesus from the synagogue, that protection was lifted, and Rome started its long course of persecution against the believers. In Rome's eyes, the crowning insult was the Christians' refusal to pay an act of worship to the emperor as to a god—required by law of all except the Jews. Many Christians went to their death as martyrs—some tossed to the lions in the Colosseum in Rome itself, some executed in various other parts of the empire. History records ten specific organized persecutions against the church—beginning with Nero, A.D. 64, and ending with Diocletian, 284-305. The Apostle John was banished to Patmos during the persecution under Domitian, A.D. 96. These ten imperial persecutions may well be those foretold in Revelation 2:10.

With the coming of Constantine in 306, the situation for Christianity radically changed. He professed to believe in Jesus and induced the bishop of Rome to join him in making the empire "Christian." This, of course, brought about the famous, or infamous, union of church and state that was to become the normal scheme of things in Europe for the next 1600 years! When Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 to decide the nature of God, any Christian not satisfied with its rulings was henceforth subject to persecution and death. The new source of tribulation and oppression against simple Bible believers was now *the professing church itself!* This was, as Shakespeare put it, "the unkindest cut of all." During the ensuing centuries, until modern times, non-Catholic Christians in Europe, Latin America, and other parts of the world were hunted down, deprived of their possessions, mercilessly tortured, and put to death by fire and sword. Some historians estimate that as many as 60 million persons died at the hands of the Catholic Church during those centuries!

What, then, is “the great tribulation”?

We saw that John was shown a great multitude of people who had come out of “the great tribulation.” The question is whether this refers to believers throughout the present “church age,” which—as we have seen—can be characterized by Scripture and by history as “the age of tribulation.” Some students of prophecy would apply “the great tribulation” simply to a very short period of time at the end of this age. This writer does not deny that much severe tribulation may indeed await Christian believers before the Lord returns, since the entire age is one of tribulation, and it is not yet over. Revelation 6:9-11, the time of the “Fifth Seal,” certainly suggests that there is a span of time between earlier martyrs for the faith and later ones. The “later ones” may well be those who are yet to come, possibly including ourselves! In light of all the facts, however, it does not seem justified to understand “the great tribulation” as meaning *only* the final outbreak of persecution just before the Lord’s coming.

The Lord’s return is to be “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29). “Those days,” then, are the days of the present church age, starting with the early church and its flight from Jerusalem just before the desolation of the city in A.D. 70, and continuing down through the succeeding centuries, up to the end of tribulation, when we are caught up to be “at rest” with the Lord at His coming (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7 with 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

We need to stop interpreting the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) as though it were occupied almost solely with the end of this age. Our Savior was concerned about His church and her course throughout the long centuries ahead. His followers needed to know that severe tribulation awaited them and that no final escape was possible until the Lord Himself should return and receive them to be with Him forevermore. Meanwhile, believers have been able to take comfort in the hope and promises He has given, no matter what tribulations and trials have been permitted to befall His church. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

I Need You, Lord
All through today, help me to be
Quick to praise, slow to criticize;
Quick to forgive, and slow to condemn ;
Grant that I may maintain all through today
Complete control over my temper, that I may do nothing I will later regret;
Complete control over my tongue, that I may speak no hasty word,-
Complete control over my thoughts that I harbor none which will dishonor You .
Give me today
Strength to conquer every temptation which comes to me,-
Strength to do every task which is assigned me
Strength to shoulder every responsibility which is laid upon me, -
Don't let me let myself down today, Lord
Let me not hurt or disappoint those who have confidence in me.
I want to make everything I do fit for You to see, and
everything I say fit for You to hear.
Let me never forget the hope You have set before me .
I need You, Lord
Amen.



THRIVE Devotions & Responses

October 5, 2011 – Wednesday Morning E-Devotional
“THRIVE and Be Prepared” – from Pastor Mark DeYoung
(Michigan)

Pastor Mark is teaching on preparing for a time of Great Tribulation. As I have warned for some time, it is imperative to be aware of the future developments in our world, including here amongst us. See what he writes:

“I do not think the idea of 7 years of food stored is a wise or practical idea. There will come a time that the “hoarding” laws will be enforced, and here in the USA there are laws against hoarding anything (except money if your rich).

“Since we do understand that we have a time coming where we will be forced to live without the ability to work within the system and sell, work or buy the things we need to live, we have to spend a little time focusing on the practical ways to exist.

“Examples to consider is:

“A. How do we get the groceries we need to thrive? Since we cannot work, sell, nor buy, we need to learn a few basic gardening skills, along with canning those items for storage. Same with meat, we need to learn basic animal raising skills, and perhaps hunting also, meat can be canned also. We need to be purchasing heirloom seeds and harvesting those seeds for the next year. Remember we can’t simply order from a catalog, if we have no way to buy or sell.

“B. How do we heat our homes? If we cannot work, sell nor buy within the worlds system, we need to look honestly at how our homes are heated. Personally, I have bought and am installing a wood heater.

“There are other ways, I am sure, but the idea of creating enough electricity for our needs that we have grown accustomed to, isn’t based in reality. The solar panels, one would have to have roughly an acre of solar panels facing at the precise proper direction, but that is a mighty expensive move. Wind generation, unless you get a permit (over 30 feet), you can’t get it high enough to get a constant wind for electric generation, then you have to spend the extra to get the magnet on magnet generator, because if it has a magnet on brushes system, it will wear out too quickly.

“C. The most important part of preparation is the spiritual and mental preparation that each of us must take to be able to face the various things that will be happening in this world especially the last 3 1/2 years...

“We may understand what is going to happen, but how are we going to respond to it when the time arrives? If we haven’t taken time to understand God’s promises to us, as well as the judgments designed to draw men to Himself during this time, how panicked are we going to be when these things actually happen?

“I believe that if we take the attitude that the military takes with the new recruits, that is that, a soldier is not going to train as hard if he thinks there is no possibility of going into battle, than he will if he believe that he will.

“We have to understand first that we are in a battle, and that the battle, regardless of where we live, is going to become more and more intense as we see the day approaching. So we have to prepare for that time of battle. In Ephesians 6:13, we read, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

“Even Paul’s letter to the Ephesians had an endtime preparation message in it. What evil day is Paul talking about? It wasn’t 70 AD! He is talking about the time that the antichrist stands where he ought not. Mark 13:14, “But when you see the abomination of desolation, that spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him who reads understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

“God has given us 2000+ years to prepare just in the age of the Gentiles for this Great Tribulation, and it goes back further. To think that there is nothing we are responsible to do before hand and simply rely on God’s miraculous provision is not based in reality of the Word of God.

“If one hasn’t set back provisions, don’t expect God to miraculously provide food when hunger strikes, or heat when winter comes. God has already told us what we are in for in the near future.”

Thanks, Pastor Mark.

Good, challenging information for us all.

THRIVE MINISTRIES

Click here to sign up for your own copy of THRIVE Devotions.

October 6, 2011 – Thursday Morning E-Devotional

“THRIVE & Response” – from Kent Ross (Ohio)

Two responses to today’s THRIVE seem to me to continue the discussion. It might be something for your Sunday School class or Bible study group that merits further investigation.

It shouldn’t be ignored but considered in light of Scripture.

Kent;

Regarding Mark’s devotion for THRIVE this a.m. Assuming that buying or selling is the only problem we have or will have, his ideas might work out. But having electricity or wind power in the home is also a form of buying/selling, so if Christians are to go through the great tribulation with the same problems the wicked have, then being able to can food is probably a slim chance unless one knows how to do it over an open fire.

I wonder what we can do if anything. I think this other scheme is also extreme. Some ideas earlier this year suggest going back to a hunting gathering mode and to have guns and ammunition on hand for protection. If you are not a gun user now, you probably won’t become one then especially if you have to take a life to protect your family and your supply of food. I take comfort in the scripture “Take no anxious thought for the morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Let’s not borrow trouble as my Grandmother used to say. Let’s continue to proceed on faith. If buying and selling break down (the complete failure of our economy) as the Bible promises, and God does NOT provide us a way through as he did the Hebrews in Egypt, perhaps Christians can rely upon each other through the barter system: Christian Food Pantries or some such system known among ourselves.

What is the basic most fundamental thing we could do within our families? I think have some liquid assets. Get a safe; stock it with gold coins or even our present day U.S. coinage that might have some value. Buy gems. Don't sell your gold jewelry for cash now. You might find it useful in a pinch. Gold (or silver) may be used for barter if cash fails. No guarantees, but paper money and Edward Jones probably will not be helpful if the economy collapses.

Remain faithful. Read the Word. Continue to tithe. Pray for yourself and others. Be prepared to lay down your life if it comes to that. Hope that the Lord will rapture his people out of the chaos, but prepare to endure to the end.

Kent,

My fear is that when it comes time to choose, worship the antichrist and receive his mark to be able to continue life normally, our church members and regulars who have heard and understand, that the resurrection isn't until the end of the Great Tribulation, will look at their pastors and ask a very pointed question.

"Why didn't you warn us about this time and that we need to think about life outside of what will become the new 'norm'?"

If we only look at and discuss, the endtime prophecies academically, that is how our people are going to think of it, as an academic pursuit.

Then the pastor becomes part of the problem.

Will Jesus find faith when he returns? Not if we are not urging our people to look forward to the future. They very well maybe drawn into the system of the antichrist, if only for physical survival.

Pastor Mark

THRIVE MINISTRIES

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October 7, 2011 – Friday Morning E-Devotional

"THRIVE With Further Response" – from Kent Ross (Ohio)

There has been much discussion generated by this discussion of the Great Tribulation, For many years many of our people believed in the "pre-tribulation rapture theory." Today, perhaps in light of the world's conditions, the prevailing view is what is called the "post-tribulation rapture theory."

You may want to read more in this month's E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom. It's free and it's on-line, should you want to read it yourself. Jusat write and ask me to include you.

Hi Kent,

My wife and I lived in Angola, Africa for five years between 1990 and 1996. We became friends of some of the Christians there and heard some of the worst stories of persecution against followers of Christ that we have ever heard. Most of the "Christians" of the area gave up their religion because they were taught the "pre-tribulation rapture theory" and thought their religion was false because they should not have to go through "the great tribulation" they were experiencing, so they recanted and accepted the communist government's alternative to Christianity, which was education and government aid.

Hello Kent,

I have enjoyed the discussion the past two days. One thing I think we need to consider is the time leading up to the seven years, not just the actual tribulation. In order for the United States to be willing to be a part of some sort of a one world government, which it will need to be if the False Prophet and the Anti-Christ are to come to power over the world as prophesied, some things will definitely need to take place. I believe that it is during this time that we should be prepared to live without what today is considered necessities. This will be the time to have stores of some food and to be able to provide for oneself. The whole country is dependant upon electricity, stores, computers, etc. Imagine what will be if this is disrupted for a time. It could be from a terrorist act, natural catastrophe, or our own government. MN had a taste of a partial shut down for about a month this past summer. I think this provided a small taste of what will come. This is the time we need to prepare ourselves for. During the tribulation God will provide and protect or, we may have to die for Him. This is where our faith comes in. And will there be any left on the earth by this time? Not if we don't make it through the time leading up to the tribulation.

Excited for the future,

In the THRIVE devotion yesterday, the email that was placed just before mine said I had stated concerning the use of guns, "...and to have guns and ammunition on hand for protection. If you are not a gun user now, you probably won't become one then especially if you have to take a life to protect your family and your supply of food."

That was a misrepresentation of what I had suggested for using guns. My thoughts were, are and have been for use in hunting. The thought of using a gun in defense of personal supplies is reprehensible and unconscionable! The use of weapons in the case of self defense and defense of family, is a decision that no one should ever take lightly, nor suggest to another person that they should consider or make plans to do. Self defense and defense of family is a decision every person should make between themselves and God based on their personal convictions found in the Bible.

Pastor Mark

Ezekiel 33

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, ³ and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, ⁴ then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head. ⁵ Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves. ⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.'

⁷ "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ⁸ When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for^[a] their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.

Living In Hope In a Fearful Age

By Mark DeYoung

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV) *"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, **to give you a future with hope.**"*

When we look at the world around us, we would be hard pressed to find hope. We are hearing or reading constantly that there is coming another economic collapse, some call it a double dip recession, others call it the next Great Depression.

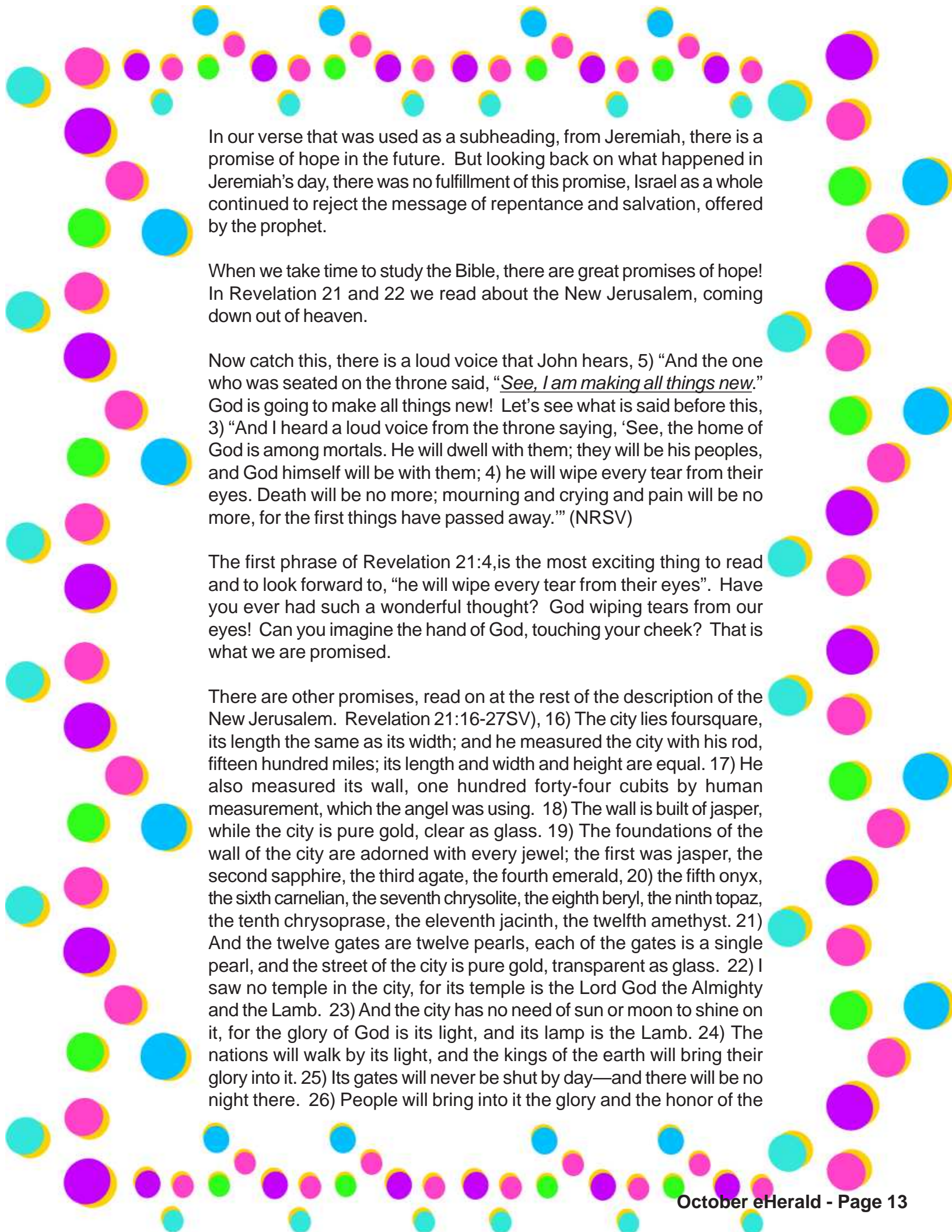
We hear and read of crooked politicians, lobbyists, business men and companies, banks, stock brokers and CEO's. Some of these same people are constantly being caught in some sort of scandal; with others calling for "special prosecutors" for those caught in their tangled webs of deceit; all the while hoping no one will find out what they are hiding.

Even as Christians, when we go to church, often times we hear about the coming Tribulation, and as if that is not enough, that is followed by a Great Tribulation! If our pastors and Bible teachers are being honest in teaching the Scriptures, it seems that it will only get worse.

Often we miss the message that it will get better! There is the promise of a better life in the Kingdom of God! In fact, that was the opening message of Jesus Christ's ministry.

Mark 1:14-15 (NRSV), "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

When the Jews heard this I imagine there was a reverberating whisper among the people. The Jewish people had a "Kingdom" mindset; they were looking for God's Messiah. When James and John came to Jesus with the request to sit on his left and right, in Mark 10, they believed that Jesus was going to establish his kingdom, in their lifetimes, and make Israel, ruler over ever part of the Earth.



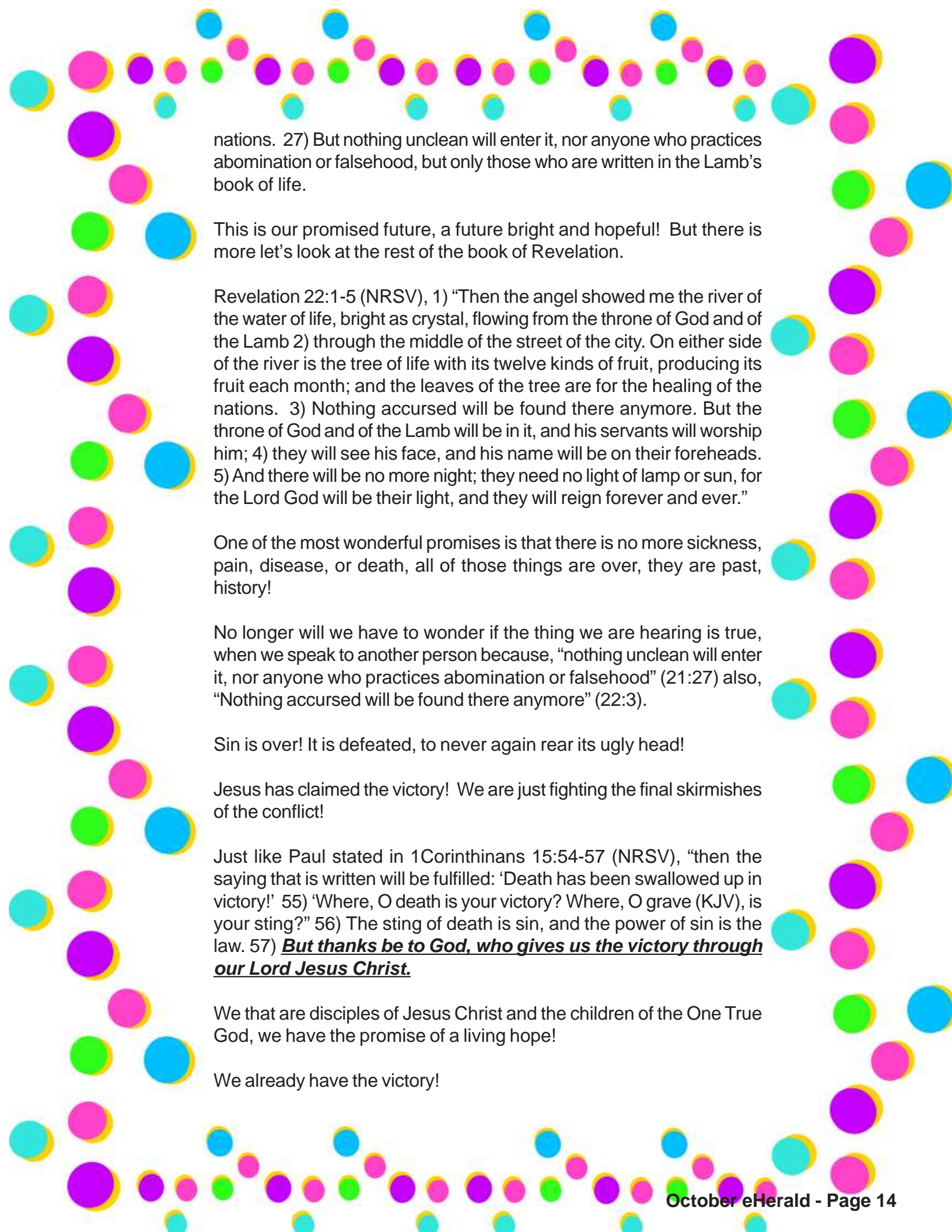
In our verse that was used as a subheading, from Jeremiah, there is a promise of hope in the future. But looking back on what happened in Jeremiah's day, there was no fulfillment of this promise, Israel as a whole continued to reject the message of repentance and salvation, offered by the prophet.

When we take time to study the Bible, there are great promises of hope! In Revelation 21 and 22 we read about the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven.

Now catch this, there is a loud voice that John hears, 5) "And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." God is going to make all things new! Let's see what is said before this, 3) "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4) he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'" (NRSV)

The first phrase of Revelation 21:4, is the most exciting thing to read and to look forward to, "he will wipe every tear from their eyes". Have you ever had such a wonderful thought? God wiping tears from our eyes! Can you imagine the hand of God, touching your cheek? That is what we are promised.

There are other promises, read on at the rest of the description of the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:16-27SV), 16) The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17) He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18) The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19) The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20) the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21) And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. 22) I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23) And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24) The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25) Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26) People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the



nations. 27) But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This is our promised future, a future bright and hopeful! But there is more let's look at the rest of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 22:1-5 (NRSV), 1) "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2) through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3) Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; 4) they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5) And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."

One of the most wonderful promises is that there is no more sickness, pain, disease, or death, all of those things are over, they are past, history!

No longer will we have to wonder if the thing we are hearing is true, when we speak to another person because, "nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood" (21:27) also, "Nothing accursed will be found there anymore" (22:3).

Sin is over! It is defeated, to never again rear its ugly head!

Jesus has claimed the victory! We are just fighting the final skirmishes of the conflict!

Just like Paul stated in 1Corinthians 15:54-57 (NRSV), "then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory!' 55) 'Where, O death is your victory? Where, O grave (KJV), is your sting?' 56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57) **But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We that are disciples of Jesus Christ and the children of the One True God, we have the promise of a living hope!

We already have the victory!

WHEN RUSSIA STRETCHES EZEKIEL'S BATTLE

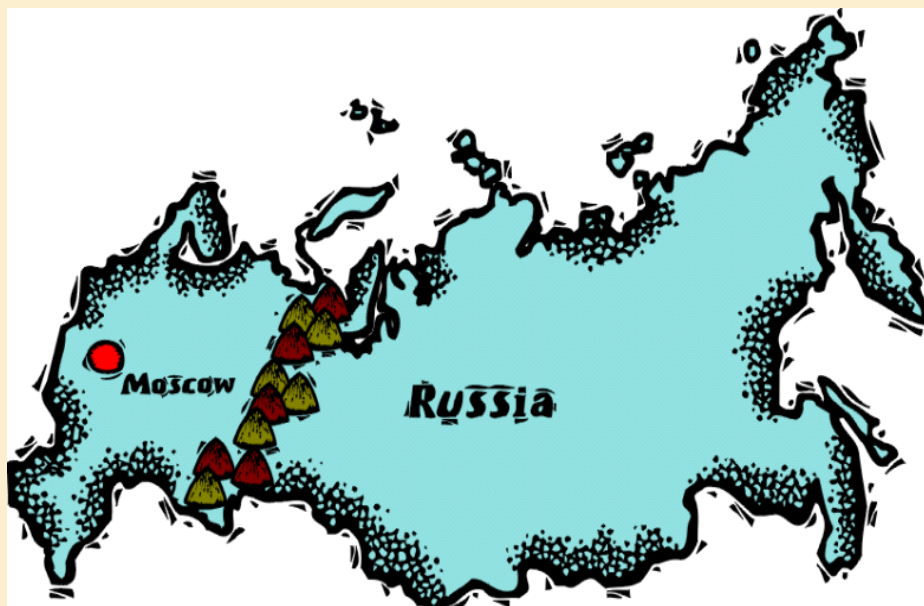
By Wally Winner

It is hard to ignore the Palestinians request for statehood, the chaos in Egypt, the saga in Libya and the multitude of stories on the economy of the United States and the candidates for President. There are so many subjects to fill the headlines of the newspapers, TV and internet. After wading through those news stories, one is sure to miss some more subtle, but extremely important shifts in power. At least some lesser known struggles going on in other countries.

“Time to shove off” is the name of a web site for people who are fed up with life in Russia, and it is becoming a catchphrase for those dismayed by the recently announced plans of Vladimir V. Putin to keep a grip on power for perhaps two more terms as president.

“A year ago I told all my friends who were leaving that I would never do that, no way!” wrote a magazine editor named Yevgeniya Lobacheva in a posting on another web site. “But I have only one life. Twelve years! I will be 43!” Mr. Putin has already been in power for 12 years — the first eight as president, the past four as a prime minister with de facto executive power. Now, the prospect of what many Russians are already calling a “period of stagnation” has set off a new wave of declarations of nonallegiance to a nation where corruption and an inflexible top-down system are squeezing off options for change and personal advancement.

Russia is the largest and most powerful of the states to emerge from the former Soviet Union. As the seat of the Soviet empire that existed for over 70 years, the Russians wielded tremendous power both within the U.S.S.R. and in the international sphere. Almost from their emergence as a separate people, the Russians have extended the boundaries of their country to include a wide variety of non-Russian people.



Both the Russian Czars and the Bolsheviks who came to power in 1917 have a long history of expansionist policies, which explains why, even today, an important part of the Russian national identity is that of leader of a large empire.

Such a leader identified as Gog moves a group of nations toward Israel. The text of Ezekiel 38 and 39 seem to indicate that some type of nuclear or contaminating weapons is involved. God

intervenes to keep Israel from being obliterated.

Gog is identified as the “chief prince” of the attackers. The Hebrew phrase translated “chief prince” is *nesi rosh*. The word *rosh* can be “head” or “first”. It can also be a place named “Rosh”. Rosh is the root of the word Russia. Some writers are emphatic that it is meant to be a proper name.

Gog leads into battle people who come from the list of nations in Genesis 10.

Magog (Scythians): Professional warriors that eventually settled in the area of present day Russia. They left their mark from the Caucasus Mountains of Russia to the Great Wall of China. Kurgans (grave sites) of Scythians are found in Siberia. Scythians were able to kill birds in flight while riding at a full gallop using either their left or right hand.

Meshech (Moscow?): One of the sons of Japheth that dwelled in Turkey.

Tubal (Tobolsk?): Another son of Japheth living along the southeastern shores of the Black Sea. These all fit the geography of remote north (Ezekiel 38:6, 15; 39:2). Who is farther north to Israel than Russia? Moscow is directly north of Jerusalem.

Persia (Iran): Elam, the first son of Shem.

Cush (parts of Africa): Between the second and third cataracts of the Nile.

Put (North Africa): the third son of Ham. Libya was originally known as the “Putites”.

Gomer (Cimmerians): Settled in Rhine and Danube valleys. It is Germany today.

Togarmah (Turkic): Turkic and Armenia people. Their area is where the Cossacks originated.

If these identities are correct then armies come from the north, south and east.

A couple of biblical nemeses aren't mentioned in this list. Why isn't Egypt mentioned? What about Iraq/Babylon? One has to be curious why they are not among the invaders when all of Israel's neighbors are involved. Could it be that they have passed from the stage of influencing history or have such internal problems that they cannot participate?

Known participants standing on the side are Sheba and Dedan: grandsons of Abraham by his wife Keturah. Their home is on the Saudi Arabian peninsula.

Tarshish and the young lions are mentioned as watchers, too. Who is Tarshish? Tarshish was the grandson of Javan (Greece). Tarshish is described in scripture as an island with sea traffic. One of the metals associated with Tarshish is tin (Ezekiel 27:12). According to some references, “Britannia” means “land of tin”. England is noted as the only possible place for tin for the Greeks.

It is not just hate that motivates, but a desire for Israel's wealth (Ezekiel 38:11-13).

This federation of nations charge using some weapons out of the pass. What can bows, arrows, swords and horses do against the sophisticated aircraft, missiles, tanks, etc. that make up modern armies? A look at the words might provide so other possibilities.

Horse in Hebrew is *soos* with a larger meaning and usage. Along with horse, it is translated as crane (Isaiah 38:14) with the emphasis on flight. Likewise, sword is *chereb*. It has been translated sword, knife, dagger and axes. The idea has to do with destroying weapons. The Hebrew *kehsheth* is used for bow. The basic meaning is to shoot or launch. Leaving us with *khayts* for arrow. It finds dart and spear as some of its meanings. The root word is *khawtsats* meaning pierce or sever.

There would be no reason to use any of the alternate word selections until the recent centuries. When the King James Version was assembled, the words used would have been the best selections.

However, maybe Ezekiel was using his best description of planes, launchers, rockets and modern weapons of war.

Even though the armies descend on Israel as a “storm”, there are no lengthy battle scenes. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Apparently the invaders are overwhelmed early in the campaign. There is nothing but a general mention of the attack and no destruction in Israel is mentioned. The land does suffer some as we shall see, but this conflict appears to be brief and away from high population areas.



Armies are in disarray and the defeat is a supernatural one (Ezekiel 39:2, 3). There is a huge earthquake (Ezekiel 38:19, 20). If that is not enough, the attackers are hit with disease, rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone (Ezekiel 38:22). There is a complete destruction of the invading armies (Ezekiel 39:2).

God intervenes here so that His name is glorified. It shows both God’s power and compassion. The nation of Israel and the world will have known that He is control.

Some wonderful things happen here for Israel. God secures their future and pours out His spirit on them (Ezekiel 39:22, 29).

The debris from the battle takes seven years to clear (Ezekiel 39:9). It supplies the energy needs of Israel during that time. Ordinary fire can burn wood. A nuclear fire can burn metal.

It will take seven months for the people of Israel to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:12, 13). They do get some help. The carnage provides a feast for animals and birds (Ezekiel 39:17). Another clue that nuclear weapons may be involved here is the use of professionals to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:14). Passer-bys that spot a bone are not to touch it, but to flag it for the professionals to handle (Ezekiel 39:15).

Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38-39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture?

In the light of current events, when the populaces of nations talk peace but expect and plan for war, it becomes a pressing question as to when the events described in those chapters will take place.

The identification of the nations described as participants and the events have already been given (see table of nations in Genesis 10 for a review). We are centering on Russia as described in Ezekiel 38 as Magog, also referred to as Rosh. Meshech and Tubal are ancient tribal names the some have identified as Moscow and Tobolsk. With all of that then, we need to look the problem of the time of the invasion.

Russia is seen to make an alliance with Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Germany, and Turkey (Ezek. 38:2, 5, 6). Because Israel seems like easy prey (Ezek. 38:11), this confederation decides to invade the land for the spoil (Ezek. 38:12). A protest is made at this invasion (Ezek. 38:13), but it is unheeded.

Ezekiel describes the destruction of the invader on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:2-4) as the result of divine intervention through a convulsion of nature (Ezek. 38:20-22). As a result five sixths of the

army is destroyed (Ezek. 39:2) and seven months are required in disposing of the dead (Ezek. 39:12), and seven years in disposing of the debris (Ezek. 39:9-10).

The scene of this destruction is said to be on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:2-4) and the time is in “the latter years” (Ezek. 38:8) and “the latter days” (Ezek. 38:16). This destruction is a sign to the nations (Ezek. 38:23) and to Israel (Ezek. 39:21-24).

General identification of the time.

It is obvious from the details given to us in the chapters under consideration that no invasion experienced in Israel’s history is sufficient to be the fulfillment of this prophecy. There have been invasions in the past which wrought hardship on the land and the people, but none that answer to the details presented here. This can refer only to some future event in Israel’s experience. There are a number of considerations which support this view.

First, the context in the book makes a contribution. Ezekiel 37 deals with the restoration of the nation Israel to her land. This is pictured as a gradual process.

The prophet sees the process of bone being joined to bone, tied together with sinews, clothed with skin. It is a regathering in unbelief, for the prophet observes that there was no life in the assembled carcass (Ezek. 37:8). Ezekiel 40 carries us on to the millennial age.

Thus the movements of Gog and Magog are seen, in the context, to transpire between the time of the beginning of the restoration of Israel to the land and the millennial age.

Second, the specific statements in the passage give clues. Twice a reference is made in Ezekiel 38 to a time element. It is said to take place “in the latter years” (Ezek. 38:8) and “in the latter days” (Ezek. 38:16). This has specific reference to the latter years and days of God’s dealing with the nation Israel, which, since it is before the millennial age (Ezek. 40), must place it during God’s dealing with Israel shortly before the Second Coming.

Third, it will be after the beginning of the restoration, for Israel is seen to be inhabiting her own land (Ezek. 38:11). 4. The nation of Israel must be “dwelling safely” (Ezekiel 38:11, 14; 39:26). The word used here is “*Betach*”. It is found 162 times in the Old Testament and in 130 cases it means a state of mind. Are we talking about a peace treaty or because Israel feels it can defeat any enemy (Ezekiel 39:26)?

Fourth, it will be connected with I s r a e l ’ s conversion, which is obviously future, for the destruction of the invader is a sign to that nation, which opens its eyes to the Lord (Ezek. 39:22).

Since the final removal of the nation’s blindness does not come until the Second Advent, this prophecy must have a definite relation to that event.

Fifth, the indication that the land will be reforested (Ezek. 39:10) confirms this conclusion, for Israel has always been dependent on other sources of supply for her lumber (cf. 1 Kings 5:1-10).

It is concluded, then, from the passage itself, that the events herein described must take place in the future, at a time when God is again dealing with Israel as a nation.



The Time in Relation to Specific Events

The invasion described by Ezekiel has been related to nearly every major prophetic event as to its time. This particular alignment of nations has not come against Israel in past history. It is yet to come. It is the purpose now to examine some of these positions in order to determine as carefully as possible just when this event will transpire.

The invasion takes place at the end of the tribulation.

There are many Bible students who believe in this interpretation of the time element. However, there seem to be difficulties in this position which makes it impossible to accept it.

First, in Zechariah 14 and Revelation 19 all the nations of the earth are seen to be gathered together for the conflagration. In Ezekiel the invasion is by the king of the north with his allies, which are limited in number.

Second, the destruction here is at the hand of the Lord through the convulsion of nature (Ezek. 38:20-23). When the final battle is fought the King of kings emerges as the victor (Rev. 19).

Third, in Ezekiel the destruction takes place on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:2-4). The events of the final battle are said to take place at Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2; Zech. 14:2).

Fourth, in Ezekiel Israel is said to be dwelling in her land in peace and safety (Ezek. 38:11). We know from Revelation 12:14-17 that Israel is not going to dwell in the land in peace and safety during the fulfillment of that prophecy and will be a special target of attack.

Thus we conclude that the invasion cannot be connected with the events of Zechariah 14 and Revelation 19.

The invasion takes place at the beginning of the millennium.

I believe that there are arguments which prove this is an impossible explanation.

First, Ezekiel tells us that the land will be defiled by reason of the dead bodies for seven months (Ezek. 39:12). Such a picture seems impossible in view of the cleansing to be effected by the return of the Messiah.

Second, in Jeremiah 25:32-33 it is stated that the Lord will destroy all the wicked of the earth at His return. This is further amplified in Revelation 19:15-18. It seems impossible to think of such a horde as described in Ezekiel escaping the destruction at His coming to rise up against Him shortly.

Third, Isaiah 9:4-5 predicts the destruction of all weapons of war after the millennium begins. Where would the armies of the king of the north secure their armament in the light of Isaiah's prediction?

Fourth, Isaiah 2:1-4 states that wars will cease with the advent of Christ and the institution of the millennium.

Fifth, according to Revelation 20:1-3, Satan will be bound at the beginning of the millennium and thus would not be operative to generate such a movement against Israel.

The invasion takes place at the end of the millennium.

Those who hold to this position contend that the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel and that of Revelation 20:8 are the same. This seems to be an impossibility from the following considerations:

First, Ezekiel mentions a specific coalition as being engaged in the invasion. In Revelation all the nations of the earth are gathered together.

Second, in Ezekiel there is no specific mention made of Satan, or the thousand years of binding prior to this invasion, while both things are emphasized in the Revelation account.

Third, the context in Ezekiel shows that this invasion is before the institution of the millennium. In Revelation the millennium has been in existence for a thousand years.

Fourth, in Ezekiel the bodies of the slain require the labor of seven months to dispose of the dead (Ezek. 39:12). In Revelation 20:9 the slain are said to be “devoured” by fire, so that no disposal is necessary.

Fifth, in Ezekiel the invasion is seen to be followed by the millennium (Ezek. 40- 48). In Revelation this movement is followed by the new heaven and the new earth. Certainly the new earth could not conceivably be corrupted by unburied corpses for seven months.

Thus, these considerations make it impossible to accept this theory as to the time of the invasion. It cannot be placed in the beginning or end of the Millennium, nor at the end of the tribulation. It must, therefore, be located before the tribulation because there is no other place for it to occur since the three other suggested dates are impossible.

The Invasion takes place before the tribulation?

First, the invasion takes place at a time when Israel is dwelling in her own land (Ezek. 38:8).

Second, the invasion takes place when Israel is dwelling in peace in the land (Ezek. 38:11). Those who believe that this invasion takes place at the beginning of the millennium interpret this peace as the peace promised by the Messiah. There is nothing in the text here to indicate that this is the true Messianic peace. It rather seems to be the false peace that has been guaranteed Israel by the covenant, which is called “your agreement with hell” in Isaiah 28:18. Israel, as yet, is in unbelief for the nation will not be a believing nation until after the Second Advent of Christ. This regathering is described in Ezekiel 37 and the lifeless condition of the nation is clearly indicated in Ezekiel 37:8.

We can conclude from these considerations that Israel is being brought back into the land with a view to her discipline for preparation for her Messiah. Israel could not be said to be at peace at the end of the tribulation period, for the land has been destroyed by invasion (Zech. 14:1-3) and the people scattered (Zech. 13:8-9).

Third, Ezekiel uses two expressions which may give an indication as to the time of this invasion. In Ezekiel 38:8 the invasion is said to be in the “latter years” and in Ezekiel 38:16 in the “latter days” of Israel’s history.

The term last day is an expression which is related to the resurrection and judgment program (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; John 11:24; John 12:48).

The term last days is related to the time of Israel’s salvation, glorification, and blessing in the kingdom age (Isa. 2:2- 4; Micah 4:1-7). The term latter days or latter years is related to the time prior to the “last days” or the millennial age, which would be the tribulation period.

In Deuteronomy 4:27 Moses predicts a scattering because of unfaithfulness but promises a restoration. In Deuteronomy 4:30 he says: “When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days...” Here the “latter days” are linked with tribulation.

In Daniel 2:28 the prophet reveals “what shall be in the latter days” and then carries the king down to the final form of Gentile world power. Again in Daniel 8:19, 23 in discussing the “indignation” the prophet speaks of the “latter time of their kingdom.” Also in Daniel 10:14 the term latter days is used in reference to the events preceding the millennial age.

It is concluded, then, since Ezekiel uses these expressions, that the events described by that prophet must take place before or inaugurates the tribulation. Daniel 11:40 seems to have reference to the same period, for the prophet places these events “at the time of the end.” This expression seems to separate the event from “the end” itself.

Fourth, in Ezekiel 38:23 we find that the destruction of the armies of Gog is used as a sign to the nations and in Ezekiel 39:21 reference is made to this same fact again. In Ezekiel 39:22 the same event is a great sign to Israel. Since some people are saved during the tribulation, and not just at the end of it, and since this event of Ezekiel's prophecy is used as a sign to bring many to the Lord, this event must have taken place sometime before the Messiah's appearance. It would seem that this destruction is so obviously by the hand of the Lord and an event used by Him to remove some of the blindness to bring many to a knowledge of the Lord.

Fifth, the chronology of several important passages dealing with these events seems to support the thesis. In Isaiah 30 and Isaiah 31 we have a description of the destruction of the king of the north. This is followed in Isaiah 33 and Isaiah 34 with the destruction of all the nations, and then follows a description of the millennium in Isaiah 35.

In the Book of Joel we find the same chronology. In Joel 2 there is the description of the invasion by the northern army (Joel 2:20), followed by a description of the destruction of the nations in Joel 3, and then the millennium is described in Joel 3:17-21.

In both of these passages the chronology is the same. The armies of the north are destroyed at a separate time, in a distinct movement, prior to the destruction of the armies of the nations, which will be followed by the millennium. This suggests the events in Ezekiel 38 and Ezekiel 39.

Ezekiel's war probably will occur soon. It's probable that the next war will be the “hook in the jaw” (Ezek.38:4) that draws Russia, Iran and their allies directly into this regional conflict. With the aid of the Russians, Iran is installing massive amounts of weapons (Ezekiel's “Persia”).

Again, Ezekiel's war occurs near the beginning of the final tribulation period and will bring about much devastation to the planet as part of a time generally known as the “beginning of sorrows,” which will only intensify until the second coming of Christ. This war seems to encourage belief among Jews and Gentiles when faced with such ominous signs of the “last days.” (Joel 3:14, Rev. 7:14). Some seem to know from the Bible that God has actually won the day and glorified himself (38:23) as He did in ancient times against Pharaoh, the world (including Israel's allies) will be severely traumatized by this escalating war (39:6), which probably will involve nuclear weapons.

Ezekiel's war and the events following it will instill such fear and insecurity in humanity, but remember that God is always in control. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.” (Isaiah 60:1-2)

God always finishes what He starts. He began a plan of redemption that included the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. It is His Son that will be returning to this earth to set up His Kingdom. Until that day, we have been given many passages of scripture alerting us to what will happen on this earth. God intended for us to study and understand. May we be like the Bereans and search the scriptures so that we are prepared for the future.





ADVENTURES IN THE GREAT EXCHANGE

By Jay Bossard

In 1972 I was driving down the driveway of a farmhouse my little family and I were living in, just north of the town of Clearbrook, Minnesota. My wife Judy and I just had a discussion which led to an argument about my work and our church activities. I was very disappointed, frustrated, and unfulfilled with my Christian experience. I spoke to the Lord as I neared the end of the driveway, and I pulled over and stopped.

I Said “Lord! If this is all there is to church, I quit! I will work as hard as I can to provide for my family, but no more playing church! If you will direct me and show me your ways, I will go to the ends of the earth seeking first your kingdom and your righteousness to share your kingdom with anyone you lead me to.”

Well, this was the beginning of the most amazing changes (exchanges) in my whole life.

That very same day I was directed to a man named John Goodrich, from Bemidji, Minnesota. He was the field director, and one of the founders of Continental Missions. He had been the pilot for the mission, but he had lost his pilot’s license due to a heart condition. I had my pilot’s license with a float plane endorsement as well as some experience flying ski equipped aircraft.

After visiting with him for the best part of one day, he asked if I would be interested and able to fly their Cessna 180 with him to some of the remote areas in northern Canada to some of the Indian settlements. I said I would be glad to if I could make enough sales in my job as an insurance agent with National Travelers Life Company, providing life, health, and disability insurance to rural electric association members. I needed to make extra sales to afford to be away for a few weeks or so. I had more than a month to prepare and accumulate the funds needed. For the next month I worked more energetic then I had ever worked before and called on the very best prospects, but I never made a single sale!

Needless to say I was very disappointed, needy, and frustrated again because I now had to not only provide for time away, but also to make up for the month of no sales.

At the deadline for me to call Mr. Goodrich with a yes or a no, I was faced with the unhappy realization that I could not make the trip. I sadly reached for the telephone on my desk to call him, and the phone rang. On the line was a Farmer that was a director in one of the rural electric associations. He had a large farming operation and was told by his banker that he needed to have his insurance coverage increased. He said he knew all about the benefits we had to offer so I didn’t need to try to sell him; just come by and have his wife help fill out the application forms and then come to find him wherever he was on the farm, to sign the forms.

It was the largest sale (order) I ever made. I returned home with a little spark of encouragement but I was still short. I needed double that amount to be able to afford to go. Once again I reach for the telephone and once again the phone rang. It was another large, large, large, order.





It was then I realized that God was in control and was taking me up on my vows.

With Joy and great expectations I accepted the position as pilot with Continental Missions. This opened many chapters in scores of adventures of seeking and finding the “Kingdom Of God and His Righteousness”.

We have experienced countless examples of the faithfulness of God in providing for all our needs as His word has promised: *Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

In June of this year 2011 I was privileged to speak at the Church of God Long Lake Bible camp reunion in Minnesota. It was so good to meet some of the people that influenced our lives from childhood, and to stand at the place where I was baptized on July 4, 1954.

Kent Ross was one of the friends we knew as teen-agers and he asked if I could share at the camp reunion, some of the experiences my wife Judy and I have had in mission aviation from past years. We accepted the offer and entitled the message “Adventures in the Great Exchange”.

The first adventure as a missionary pilot started at a place called God’s Lake, Manitoba, Canada, in 1972. The remote village of God’s Lake Narrows is about 360 miles north east of Winnipeg.

Upon arrival at the remote settlement of about 2000 Cree Indians, I was advised to go to the village school and meet a school teacher that worked with the mission and he would take me to a native’s house where there would be a service that evening, to be led by the mission director John Goodrich. We arrived at the little house and John was not yet there so they wanted to sing some hymns from a Cree/English song book. The Cree was on one side and the English on the opposing side. We needed an interpreter because not all the people spoke English. The interpreter was a very gifted lady named Flora Ogemow The school teacher and I played a guitar to accompany the singing. We sang until late that evening and decided it was time to close, but a Cree lady, Mrs. Spence asked for me to pray for a 9 year old boy named Elvis Spence, her nephew. I noticed the little boy looked very ill so I asked the school teacher what he thought we should do and he said “maybe we should wait till Mr. Goodrich comes” and he could pray. I said that is a good idea but Flora said; “no. You pray. You pray now”.

I had been standing with my back to the wall next to the entry door and moved over to make room for more and more people to come into the little house until there was room for no more. Some people were standing outside. Someone kept moving a kitchen chair in front of me to sit in as I moved further and further from the doorway. I never sat in the chair so it remained empty even though many people sat on the floor or stood for lack of chairs for everyone.

Well little Elvis came and sat in the chair in front of me with his back toward me. I reluctantly began to pray for him and touched his left shoulder with my right hand. I felt an ache go up the bones in my arm to my shoulder and at the same time he leaned his head onto my hand and began crying and convulsing.





He didn't cry alone. I was bawling and felt so uncomfortable I wanted to run away. As soon as I finished praying Elvis bounded to the opposite side of the room and I left the house, confused and with many questions.

The next morning we left early to flights to other settlements for the next two weeks. Our itinerary brought us back through God's Lake Narrows and the first thing I wanted to do was to locate the interpreter, Flora Ogemow to find out what had happened to the boy on that first day of the adventure. I walked up a hill on a trail leading to Flora's house and before reaching her house a group of about 15 children ran to me and a little boy grabbed me around the ankles and put his head on my feet. The other children were dancing around me while laughing and all talking at once. I thought I was the object of some kind of game they were playing. Then a lady I recognized as Mrs. Spence, trotted up to me and took my right hand in hers and began kissing my hand. She pointed to Flora's house for help to communicate something important to me.

Flora came outside her house to meet us and said: "This boy that is clinging to you is Elvis Spence, the boy you prayed for the first time you were here. The next morning after you prayed, Elvis went outside his home and began playing with the neighborhood children for the first time in his life. When his parents saw it they were questioning whether or not to give Elvis his medications he was required to take in the past so they called for a plane to take him to Thompson, Manitoba to get an examination from his doctor. Elvis had been sick with epilepsy and several other serious conditions and when the doctor examined him he said he didn't understand what had happened, but to not give him any more medication because the boy was completely healthy."

It was obvious then that those people wanted to worship me as some kind of miracle working healer. I told them clearly that the one to worship was Jesus, the son and the "Great Creator" as they knew Jehovah God. Jesus was making a great exchange for the benefit of all of us. My life has never been the same since this time, and truly God was in the process of teaching me spiritual lessons. It's that way today—we can experience God and His Word in theory or in power.

There are many "exchanges" God is willing to make in our lives if we are willing to trust Him and depend on Him.

In Isaiah 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Lord Jesus gave His life so we could have eternal life;
Jesus bore stripes and wounds so we could experience his healing (physical & spiritual)
Jesus took our punishment so we could have peace.



Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,
3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

In this particular passage which Christ repeated again in Luke 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”
20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,
21 and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Note the benefits:

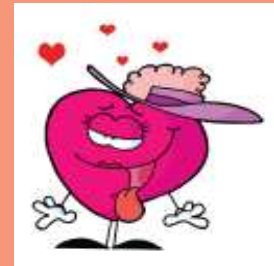
- Good news to the poor
- Freedom for those imprisoned
- Beauty for ashes;
- The oil of joy for mourning
- A garment of praise for the spirit of despair

I believe God wants us to pass from “the natural man to the Spiritual” and put His words into practice. We are discovering that when we do this we will experience adventures in exchanges with what we have to what He wants us to have as we seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness. “The presence of the Holy Spirit” is one of the present aspects of the Kingdom of God. There are several other terms in the scripture that take on part of the same meaning. “The mind of Christ”, “the fullness of Christ”, “the fullness of God”, “filled with the Spirit. God and His Son made a promise that is available to all of his people. “I will be with you”, “I will never leave you”. One of the ways He keeps that promise is by giving us one of the greatest gift he has; The Holy Spirit; THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD”. His presence links us with words of faith and power previously only dreamed of



AND THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE

By Merry Peterson



We hear songs about it every day on all the radio stations. All You Need Is Love... Endless Love... And They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love. Love seems to be on everyone's mind, everywhere, both Christians and non-Christians. No doubt we are all affected by love; both the giving and the receiving of it. Obviously it is important to everyone. We most often stop to think of the importance of love when a couple is getting married. Often times the passage from I Corinthians 13 also known as the 'love chapter' is read during the ceremony. Looking at this chapter we find out what love is and its importance. "And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. (I Corinthians 13:1-3)" This passage is telling us volumes about the importance of love. The writer first points out that this is the most excellent way pertaining to conducting oneself. It is noted that even if a person is an eloquent speaker, and seems to be able to say all the right things if they are devoid of love they are basically just a nuisance just like a continuously ringing gong. They become an annoyance, or detractor of positive attention instead of being respected and heard by those they are speaking to. In this case actions speak louder than their words.

In the next part of this passage the writer maintains that others have the gift of being knowledgeable or quick to understand, or have the ability to believe what seems to be impossible, but yet again if they do not have love they really aren't that much better than anyone else. Many people can be smart enough to impress others but how many are wise enough to put love into practice? Going on with the passage there are others who do all sorts of acts that outwardly could be mistaken for acts of love but we know that there is an internal void that they are drawing from instead of the wellspring of God's love within their hearts. There are those individuals who do what seem to be great acts of service to humanity but have a motive of personal gain or recognition that prompts their actions. Let me explain this a little further. There are those who do things for others not out of compassion for others but simply because they know that doing these things will put them in higher esteem with others. This one 'upmanship' kind of attitude only breeds more of the same attitude so really nothing is gained by that individual in the long term. They are still caught in their own cycle of trying to fill their own internal need for approval and attention. As a side note there are many people who do truly have compassion and do similar acts in their devotion to both God and their fellow man for all the right reasons.

Now that we have established the importance of love we need to know what love is – what it looks like and sounds like. How love plays itself out in the context that it is presented in. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." (I Corinthians 13:4-7) What this is telling us is that love is action. Love is only love when it is put into action in giving it away to others. Love was meant not to be just a feeling that we hold in our heart but an action that daily plays out in our lives affecting those around us and even speaks to the kind of relationship that we have with our heavenly father. If we recall the famous question that was asked of Jesus as to what the greatest commandment was we find his reply in Matthew 22:37-40 " Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." This brings up a good question: Where do we get love from to begin with? The answer is this: We love because God demonstrated his love

first toward us. This leads us to consider Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God in his perfect love showed mercy and protection for a flailing human race struggling with the debt of sin by providing the ultimate sacrifice of his one and only son to pay the price of that debt once and for all. God could have turned his back on Adam and Eve and the whole rest of the human race to come because of their wrongdoing, but he didn’t. Instead of staying angry he lovingly didn’t walk away from the humans he had created but rather hoped for their best in providing an opportunity to choose salvation through the later gift of his son.

Throughout the Bible we are reminded of the ways that God loves us. The Psalmist expressed it best in Psalm 103:1-18) Praise the LORD; O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’S love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children – with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.” This passage should remind you of the original passage that we are considering. God sets the example of his love towards us as a model for us to follow. His expectation of us as forgiven Christians is that we treat others in a similar way to how he treats us. This is not always an easy task. It is not easy to overcome the urge to repay evil for evil, or to forgive those who have wronged us. On a daily basis how many times are we kind to someone or not rude to someone when we had the opportunity to be. It is a difficult task to hope for the best for everyone – that includes people who we dislike or who have wronged us. The last statement should push our ‘ouch’ button internally. According to Jesus’ statements in (Matthew 5:46&47) we are no better than those squirmy tax collectors if we only love those who love us. Double ouch!

Continuing on with our main text: “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies they will cease; where there are tongues they will be stilled; where there is knowledge it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”(I Corinthians 13:8-13) The passage is finished up by reiterating that the things that we look at as great abilities amongst people pale in comparison to the ability to demonstrate love. So how do we choose the most excellent way of love in our own lives. It all comes down to the daily choices that we make. First of all we should look at our love for God – how are we demonstrating our love for God who is our greatest example of love? Are we spending time with him quietly listening to what he may have to say to us or are we simply coming to him with a list of requests when we take the time to pray? Do we spend time meditating on the word of God each day or do we benignly read our few verses and go our way- or is God’s word a priority in our lives at all? Our love for God should undergird us in all we do. We should desire to have an unquenchable thirst for relationship with God just as the Psalmist expressed in Psalm 42:1&2 when he wrote “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? “An example that I really appreciate from the Old Testament of someone’s love for God is the story of Hannah and her willingness to dedicate her son to

God's service. Hannah couldn't have children and wanted a child more than anything else. When God granted her request and she had Samuel she kept her promise and dedicated him to service in God's temple giving him up – her precious son as a gift of gratitude to God. What are we willing to give up to God as a gift of gratitude for all he's done for us? God deserves our love first and foremost.

Next we are to love our fellow Christians. In both Ephesians 1:15&16 and Colossians 1:4 the early Christian believers at Colosse and Ephesus, were commended for their love for the brethren. We are to look out for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to demonstrate love to those who are of the Christian faith. In fact, our love is to be so evident towards one another that it makes other non-believers stop and take notice. Our love is to be a method of transforming the attitudes and hearts of non-believers around us. Love transforms people. There is the age old tale of the beauty and the beast. Walt Disney did a nice job in retelling the tale in an animated form. The kindness of the beautiful young maiden towards the surly, unlovable beast transforms the beast inwardly so that he begins to love and show kindness to others. Thus in the ending of the story he is totally transformed from a beast to a prince whom then marries the beautiful on the inside and out young maiden. This is an old tale. A more recent example of love that transforms is the story of A Man Called Norman by: Mike Adkins (produced by James Dobson of Focus on the Family). It is the true story of how one man and his family reached out in love and compassion to a man named Norman who was quite unlovable and yet through their loving efforts he was transformed into a loved individual who became a Christian. In the transformation process both sides were affected; Norman by receiving the love, and the family by sacrificially giving of their love.

I John 3:14-23 reminds us of the love we ought to have one for another. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." The love we have should compel us to take care of our brethren in need. In our daily choices to show love it may look like mowing the grass for an elderly individual or assisting someone with tasks they need help with after being ill or in the hospital. It can look like providing a ride to someone, or providing a meal to a family, or providing financial assistance to those who are struggling from time to time. It can also look like not taking offense to things that are said that could have been expressed differently or not said at all. Love looks like exercising patience and kindness toward others. Rejoicing with those who are rejoicing and mourning with those who are mourning. (see Romans 12:15) Be creative, and practical, there are many ways to show love for those in our Christian fellowship and ways to let that love flow out to non-believers which I prefer to call the not yet believers in the hope that they will come to discover the joy of the Christian faith. We are to be shining examples of love in our world. I Peter 2:12 admonishes us to "Live such godly lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

The world is watching. They should know that we are Christians by our love just as the camp song suggests. We should be one in the spirit and one in the Lord, praying that all unity may one day be restored. And then they'll know we are Christians by our love, yes by our love. They'll know because of the rewards of love they see in the fruit of our lives. The transforming power of love in our lives, the forgiveness we receive and give, and the peace with God and man that we experience when we choose to love. Love is a choice. Choose love. Accept it from God, let it flow through you back to God, then to your brothers and sisters in Christ and on to those who are in your community around you and beyond. Then, they will know that we are truly Christians by our love.

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOU?

By David Hixon

For the next few months we are going to talk about What God's Purpose for You is. Man has come up with MANY ideas about what he thinks that purpose is. Most of it has to do with what is going to happen to him here and now. How great a person can be, what he can do, what he can create, how much money he can make and the kind of power that he could perhaps have, many times for well..... or the way it starts out – for the good of everyone.

It doesn't always turn out that way because of simply how man is and there is a reason for that. God Himself has a purpose for humans and if you are deceived on this point, you are deceived on all other points of the Christian religion. You have to understand this one point because it all is a part of a package, if I can put it that way.

What is God's purpose? Why did He create man on this earth as we read in Genesis the first chapter? Why did He form the earth for man to live? He even created a garden with nature so ordered in such a way to give the man who was created on the sixth day after everything else was created, a wonderful life.

That garden was a utopia. It was created for man and his family and we do read then on the sixth day, in **Genesis 1:26- "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."**

Who was God talking to here? He was talking to the angels. This is known as a Majestic Plural. God was talking to the Heavenly Hosts.

It is a very inspiring thing to understand that when God created man he was a very special creation. None of the other animals were created in the image of God. We have to ask the question: What was God doing at this point? Why was He creating man?

And we might go on to ask the question: If He did have a very special purpose for man, why was there evil there? So if God was doing something special with the man and His family why was the serpent allowed to even talk to His family in the first place?

You might also ask the question why does God allow so much suffering? How does this fit in with God's purpose? What about the violence we see, the disease, the war, crime? How about all the natural disasters?? It just doesn't quite fit in with what most people would try to understand as a loving God. Why would God even permit such a thing to happen? That is why it is so important to understand God's purpose, His **great** purpose that He has for man and how He intends to accomplish or fulfill that purpose.

We find ourselves in some bad circumstances sometimes, and many times they are quite discouraging aren't they? If we know God's purpose for us, we can rise above those trying times because we know that there is a purpose that God is working out with us and that gives our lives purpose. **That was what it was meant to do** and so it is very important to understand what that great and wonderful purpose is.

Let me just say this is an enormous subject to understand , but it is important that we do at least get a grasp of what God is doing today to give us, let's say, a clearer picture. We don't want to ever forget what He is doing. We want to always have in the front our minds His purpose for us and what and how He is doing it. Things do tend to clear up quite a bit in our hearts and our minds as we live life in a world, the present evil world, as it is called, if you understand what that purpose is.

God began to reveal a very important phase of His plan that He was going to accomplish directly with people with the beginning of the New Testament. That is where I want to start. In Luke the first chapter we find the beginning of what is called the New Testament or more correctly the New Covenant, because there is going to be now a New Covenant.

Christ would come and establish that New Covenant. So we read in Luke chapter one, the first incident that begins the whole process that I am referring to, that is going to tell us what that grand purpose is.

It begins with the message from the angel Gabriel to Zacharias who was a priest serving in the temple in his order, that is his time in which he was scheduled to serve as they were divided up in the 24 courses during the year. This was Zacharias' time. Zacharias was going to be the father of John the Baptist. John was to be the one who would precede the Messiah as we read, and he would teach repentance for sins and baptism for the remission of those sins. Here is where it would start.

The first thing people had to do would be to turn from sins and have their sins remitted. Not just atoned for through the law but now remitted through repentance. Here is what John is going to begin to preach:
Luke:1:76-77- "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins"

It is quite a long chapter. Here is Zacharias who was speaking for the first time after he was struck mute by the angel Gabriel because he didn't believe what Gabriel was telling him, that his wife who was quite old and so was he, would have a child. The child was born and Zacharias speaks then for the first time and says his name is going to be John.

You could imagine a transformation took place on the part of Zacharias over a period of nine months. After all, if you get struck mute for nine months you would have a few things to think about over that period of time, wouldn't you, and so he did and so here is one of the things he says:

Luke:1:76- "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins"

That is what John was going to begin to preach. Now we are going to see that was considerably different than what was spoken before. We have someone who was born in a miraculous way, to a priest, someone well known in the community in Jerusalem.

Let's go to **Luke:3:2- "in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.**

So as John began to grow up and as he became independent enough he had moved into the wilderness as we are told in another place. And so the word of God started to come to him and he said this:

V. 3-4 – “And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”

John preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The Jews had a baptism, so to speak, where they themselves would go down into a pool of fresh water. Many of you that have been to Israel have seen these pools. They are everywhere. The person simply went and got in himself and he came out of that after he had submerged himself and went to the place, the synagogue of worship, on that particular day. They are called cleansing pools and the person would go down to these pools, submerge himself and come out and worship.

This wasn't done just one time as you and I understand baptism today. They did this quite often. It was a part of their cleansing or their purification as we read the term: purification of the Jews.

So now John is coming and he is saying something different. John is teaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Now this is something Jesus would do, except that it wasn't a matter of God forgiving sin through only repentance and baptism but that **JESUS HIMSELF** would die as the sacrifice for sins.

John only referred to the One who would come after him whose shoes he was not worthy to untie. He says: I am not worthy. I am nothing compared to what this Man is or who this Man is. I am only baptizing for the remission of sins. He didn't go into details to what He would do. We do understand later that the Messiah Himself would be the One to die for those sins and His blood would be shed for our cleansing.

1 John:1:7- “but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins.

Something new was about to happen. I want you to notice in **verse 6 of Luke 3** this quotation from Isaiah 52.

Luke:3:6- “And all flesh will see the salvation of God.”

Now this is different, quite different. The people of Israel expected salvation in the form of deliverance - deliverance from their enemies! Salvation could be a person saved from that type of evil or calamity and that would apply to the entirety of the nation.

Now it says **all flesh will see the salvation of God**, which tells us we are not talking about a physical salvation or saving or deliverance. We are talking about something more than that; something that would happen to all flesh.

And what would happen to all flesh would simply be, everybody is going to die. So how is a person saved from death? How do you live beyond that? Is there life after death?

So now when we come to the New Testament we understand salvation in the way the people of the Old Testament understood it. With the beginning of the establishment of the New Covenant as Jesus came to bring, something **more** is going to be done for people. Now it is called ***the salvation of God.***

Now before this God worked through a nation. He showed that the nation who He ruled would be like no other on the face of the earth. I am talking about Israel. That would be God's nation. If they obeyed God, there would be blessings from God. God would rule that nation. It would be a nation like no other nation that existed. They would keep His holy and righteous laws and they would not be defeated by their enemies.

But this wasn't the major work God had in mind. This was only a forerunner in many respects, of a people that He had established for Himself to eventually be a **spiritual nation.**

When we look at John the Baptist we see that he was a forerunner. He came first. BUT something better was coming! Jesus Himself! Just as the nation of Israel came first, something better was coming **SPRITUAL ISRAEL!**

God provided National blessings for us through His promise that He made to Abraham.

But I want to show you that even in the promise to Abraham, as we go through the next few months, **that was not the end.** That was only a part of what He said. It was only a forerunner.

God using Israel was something that was to come before something greater that He was going to do, and that is: He was going to establish for Himself a spiritual nation.

Let's turn to **1 Peter:2:9-** "**But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**"

Peter refers to this. All of the Apostles began to understand very clearly what God was going to do; what God was doing through Jesus Christ.

We see right now the indication is this is not a nation such as the nation of Israel or any other nation for that matter. Here is a nation of special people, he says. They are called out of darkness, meaning the world. He is dealing with the world now. He is not dealing simply with one nation.

Now He is calling people out of the entirety of the world. It doesn't matter what their ethnicity is. He is opening this up to non-Jews and many of the prophecies quoted from Isaiah show that this was in fact going to happen. This was in the cards.

Well we have set the stage for the next issue. Next time we are going to look further into God's purpose for us. We are going to look deeply into the Kingdom of God. So stay tuned and find out just what God's purpose for your life **REALLY** is!

MORNING DEVOTION

Camp Reunion

June 13, 2011

By Joani Trott

“. . . and forget not His benefits.”

Psalms 103:1-5

Psalms 103:2b says, “. . . and forget not His benefits.” How appropriate is this quote when this weekend is designed to recall summer Bible camps enjoyed by many in this group in bygone days! Also, since we desire to benefit from this reunion by becoming refreshed in our faith today.

What are His benefits? Verses 3-5 tell us they are His:

Forgiveness
Healing
Redemption
Crowns of love & compassion
Satisfying provision

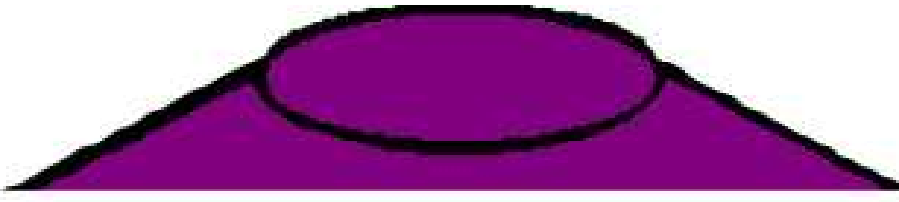
Result: Youth is renewed like the eagle

These three verses can be expressed as a mathematical equation. In fact, it can be written as simple addition. Forgiveness, plus healing, plus redemption, plus crowns of love and compassion, plus satisfying provision equals our youth being renewed like the eagle. Adding these 5 components together results in being renewed. Isn't that what we need?

Another way of saying “forget not” is to say, “I will remember.” Psalm 77 uses this phrase—which is the positive form of ‘forget not’ in writing about meditating on the benefits of our God. In verses 1-4 the writer is in distress. In verses 5-10 he remembers God's favor in the past. The victory comes in verses 11-14 when he finds comfort in the midst of his troubles by recalling God's mighty deeds! (Read verses 11-14.)

Verse 11 says, “I will remember the deeds of the LORD.” They described as miracles, works, and mighty deeds. These are the works of our God who is holy, strong, and greater than any other god. He is the redeemer of His people.

In preparation for this weekend, I decided it would be a good time for me to remember things my LORD has done for me over the past many years. After spending time over several days reflecting on the past, 4 different answered prayers came to mind that I would like to share



with you today. Hopefully, they will honor the One who has blessed my life in so many ways and be an encouragement to you.

Answered prayer #1:

I had prayed prayers for years. These were prayers in groups and prayers before meals. They were the typical, "It's time to pray." kind of prayers. This was the first time I prayed for a very personal need. In the scheme of things it was very minor but I was really trying to apply my faith to day-to-day needs. I was a young, married woman at the time. I had lost my purse in the mall and had no idea where I might have left it. I was back in the car by the time I realized what had happened so my husband went back to look for it while I stayed in the car. After waiting a bit, I thought it might be good to pray for help. However, I didn't feel that I deserved much help since I had been so careless! I was so disgusted with myself. So I didn't ask God to find my purse for me, I asked him to help me recall where I had left it. After praying, I continued waiting in the car. A few minutes later, I realized I was visualizing the time and place where I had set it down! I ran inside. There was my purse—exactly where I had visualized it. I was thrilled! What happened next was very significant. Another thought came into my mind. Wasn't it just a coincidence that I prayed before I remembered where my purse had been left? I had a choice to make. After some thought, I decided to give God the glory for what He had done for me. I could just as easily have said it was simply a coincidence. That experience was a faith-building one that became a stepping stone to greater trust in my God.

Answered prayer #2:

As Christmas approached one year, things developed so that several visitors would be coming. I was expecting several different parties to visit over a 10-day period of time. I would have overnight guests 6 of those nights. I was pleased to have guests come to stay but I knew it would be a challenge to provide clean beds and meals for so many over several days. Besides, our house was small. I prayed about it and just asked God to sustain me through all the activity. I prayed that several times as I prepared for the Holidays. Soon, we were in full swing of celebration. I didn't think any more about it. When the Christmas season was over and all the busyness had settled down, I realized that I had gone through all that time without ever feeling overwhelmed or exhausted. The whole time had been very enjoyable. God had sustained me!

Answered prayer #3:

I was involved in a ladies group at church that had become irrelevant for many women. After much thought, I became convinced that this group needed to change in a specific way to be more meaningful to more women. I was convinced that I should present this idea to a planning group that was meeting but I expected great resistance by some in the group. I was truly fearful about the way my idea would be received. By then, I was praying about more things and prayer became a big part of my preparation. When it became my turn to speak, I fearfully began. Before long, another participant exclaimed, "That's a great idea." and became very enthusiastic. Not one word of objection was ever raised. I was truly amazed!

Answered Prayer #4:

This answered prayer took place in more recent years and the process was much more involved. For several years, our church had put on major productions involving music, drama, costumes, lights, etc. at both Christmas and Easter. This was an outreach into the community that eventually included up to 8 performances each season. Probably 150-200 people were involved in these productions. At Christmas, our director liked to start the production with secular music and draw the crowd into the Christian message. During rehearsals, various ideas would be incorporated or dropped as we went along. At one point, some dance steps were added to a choir number. This began to trouble me. I continued to rehearse but had some misgivings. Finally, I realized I needed to make certain that God approved of my doing this. It didn't matter what others thought was right or wrong. I needed to know for myself. I left rehearsal to get this thing worked out in my mind. Several others knew I was really struggling and three or four people prayed with me asking God to reveal to me very clearly what His desire was. I remember having some doubt as to how clear this message would be.

I went home with such a heavy heart. When I climbed into bed that night, I opened my Bible seeking God's direction. Since this question involved music, I decided that the Psalms would be a good place to begin my search. I started with Psalm 1 and slowly read several Psalms. Once in a while, I would come across a phrase that would catch my eye. After pondering it, I would realize it didn't clearly answer my question. By the time I reached Psalm 28, I came across the phrase, "To Thee, O LORD, I call." That's exactly what I was doing. It was encouraging but not an answer. Then I read, "Hear the voice of my supplication when I cry to Thee for help." That was more encouragement, but not enough. So I continued reading. When I started Psalms 31, I stopped after a few verses. I suddenly realized I had skipped over something in Psalm 30 that I needed to look at again. I went back and found verses 10-12.

"Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD be thou my helper. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; That my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever.

Psalm 30:10-12 NAS

It wasn't about music in general. It was specifically about dancing! God provided a very clear answer to my question. He is so good!

I hope this exercise encourages you to think back to times when God has been so gracious to you. If you were writing a Psalm, what benefits would you list that He has done for you? Share it with others so they can be encouraged and He can be glorified.

I have one final point. Several months ago, I was searching for a scripture that I could embroider on a set of pillows for my bed. I designed them with Psalm 63:6. It says, "On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night." From now on, this verse will mean even more to me.