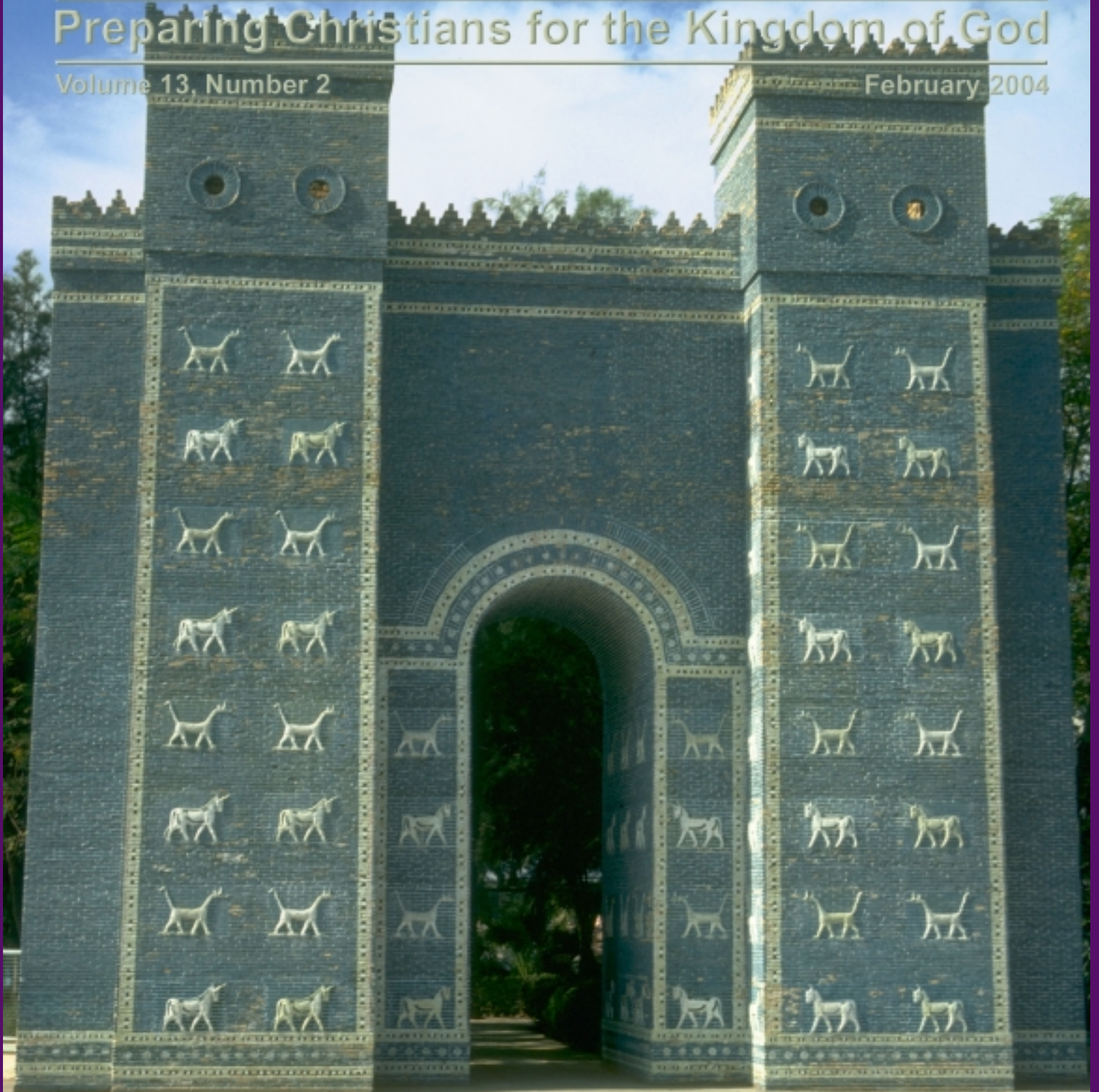


Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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Babylon's Ishtar Gate symbolizes the power and wealth of the Chaldean Empire that rose to dominance during the Axial Period. This time saw a sea-change in world affairs—from new empires to new ways of thinking. Is another Axial Period on the near horizon?
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Prophecy and the Sixth-Century Axial Period

The principle of duality is an element of prophecy we have to be very careful about when attempting to interpret. Prophetic statements sometimes apply to more than one fulfillment; dual applications do exist. But at the same time, it can be a lure, trapping us into a wrong interpretation because God never intended every prophecy to have dual applications.

A prime example of duality is Christ's first coming to atone for our sins and His second coming to rule as King of Kings. Another clear dual application is Jesus' Olivet prophecy given in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Many of the conditions He predicts to befall Judea shortly after His ascension into heaven are also forming for a repeat performance in our day. Often, we will read of "the day of the Lord" and perceive that it was fulfilled anciently. Then a few verses later, the "day of the Lord" will appear in a setting that could not possibly exist anciently but does now.

Hosea 11:1-12 is a prophecy made against ancient Israel, which was headed by the tribe of Ephraim. It too has modern relevance to Israel, but its application

is complex, requiring that we believe that biblical Israel—the ten northern tribes—still exists as modern nations. How far can we take its ancient application into our day or to a time yet future? Verse 1 appears in Matthew 2:15, applied to Christ, because Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's persecution against them. When that was safely over, God brought them back to Israel. This prophecy was fulfilled twice before the first century AD began! Is there yet another?

Hosea wrote this prophecy about forty years before Israel went into captivity to Assyria. Since part of it has already been used in reference to Jesus, how much of it applies to modern Israel? All, just another verse or two, or most that remains? Is Assyria truly modern Germany, as some believe? Will it fulfill exactly the same role a second time? The research of some within the church of God leads them to believe Germany is actually a part of the ten lost tribes of Israel! We can see how risky it is to make assumptions and leap to conclusions. One must be careful when using duality as a base.

A Foundation for Understanding Prophecy

Prophecy has many purposes, but it is never intended to open the future to mere idle curiosity. Its much higher purpose is to furnish guidance to the heirs of salvation; to give comfort, hope, and encouragement; and to instill in them confidence and a sense of urgency in the troubled period in which they live.

Amos 3:1-7 is instructive of some of prophecy's uses:

Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion

cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it? Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

Prophecy is both practical and positive, not all gloom and doom. Most of prophecy begins negatively but ends positively because God is confident that what He prophesied will accomplish His end, which is always good! Much of the thrust of Amos is an education for catastrophe. Amos followed Elijah about 90-100 years later. During that period, Israel's sins continued to mount horribly. Despite this, they became very wealthy and self-indulgent, even oppressively so.

Religiously, they were trying to walk a tightrope between God and Baal. They were behaving and worshipping like Baal worshippers but doing it in the name of the Lord. Does that not sound familiar to an informed observer of our modern, American scene? People in high places are claiming we all worship the same God; they say the God of Islam and the God of Christianity are the same!

Amos, a Jew from the southern kingdom, was sent by God to preach against the sins of the northern ten tribes. In those from the north, there would be a natural resistance to such an arrangement. The first thing Amos needed to do, then, was establish his authority to preach against them.

The prophet begins in the first two verses with a "thus saith the LORD," providing the foundation for all that follows. He sets out two things that construct a basis for what he says. First, God and Israel have a special relationship: "You only have I known." This phrase indicates a very close bond, as in a marriage, from which ensues the sharing of life's experiences. This ties what Amos would say to correct them to their responsibilities within that close relationship.

Second, he makes a veiled warning, contained within the next five verses: Amos' words carry authority. Israel had better heed because his words are not idle. He establishes this through a series of illustrations posed as challenging questions that can logically be answered only one way. His aim is to awaken them from their spiritual lethargy. It is as if he is saying, "Think about the practical ramifications of this." What follows is a general pattern of God's operation in His people's behalf.

First: People traveling in the same direction toward exactly the same destination would hardly meet except by appointment. It is no accident that God and Israel have this relationship. This also applies on a smaller but more immediate scale: Amos has been sent by appointment, and he does not speak promiscuously. He is there by no

accident. His utterances are not his own words; they began with God, who sent them because the close relationship is seriously threatened.

Second: Lions do not roar unless they have taken their prey because they do not want to scare their intended prey away. Israel is God's prey, as it were, and He is not roaring yet. This means, "Take heed! He is stalking you, and you are in mortal danger. Punishment is imminent, at the very door. Beware, for the margin of safety is very slim."

Third: One cannot snare a bird unless a trap is set, and then something—in this case a bird—has to cause the trap to spring shut. This illustration is declaring a cause-and-effect relationship, meaning, "Israel, you are already in the trap, and you, through your conduct, are just about to spring it shut on yourself. Your sins brought this warning, and punishment *will* follow if you continue sinning."

Fourth: All too often, the alarms go off, and *then* people take notice. "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Amos is declaring that God is involved in His creation; He has not gone way off. The Israelites must not allow themselves to be self-deceived. God is managing it, governing it. His warning of impending calamity would not come if they were not deserving of it. They have been flippantly careless and have no one to blame but themselves.

Fifth: It is illogical to think that God would punish without first warning His people. It is an aspect of His mercy. We can infer that Amos did not choose to be there before them. God appointed him to this task and "caused" him to speak. It is from God that the authority for the prophet's message emanates.

An important overall warning from Amos for those of us who have made the New Covenant with God is that great privileges must not be abused, or they will bring great penalties. To whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48). Our great privilege is to have access to Him, His Spirit, and therefore a far closer relationship with Him than Israel ever had under the Old Covenant. Israel's sin was first neglecting and then departing from God and the relationship. This in turn produced great moral corruption through self-serving idolatry, illustrated as and called "fornication" in other books.

The overall effect of these sins produced a careless disregard for the simple duties people owe their neighbors, as well as oppression of the weak. Amos speaks strongly against public and private indifference toward the keeping of the second of the two great commandments (Matthew 22:37-40). When these are considered, we see that he is truly a prophet for our time, when public morality has fallen so low. We need to heed His words seriously because our cultural circumstances parallel what Amos confronted in his day.

The Axial Period

The Old Testament gives a strong impression that prophets arose in times of crisis, and most church members believe we are facing the crisis at the close of this age. However, the New Testament shows that God is no longer using prophets as He did before He established the church. Instead, He has given us an understanding of the dual application of what has already been written, using the apostles to fill in necessary prophecies for the sake of the church. God has given these prophecies so we can be spiritually prepared for the end-time crisis and do whatever work of witnessing of Christ's gospel He requires.

The Bible's prophets, with few exceptions, have indeed come in bunches. Most of them appeared within a 250-year period beginning about 800 BC and included a remarkable range of personalities: the visionary Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; the ethical Amos and Hosea; and the outstanding Jeremiah, who seems to be in the midst of everything.

For our purposes, we will deal with a 130- to 150-year period that began in about 620 BC, which contained

Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and possibly Obadiah and Zephaniah. Their lives and service preceded and spanned the most tumultuous period in man's history until now. Some historians call it the "Axial Period" because history shows the rise and fall of nations created a multitude of flip-flops in terms of power and influence. New nations rose to dominating power, and older powers fell, never to rise again. Some nations disappeared from view altogether.

Axial means "having the characteristics of an axis." An *axis* is "a line, shaft, event, or thought on which something rotates." Rightly applying what happened immediately preceding and during the sixth century BC gives greater insight to history and, because of the duality principle, to what is happening now. The sovereign God was deeply involved, as shown through the writings of His prophets to Israel. Understanding this period from a biblical as well as a secular viewpoint is important because it is a type of what we are living through now.

The Origin and Goal of History

Swiss historian Karl Jaspers authored *The Origin and Goal of History*, first published in German in 1949. Within his opening paragraphs, he writes:

It would seem that the axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 BC, in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 BC. It is there (about 500 BC) that we meet with the *most deep-cut dividing line in history*. Man, as we know him today (mankind and his present civilizations) *came into being*. For short, we may style this the Axial Period." [p.1, emphasis mine throughout]

He advances on page 18, "It might seem as though I were out to prove the events of the Axial Period as a *direct intervention on the part of the Deity*, without openly saying so." This remark is especially interesting because Jaspers is agnostic. The fact is, however, there *was* intervention. The historical evidence, when combined with belief in the Bible, is so overwhelming that even the agnostic Jaspers has to mention the obvious appearance of supernatural involvement. Or, as he states it, "The Axial Period is in the nature of a *miracle*, in so far as no really adequate [human] explanation of it is possible within the limits of our present knowledge" (p.18). Nevertheless, there is an explanation because God was involved, and He left a record in the Bible. Notice, Jaspers posits this period to have occurred between 800 and 200 BC, a period that encompasses the writings of all prophets from Isaiah to Malachi.

Isaiah 10:5-7 states:

Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.

Isaiah, the key prophet at the beginning of this period, is very interested in a dominating Gentile power, the Assyrians, and its threat to Israel and Judah. He begins to trumpet a warning to them of the impending commencement of the times of the Gentiles. Assyria is the first great Gentile power, but not the most influential.

Jeremiah, predominantly, and Daniel are the key prophets during the midst of this period, in the sixth century BC. Jeremiah began to prophesy as the seventh century ended and continued well into the sixth. Jeremiah 1:6-10 reveals some overall goals his commission included.

Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to

pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

Above all others, Jeremiah is the “Axial Man,” prepared by God. God told him that he was a prophet not only to Israel and Judah, but to many other nations and kingdoms, and his job was to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build, and plant. Jeremiah 25:15-30 greatly fleshes out Jeremiah’s commission. Notice how detailed God is as to which nations Jeremiah must prophesy:

For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: “Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.” Then I took the cup from the LORD’s hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the LORD had sent me: Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people; all the mixed multitude, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); Edom, Moab, and the people of Ammon; all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastlands which are across the sea; Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who are in the farthest corners; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the

Medes; all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. Also the King of Sheshach shall drink after them.

“Therefore you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.”’ And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “You shall certainly drink! For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth,” says the LORD of hosts.’”

This is a tremendously broad commission to lay on one man’s shoulders! His ministry embraced the totality of the biblical world, and some verses can be understood to encompass the entire world. Many of these nations had existed from the time God scattered the people by confusing the languages at Babel (Genesis 11). Did Jeremiah actually, in person, deliver this warning to these nations? We do not know because records are so rare. Jeremiah’s writings include specific prophecies against Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Elam, Kedar, Hazor, and Babylon. Did he deliver these prophecies in person, or does the duality principle apply so that the literal fulfillment will occur in a time like ours, when rapid transportation and communication systems exist?

Collapse and Ascent

Jaspers makes an interesting comment about what was happening during the Axial Period that agrees with Jeremiah’s commission in Jeremiah 1:10: “It was an age of *simultaneous* destruction and creation” (p. 5). On the next page he adds, “The thousands of years-old ancient civilizations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period when it melts them down, assimilates them, or causes them to sink from view.”

Where did they go? They virtually vanished because God set Jeremiah over those nations to pronounce His judgments. The Assyrian, Egyptian, Hittite, Elamite, Midianite, Phoenician, Philistine, Ammonite, and Moabite nations disappeared from view, and new nations rose as powers to take their places. Within these few centuries, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, China, India, Europe, and Russia began their ascent to greatness. Jaspers further notes the process that was destroying and simultaneously making nations: “Mighty empires, made by conquest, arose almost simultaneously in China, in India, and in the West. Everywhere the first outcome of the col-

lapse of the ancient order was an order of technological and organizational planning” (p. 5).

At this time lived such towering historical figures as Pythagoras, Confucius, Lao-Tze, Buddha, Zoroaster, Numa, Thales, and a bit later, Herodotus and Hippocrates. These and many others had an enormous impact on the formation of civilizations that exist to this day. Later, Jaspers comments on contemporary religious personalities who left their marks on the cultures they helped form:

It cannot possibly be an accident that six hundred years before Christ, Zarathustra in Persia, Buddha in India, Confucius in China, the prophets in Israel, King Numa in Rome and the first philosophers in Hellas made their appearance pretty well simultaneously as reformers of the national religion. (p. 8)

What was taking place? Jasper’s book is devoted to his conclusions regarding this remarkable time. He writes, “In this age were born the fundamental categories

within which we *still think* today, and the beginnings of the *world religion*, by which human beings *still live*, were created. The step into *universality* (one-worldism, Catholicism) was taken in every sense” (p. 2).

Jaspers asks a penetrating question that must be addressed to support the conclusions he reaches: “If the Axial Period gains an importance with the degree to which we immerse ourselves in it, the question arises: *Is this period*, or its creation, the *yardstick* for all that follows?” (p. 18). He is somewhat hesitant to answer this question in the affirmative, even though he leaves no doubt that he feels it is. However, the Bible, through the writings of Daniel, assures us that Jaspers should answer, “Yes.” Notice Daniel 2:31-38:

You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold.

Jaspers does not feel he has an absolute answer to this question, but with trust in the Bible, we can readily see this period dominated by Babylon *is* certainly a yardstick and standard. Babylon was the head of gold; it was the fountainhead, establishing patterns and influencing the rise of the new civilizations that followed it. Those with a grasp of biblical prophecy see its reflection in all of history from the sixth century BC to the present. Here is the beginning of our world, the same system the apostle John calls “the world” in I John 2:15-17.

What emerged from that century or so is a reshaped world—our world. Certainly, at its beginning it did not possess much scientific technology, but the world’s standards socially, politically, economically, philosophically, and theologically came into being at that time. These standards have undoubtedly been modified somewhat through time, but the New Testament confirms this conclusion by calling our present civilization “Mystery, Babylon the Great” (Revelation 17:5).

The Axis Turns Again

John writes in Revelation 17:3-5:

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The culture symbolized here is not mystery Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, or Israel. It exists down to the time of the end because its ways are embedded in the nations to this day. Babylon is the fountain and yardstick even in Israel. In fact, Israel epitomizes Babylonish ways brought to their very peak. God’s prophets were trumpeting its birth long before it occurred and as it was born.

In Luke 21:24, Jesus speaks of the circumstance the prophets were proclaiming: “And they will fall by the edge

of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” A new world, the times of the Gentiles, was ushered in through the Axial Period, and the Babylonian image has influenced the world since the sixth century BC, stamping its character on every culture. However, Gentiles have not always dominated politically or culturally. The last two hundred years have seen the rise and dominance of the Israelitish nations, featuring their syncretism of Christian and Babylonian concepts. This system, focused in the Israelitish nations, has risen to dominate the world scene to an extent no nation ever has.

There is no doubt God is preparing the world for the time of the end and the return of Jesus Christ. If an end-time parallel occurs, Daniel 4 contains an interesting possibility for the years just ahead. The tree, representing Babylon, is chopped down and its stump banded with iron. Then, Nebuchadnezzar is told he will become like an animal in behavior, and seven times will pass before it is concluded. In its literal fulfillment, the seven times became seven years, but prophetically, it is possible that the seven times ended in 1982.

The number of years in seven times is equal to the

“Afterward the children of Israel shall turn,
seek the LORD their God, . . .
and fear the LORD and His goodness
in the latter days.”

Hosea 3:5

Fear the Lord's Goodness!

Quite often we hear people say: “Goodness!” “My goodness!” or “For goodness’ sake!” What comes to mind when you hear these expressions? People use these exclamations without any intended meaning other than an expression of surprise or wonder.

Many recognize that goodness is directly or indirectly associated with an attribute of God. According to *Webster’s New Universal Dictionary*, “goodness” is a euphemism for “God.” Most people, however, do not realize that using the word “goodness” in a meaningless exclamation reflects on God in an irreverent way and is taking His name in vain (Exodus 20:7). Do we fear to take God’s name in vain? Is it possible to fear God’s goodness?

In a non-euphemistic sense, the term “goodness” refers to the state or quality of being good, specifically with regard to virtue and excellence. Goodness can be equated to such virtues as kindness, generosity, and benevolence. It also refers to the best part, essence, or valuable element of something. God is the personification of goodness, and He is the standard by which it is determined.

Although goodness is related to kindness, it differs from it in being a more openly active fruit of the Spirit. In this sense, goodness is more often directed toward those who do not deserve benevolence.

Fear

There is an aspect of God’s goodness that is rarely associated with goodness. As surprising as it may seem, God’s goodness can be *feared*!

In the relatively near future, all of the descendants of ancient Israel will fear God’s goodness with respect and reverence. A prophecy in Hosea 3:5 says, “Afterward the children of Israel shall return, seek their God and David their King, and *fear the LORD and His goodness* in the latter days.” The Hebrew word for “fear” (*pahad*) in this verse means “to be afraid, tremble, or stand in awe of,” even to the point of shaking in fear. Everything God does is good, but His goodness can be overwhelming, especially when it is obviously undeserved. It may appear harsh at times to a carnal human being because it may force a change of thought and action—a total reversal in lifestyle.

During the Millennium, Gentile nations will fear God’s goodness with the realization and understanding that His judgment will come upon *all* nations. After God’s judgment on Israel, resulting in terrible trials through the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, this fear of God’s goodness will help bring about repentance and lasting blessings that will flow from the benevolence of God, but which will also require the obedience and submission of the previously rebellious nations. The future of Israel and Judah will be so glorious that the other nations

(continued on page 14)

Blood a

The Persistence

“The destructive questioning of the highest human values by Jewry shows that Jews are already excluded from the ethnic-national life of other nations by virtue of their mode of thought, which flows precisely from their race, and that they should therefore be excluded from the other nations.”

—Theodor Veiter, 1938

Last month, we looked at the Roman Pontiff’s assertion, “Anti-Semitism is inadmissible. Spiritually, we are all Semites.” His comment was rooted in the theology of universal inclusion: God’s love is for all; His grace is toward all. Hence, mankind is not empowered to act in any way which *excludes* anyone from the benefits of His working.

The German government of the 1930s rejected inclusivity as a basis for its racial policies, opting instead for a policy of *exclusivity*. Theodor Veiter’s comment, written in the same year Pius XI condemned anti-Semitism as “inadmissible,” argues that some people, notably Jews, could legitimately be “excluded from the other nations.”

Veiter—along with the other architects of Nazi racism—subscribed to the doctrine of *exclusivity*. “Blood and soil” was their jingoistic watchword; selective disenfranchisement based on race was their aim. “Blood and soil” refers to the Nazi teaching that certain people, by virtue of their *blood* affinity—that is, their racial ancestry—belonged to the *soil* of Germany, the Fatherland. They categorized all others as foreigners, as interlopers, gatecrashers, and trespassers on German soil. They did not “belong.” If these foreigners were allowed to remain in the Fatherland, it was because of certain specific services they offered to it at the time. If they were perceived as inimical or hostile to the aims of the Fatherland, they were expelled or exterminated—the politically correct term today is “ethnic cleansing.”

Exclusivity is the bedrock of this thinking: Some

racial stocks are deemed worthy to be legitimately excluded from the polity of a larger, host culture. All means taken by the “rightful” owners of the land to the ends of keeping the soil and the blood pure are lawful. This is the ultimate—and appalling—conclusion of the Nazi-devised “law of ethnic groups” (*Volksgruppenrecht*) propounded by Veiter and other legal theorists in the 1930s. This doctrine explains the fate of the Gypsies and Jews in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Nazis identified the values and culture of these folk to be decadent and by that virtue a danger to the German nation. They therefore were to be repressed. Later, “exclusion” came to mean the “final solution” of mass murder.

The “Law of Ethnic Groups” Today

The terminology has changed a bit, but the thought-pattern of modern-day Europeans remains the same. Most Americans are unaware of the fact that European integration over the past few decades has taken place through a process of *regionalism*, the development of a “Europe of the regions.” The idea that integration can be brought about through the apparently divisive concept of regions seems contradictory. Nevertheless, regionalism remains the touchstone of European integration to this day.

Comparatively, Europe is a rather small place inhabited by many people; the population is dense. These peoples are linguistically and culturally di-

nd Soil

of Anti - Semi tism

verse, and inhabit a number of very old nations. This presents a challenge to effective integration.

In answer to this challenge, the bureaucrats of the European Union (EU), along with a number of collaborators from non-government agencies (NGOs), have resurrected (with some modifications, of course) the German “law of ethnic groups” first set forth in the 1930s.¹ It goes something like this:

First, the “law of ethnic groups” recognizes that Europe is made up of a number of old-fashioned—though nominally sovereign—states (such as Italy and Spain), each with its own legitimate national interest and culture. Inhabiting these states are members of a “majority” culture, more properly, a “majority” ethnic group. This “majority” would be the French in France, the Germans in Germany, the Italians in Italy, and so on.

Second, any of these old states (nations) may have residing in it any number of other peoples or “nationalities,” sometimes termed “national minorities.” Hence, Germany has in it Bavarians, Hessians, and so on. These “national minorities” enjoy the same legitimacy (or rights) as do the national “majorities” because they have lived in the land for a long, long time. (In other words, they have become part of the “soil,” to use Nazi terminology.)

Third, this ethnic model is complicated by the geopolitical fact that some peoples *span* nations. That is, many nations have residing in them “branches” of the “majority” peoples of an adjacent nation, or of other nations. For example, in the nation of Poland, there resides a “branch” of the German people. Europeans view the people of these “branches” as citizens of the state in which they reside. For instance, the “branch” of German people living in Poland has Polish citizenship, not German citizenship.

What legitimizes these “minorities” and “branches” are their peoples’ “ethnicity.” That is, their members have something in common, namely,

ancestry. Therefore, the Germans living in Poland are *citizens* of Poland, but are *ethnic* Germans because of their family connections—what the Nazis called “blood.”

We can be more specific about the mechanism which legitimizes a “national majority,” a “national minority,” or a “branch.” For any such group to be legitimate, it must pass the test of “autochthoneity.” *The people must be autochthonous to the land.* In simple English, that means:

- They must have been living on the “soil” for a long time, such that most people identify that land with them. This is the logical juncture of blood *and* soil.
- They must be concentrated in the land to some extent, to saturate, as it were, the “soil” with their “blood.”

If a people do not pass this test, the “law of ethnic groups” defines them as “allochthonous” rather than “autochthonous.” To be an “allochthone” is to be a foreigner.

The “law of ethnic groups” seeks to provide legitimacy for all the “minority” and “branch” groups spread over Europe, for example, the Macedonians in Greece, the Greeks in Cyprus, the Croats in Serbia, and so on. A current example of this law in operation is the plan for the “unification” of Cyprus—to prepare it to join the EU. The plan is a model of this law in action. The stated goal is “reunification” of the island. However, the plan “would in fact guarantee a permanent spatial and institutional segregation of the island’s residents within their respective ethnic ‘communities.’”² Greeks, as one ethnic “branch,” would live in one area; Turks, as another “branch,” in another.

When all is said and done, the effect of this legal doctrine will be to make national borders, which have defined the old nations of Europe for so many years, essentially irrelevant. In some

cases, it appears that the aim is to redraw the borders of some states. This is all to say that the geopolitical fact of ethnicity has come, according to this legal theory, to supersede the territorial claims of sovereign states.

Already, the “law of ethnic groups” provides the legal foundation for the European Charter on Minority and Regional Languages as well as the Framework Convention on Minority Rights. Both legal structures, incidentally, were influenced by an NGO called the Federal Union of European Nationalities, whose principal organ, *Europa Ethnica*, was for years edited by, as one may have guessed, a “reformed” Nazi by the name of Theodor Veiter. He, a primary architect of the Nazi’s “law of ethnic groups,” was one of several supposedly transformed Nazis who have been pressed into service to rejuvenate the law, to make it fit modern Europe’s circumstances.³ Although virtually unknown in the United States, Veiter has been very influential in Europe. An Internet search of his full name yields some 56 pages of links, mostly German websites.

Whither European Anti-Semitism?

Where does this “law of ethnic groups” leave European Jewry? Briefly, Jews (as well as Gypsies and Muslim minorities such as the Turks, Algerians, Pakistanis, etc.) do *not* pass the test of “autochthoneity.” According to the definitions set forth by this law, the Jews fail to pass this test for three reasons:

1. European Jews are *scattered*, not concentrated enough in a particular territory to justify their being a “national minority” or a “branch.” Incidentally, this judgment reflects the old Nazi myth of the “rootless, cosmopolitan” Jew.
2. Today’s European Jews lack the population that would qualify them as autochthonous.
3. Finally, the Jews today have not lived long enough in “Old Europe” (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, as distinct from the Baltic states, etc.) to qualify them as a “legitimate” ethnic group. Many of the (estimated) 120,000 Jews currently living in Germany, for example, are relatively recent immigrants from nations of the now defunct Soviet Empire.⁴

Using these standards, European bureaucrats are increasingly willing to consign the Jews to the class of allochthons (foreigners). Shocking as it may be to Americans, some of whose sons and

brothers and husbands died to liberate Europeans from the demonic clutches of racism, the morally bankrupt EU has “conspicuously excluded [these peoples] from the protections laid down by the European conventions on minority rights.”⁵ The “enlightened” EU is developing the legal structure by which Jews (as well as the large numbers of Muslims immigrating to Europe from Pakistan, North Africa, Turkey, etc.) are treated as second-class citizens.

The Three Arteries of Anti-Semitism

Looking more broadly at anti-Semitism as practiced in Europe, we can identify at least three distinct arteries that nourish it.

As we have seen, the old, racial doctrine of **exclusivity**, albeit wearing new clothes, is ideologically as robust as it was in 1935. European elites have collectively come to see the Jew as a foreigner, not part of Europe’s “blood and soil.” This perception, if it is allowed to become ensconced into civil law, will leave Jews with few rights.

Anti-Zionism is on the rise among both liberal and conservative Europeans. Anti-Zionism is where anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism converge. It is chic to accuse the American power structure as kowtowing to an over-powerful, malignant (and, of course, mythical) “Jewish lobby” which promotes the interest of the “Zionist” State of Israel. European leaders increasingly demonize the State of Israel, especially in the context of its struggle with the Palestinians. Such characterizations are in fact anti-Semitism by another name.

Despite the incessant hair-splitting over the need to separate anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, this has in recent decades become a distinction without a meaningful difference. Whatever theoretical contortions one may indulge in, the State of Israel is a Jewish state. Whoever wants to defame or destroy it, openly or through politics that entail nothing else but such destruction, is in effect practicing the Jew-hatred of yesteryear, whatever their self-proclaimed intentions.⁶

In spite of all the serpentine rationalizations of the enemies of Israel, anti-Zionist rhetoric remains at its core anti-Jewish rhetoric. No matter how it is couched, anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism.

The current rhetoric of **anti-globalization**, lacking as it does much real substance to back it up with fact, has become a search for scapegoats. What whipping boy can the self-styled pundits of anti-globalization find today on whom to blame the supposed economic inequities and cultural erosion resulting from the spread of globalization? The Jews, long perceived as sinister bogeymen lurking in the mists of international banking intrigue and currency

arbitrage, make good candidates indeed! In Europe today, there is no paucity of conspiracy theories which lay the evils of globalization at the feet of a global cabal of internationalists, at the heart of which are secularist, atheistic Jews seeking world domination.

These three arteries feed the growing violence against Jews and their property in Europe. The fact that America's liberal press goes out of its way to under-report these incidents does not diminish their number or their intensity. The fact remains: There are more incidences of anti-Semitism in Germany today than in any other European nation. Because there are so few Jews living in Germany, most anti-Semitic acts are against property—memorials and graveyards. In France, the story is different, where people are often the targets.⁷ Would we expect anything less from “national majorities” who may feel economically threatened by American globalization and Middle Eastern instability? “Go back to your country! You're not in your land!” Such cat-calls hurled at Jews are now commonplace and indicate a resurgence of anti-Semitism that is beyond its inchoate stage.

Haman and Stalin

Haman's criticism of the Jews of ancient Persia is astonishingly reminiscent of Hitler's denigration of the Jews of Europe. The Nazi stereotype saw them as “pestilent,” “wandering,” “different,” and “rootless.” Haman tarred them with the same brush. He tells his king:

There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed. . . . (Esther 3:8-9)

There is nothing new under the sun! Haman's view of the Jews and his “final solution” to the “Jewish problem” echoes the Nazis' approach of exclusion—and extermination.

God intervened, not only saving His people of that day, but visiting on Haman the end he had sought for the Jews. His plot “return[ed] on his own head” (Esther 9:25). He died instead of the Jews. Thereafter, the Jews of the Persian realm established Adar 14 and 15 as days that

should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among

the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants. (Esther 9:28)

Purim was the occasion that God saved His people.

Well more than 2,500 years later, Joseph Stalin also set his jaws against the Jews. Before and during World War II, seeing no political advantage in climbing into the same bed as his archenemies, the Germans, he denounced anti-Semitism as akin to cannibalism.⁸ After the war, however, Stalin found a new archenemy, the capitalist West, led principally by America. As a result, he reversed his position on anti-Semitism. He found it strategically useful to adapt the bogus *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,⁹ with its inane fantasies of a malignant, global conspiracy of capitalist Jews planning to take over the world. To deal with this grave new threat, new track had to be laid eastward, new gulags opened in the Russian Far East—the permafrost places of Gog and Magog.

The Gul ag!

Yes, Stalin knew how to deal with the Soviet Union's own “Jewish problem.” The gulag!¹⁰ “Stalin was of course a secular utopian and materialist, . . . [and there is] no evidence that he ever had any moral scruples or hesitations about the Gulag.”¹¹ In spite of all anecdotal and statistical evidence to the contrary, he had convinced himself that the mass consignment of peoples to forced labor was an efficient means of ensuring high productivity.¹² He lacked any doubts whatsoever that the wholesale deportation of problematic folk—along with their families—was an effective way of checking political troubles and of resolving social malaise.

In 1930, probably about 179,000 unfortunates were incarcerated in his system of concentration camps. By 1940, the number jumped by an order of magnitude to about two million in a vastly expanded complex of labor camps. By 1950, the number had swollen to about 2.5 million inmates.¹³ To Stalin, the more the merrier!

There were no bounds to his brutality. In the winter of 1944, he moved the *totality* of the Chechen nation, upwards to 400,000 people, to eastern Siberia. As many as 78,000 persons died in transit.¹⁴ In all, about 28.7 million individuals—men, women and children—were interned in the Gulags during the fifty years between 1930 and 1980. It is estimated that 2.7 million people died in these camps.¹⁵

Stalin, indeed, was well-experienced in implementing forced migrations on par with those we generally associate with the ancient Assyrians. According to his plan, hatched after his difficulties with Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s, Soviet Jews by

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"Afterward the children of Israel shall turn, seek the LORD their God, . . . and fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days."

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will stand in awe of them and tremble at their greatness. Of this future time Jeremiah was inspired to write:

Then it shall be to Me [God] a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the *good* that I do to them [Israel]; *they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness* and all the prosperity that I provide for it. (Jeremiah 33:9)

Goodness is used in this context to convey the pleasant, joyful, and overwhelmingly positive effect of blessings on the people of Israel after their exile and captivity.

This exile of Israel will eventually result in both a physical and spiritual healing, testifying of God's awesome goodness to a previously rebellious people, who will receive incredible blessings upon repentance. Verse 6 says, "Behold, I will bring it [Israel] health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth." The word "health" in this verse is literally "new flesh" in the original Hebrew. Their exile will have a healing effect, and the wounds of Israel will be wrapped in peace and security.

Verse 11 goes on to say:

“. . . the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: 'Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever'—and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first," says the LORD.

Good health and healing are gifts from God for repentance, faithfulness, and service (Philippians 2:27-30). Many diseases come upon us

as a result of tension and stress. Peace provides the tranquil environment needed for healing of all illnesses—both mental and physical (Philippians 4:7).

Hardship

Even when God withdraws the "good" of outward prosperity and brings upon us "hardship" in its place, we still reap the benefits of His goodness. It is good for us to be afflicted, to receive correction, when we will benefit from it in the end. Hebrews 12:9-11 explains this in no uncertain terms,

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Everything that God does is good and for our benefit (Romans 8:28). God's correction is a blessing and should not be complained about. Israelites have always carried the unthankful character trait of complaining. Even though we live in a world of unprecedented prosperity, there is more protesting, complaining, grumbling, moaning, griping, and whining on a global scale than ever before. Our social environment, a result of Satan's sway and our own human nature, has certainly pressured and influenced even God's people to behave the same way.

But should a Christian allow himself to bemoan God's goodness even during a trial? When Job's wife wanted him to curse God for bringing trials upon him, Job ex-

pressed the right principle of God's universal goodness and fairness when he rebuked her for grumbling: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10).

There are times when we may feel like God is not treating us fairly. Job points out that, as God's creations and recipients of His generosity and benevolence, we have no right to complain when He allows us to be afflicted or tests us through hardship.

Repentance

It is through the richness of God's goodness that we find repentance. In Romans 2:4, the apostle Paul writes, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the *goodness of God leads you to repentance*?" "Goodness" here is from the Greek word *chrestotes*, which signifies more than goodness as a quality—it is goodness in righteous action, goodness expressing itself in deeds.

God's goodness is closely associated with "kindness." *Chrestotes* describes the kindlier aspects of goodness. From this we can understand that, through God's kind goodness, He works with us carefully and patiently to bring us to repentance. Sometimes He firmly corrects us if we are especially hardheaded about overcoming a problem, or He may only need to reveal the problem to us. Either way, our powerful but kind God provides His Holy Spirit to help us to overcome.

God Is Good

God *Himself is good!* It is what He is and what He creates, gives, and commands. *Good* is defined in terms of "God," not vice versa. God, and God alone, is good without qualification. He is the Judge and the only Standard of goodness (Psalm 100:5). He is good because

He is morally perfect, gloriously generous, and the Standard of excellence and righteousness. Every attribute and every action of God is good, producing only good fruit.

The *works* of God are good because they reveal His attributes of wisdom and power (Psalm 104:24, 31). Look at how wonderfully organized, beautiful, and pleasant all of God’s creation is, and we see only a small portion of His infinite handiwork. God’s works are perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4), awesome through the excellence of His power (Psalm 66:3), honorable and glorious (Psalm 111:3), and gracious (Psalm 145:17). His creation of the angels and man is good. David was inspired to write, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:14).

The *gifts* of God are good because they express His generosity. Psalm 104 rehearses God’s creation, and in verse 28, the psalmist was inspired to write, “You open Your

hand, they are filled with good.” Physically, He provides us with food, water, health, sleep, shelter, and all our needs. Spiritually, He provides us with the Holy Spirit, grace, wisdom, repentance, faith, a new Spirit, peace, rest, and in the future, glory and eternal life. All God’s gifts are good, in both intention and effect. The apostle James tells us in James 1:17 that all of God’s gifts are good and perfect.

The *commands* of God are good because they express the righteousness of His character, teaching us (Romans 7:12) and helping us to grow in understanding His goodness. God’s goodness is a fearful attribute, but that fear has a positive effect on us when we obey Him because it produces good, spiritual fruit. Those who yield to God’s commands profit by it. Paul tells Titus to remind the church: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain

good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:8). The right fear of God is accompanied by the trust that God will shower His good works (His acts of righteousness) upon us.

The goodness of God seems harsh to those who are disobedient, but the end result shows God’s goodness as having either brought them to repentance or ended their suffering in sin (see Romans 11:22). We can receive the gift of unlimited blessings from God’s goodness if we fear and revere our Creator, obeying Him with faithfulness and overcoming our sins with genuine repentance.

This seems like a tall order, but God, who is faithful and true, promises to help us. This, too, is part of His wonderful goodness. Psalm 31:19 enlightens and encourages us, “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!”

—Martin G. Collins

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the millions would ride the rails to Mirnyy, Yakutsk, and Magadan.

Healthy, still vigorous, the long-time Soviet dictator probably smelled success. After all, he had his personal strength and the vigor of the Soviet Empire—not to mention the experience of its bureaucracy—to back him up. He could not fail. God had other ideas: Stalin died unexpectedly in his sleep on March 5, 1953. He died on Purim.

The post-Stalinist Soviet government almost immediately drew down his plans to “exclude” the Jews. For a while, European Jewry was safe. Yet, again today, the storm gathers over Europe. What Winston Churchill described as the “long night of barbarism” is not far away, when unspeakable tribulation will fall on all Israel, worldwide. At that time, God will be just as capable of saving His people as He was in Haman’s day, just as resourceful as He was in Stalin’s.

Before the dawn of that “day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Joel 2:2), God will have taught His people: “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Joel 2:32). A remnant will call.

—Charles Whitaker

Endnotes

¹ Rosenthal, John, “Anti-Semitism and Ethnicity in Europe,” *Policy Review*, October/November 2003, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.28-29. Before the unification of East and West Germany, there were “somewhat less than 30,000 Jews in Germany.” Interestingly, however, a poll conducted in the late 1990s indicated that “about a third of Germans surveyed imagined them to number in the millions.”

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37. Rosenthal cites a granular study of Europe’s ethnic groups authored by Christoph Pan and Beate Pfeil (*Die Volksgruppen in Europa: Ein Handbuch*, Vienna: Branmüller, 2000). He concludes, “As a result of this sort of exercise, ‘Jews’ are set apart from the populations among which they live as being somehow significantly different and furthermore, to the extent that they are ‘allochthonous,’ as ‘not belonging.’”

⁶ Wistrich, Robert, “The Old-New Anti-Semitism,” *The National Interest*, Summer 2003, p. 65.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19-30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.65.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Many think that *gulag* is the Russian word for *prison*. This is not so. GULAG is an acronym which stands for *Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei*, meaning “Main Administration of Camps.”

¹¹ Uzzell, Lawrence, “Remembering the Gulag,” *First Things*, November 2003, p. 38. Mr. Uzzell is president of International Religious Freedom Watch and has specialized in religious freedom in Russia.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Part One

What was in Jesus' mind during His final hours as a human being? This was the intriguing question put to me a few months ago by a fellow member of God's church. As we approach another Passover season, this question is an appropriate one.

Occasionally, the authors of *Forerunner* articles receive comments and questions requesting clarification on what we have written. A short while ago, I received just such a letter from my aforementioned friend, commenting on an earlier article. Her letter was so insightful and inspiring that it motivated me into an extensive study of her questions. She allowed me to share with our readers an appropriately edited version of her comments and questions and my responses.

More Than Just Legal

One of the first things my correspondent wrote that arrested my attention was that "in a legal sense, our sins were laid upon Him"—referring, of course, to our Savior—"and He paid the penalty for them."

Although whole books have been written proving that so much of Jesus' trial and execution was illegal from Jewish, Sanhedrin, and Roman standpoints, it remains true that our sins were laid upon Jesus and that He paid the penalty for the sins of mankind in a legal sense according to the law, the prophecies, and the will of Almighty God:

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned,

every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:4-6, 12)

The wages of our sins is death (Romans 6:23), and our sinless Savior paid that penalty for us. This, in a nutshell, sums up the greatest act of sacrifice ever made. However, fulfilling the legal aspect was only a part of it. To look at it only from the legal point of view is almost to sanitize Jesus' great sacrifice.

Jesus' Final Human Thoughts

Phenomenal Question

My correspondent then continues with this phenomenal question: "While He was being tortured, hated, and crucified, was He 'thinking' of all the dirty sins for which He was dying?"

In a word, "No." It is doubtful that, even when they were being laid upon Him, Jesus spent much time thinking of the many individual acts of human sin. However, if Jesus was not thinking about these horrible sins during His final hours, what *was* He thinking about? Scripture gives us many clues as to what some of His thoughts were during His last day of physical life.

Here are a few points to consider regarding some of the contents of Jesus' mind during the final hours of His physical life. What Scripture tells us that Jesus *knew* during the time that He bore our iniquities from Gethsemane to the stake gives us many clues to what His thoughts might have been. Jesus' thoughts during this time—that is, His *knowledge*, what He *knew*—are extremely important to His brothers and sisters, because it is partly by them that we are justified. As it says in Isaiah 53:11: “He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”

Jesus was able to foresee the travail, or the labor, of His soul. As His final human hours approached, He knew—probably exactly—when His torture and execution would take place:

- You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. (Matthew 26:2)
- Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)

Jesus knew that, to fulfill all things (Luke 24:44), His suffering must take place during the Passover Day of the year that we refer to as AD 31 and that He must be dead and entombed as that day drew to its close. Knowing how much time He had left before His arrest and His separation from His beloved Father, Jesus knew that His final moments of human freedom would be best filled with close communication with that heavenly Parent—that other member of the God Family: “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go and pray over there’” (Matthew 26:36).

The writers of the four gospel accounts have left us an accurate record of these communications, some of which we will examine later.

Despised and Rejected

Despite His welcome into Jerusalem six days before, Jesus knew that He was despised and rejected:

- But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. (Psalms 22:6)
- Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul. (Psalms 142:4)
- Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully. . . . [T]he reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. . . . Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards. . . . You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. (Psalms 69:4, 9, 12, 19-20)

Jesus was very much despised. Consider that the Eternal Lord, the very Creator of the whole magnificent universe, was regarded as contemptible and worthless! We recoil from the idea that our Elder Brother, who gave up so very much for us, should be the subject of the songs of drunkards!

- But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Luke 17:25)

- He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. . . . He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. (Isaiah 53:3, 8)

These two scriptures prompt some additional questions and points to ponder: To whose generation was Isaiah referring when he asked, “Who will declare His generation?” How extensive was “this generation” in Luke 17:25? Were these terms, “this generation” and “His generation” limited to the time and place of Jesus' human lifetime only, or do they, as the other verses quoted above imply, extend to the whole world over the six thousand years allotted to man's self-rule? Just six thousand years? Yet, even in the Millennium, will there not be those who despise and reject Jesus Christ and His rule (Ezekiel 38; Revelation 20:7-8)? Isaiah 53 tells us first that Jesus *is* despised—He still is today! He also tells us that Jesus *was* despised. Has not Jesus in fact been rejected by *all* of mankind?

In addition to His awareness of the rejection of the world, Jesus also knew that even His closest friends were very weak, spiritually, despite all they had witnessed during their association with Him. He knew that they would stumble or be offended because of Him, forsake Him, and scatter like frightened sheep:

Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’” . . . Then He came to the disciples and found

them asleep, and said to Peter, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour” . . . And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. . . . Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. . . . Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. (Matthew 26:31, 40, 43, 50, 56)

Worse still, Jesus knew that one of those closest to Him—and He, of course, knew which one—was in the process of betraying Him:

Now as they were eating, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?” Then He answered and said, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.” (Matthew 26:21-25)

Sudden Sorrow

Although Jesus, after the Passover dinner, was somewhat troubled in spirit because Judas’ act of betrayal was already in progress (John 13:21), it was not until shortly after the group had arrived at Gethsemane that Jesus—apparently quite suddenly—began to be intensely sorrowful and profoundly distressed:

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch

with me.” (Matthew 26:37-38)

The depth of Jesus’ sorrow exceeded that of any man, either before or since these final moments of His human freedom:

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me, which the LORD has inflicted in the day of His fierce anger. From above He has sent fire into my bones, and it overpowered them; He has spread a net for my feet and turned me back; He has made me desolate and faint all the day. (Lamentations 1:12-13)

Note the words “all the day.” Jesus, on this last day of His human life, would be afflicted with utter desolation and faintness. We cannot comprehend the level of incomparable sorrow and distress into which Jesus descended on His arrival at Gethsemane. Our modern ideas of depression do not even come near it. The words “even to death” in Matthew 26:38 strongly suggest that, had He sunk any lower, He would have died right then and there. But He was determined to stay alive because He knew that the time set for His death had not yet come and that, to fulfill all things, He had to carry the sins of the world for several hours more.

We tend to equate agony with great *bodily* pain, but even though no one had physically laid a finger on Jesus at this point, His time of great agony had begun: “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

But why did our Savior suddenly become so very sorrowful? What was in His mind that brought such agonizing sorrow upon Him? Was it because of the despise and rejection by every generation of mankind? Or that His closest friends were either betraying Him or forsaking Him?

Was it because He feared the fast approaching hours of physical torture? Or that He dreaded the blackness of death itself? These may have been factors, but the evidence renders it more likely that the major reasons were these:

- The humanly unbearable weight and pain of the knowledge and burden of seven thousand years of mankind’s sins.
- The horrifying fact that, as the sins of the world were being laid upon Him, He was *actually becoming* the sin of the world (II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13).
- The knowledge that His Father must now turn away from Him because of the sin that He—Jesus—bore and was now becoming.
- The thought of the fast approaching, total separation from His Father.

On this last point, Isaiah 53:8 prophesies that Jesus would be “cut off from the land of the living.” He was to be cut off from His human brothers and sisters who were imperfect, who enjoyed a temporary, physical life, but whose sins had caused His suffering and death. More importantly and painfully for Him, He was to be cut off from communication with His perfect, loving, and eternal Father: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46)

“Forsaken” comes from the Greek verb *egkatalaipo*, indicating that Jesus, in the delirium that preceded His death, was crying out to His Father, “Why have You deserted Me? Why have You left Me behind in this place?”

[TO BE CONTINUED]

—John Plunkett

<http://www.worldwatchdaily.org>

U . S . F O R E I G N P O L I C Y

Since the events of September 11, 2001, which initiated the current U.S.-Islamist tensions, the U.S. has had only marginal success in influencing the geopolitics of the Middle East—until recently. Now, from North Africa through the Middle East and South Asia, even to the “rogue state” of North Korea, the U.S. has had an amazing series of geopolitical successes:

- Saudi Arabia, in order to align itself with the certain victor, began coming into alignment with the U.S. even before the undeclared Iraq war began.
- Iran agreed to inspection of its nuclear programs before the fall of 2003, when it became clear that the U.S. was prepared to create a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq, which would be friendly to Iran.
- In December 2003, with the televised capture of Saddam Hussein, the power of the Ba’athist guerrillas in Iraq appeared to have been broken.
- Shortly thereafter, Libya made the surprising pledge to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program and allow inspections of its weapons sites, and advised other states to do the same. It has also recently had diplomatic meetings with Israel—significant because Libya has never recognized Israel and has condemned Egypt and Jordan for doing so.
- North Korea also made an unusually conciliatory offer to freeze its nuclear program (under certain conditions) and has already allowed some inspectors in. This is at least partially because the U.S. has demonstrated to China that a nuclear-armed Pyongyang would lead to missile defenses in Japan and Taiwan, a potential challenge to China’s hegemony.
- The leaders of India and Pakistan, nuclear-armed rivals at the brink of war in 2002, are beginning formal peace talks. The U.S. says its efforts to push Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to combat terrorism helped move him to seek peace with India.
- In Afghanistan, bickering warlords in a culture of conflicting tribes and languages have come together and produced a rudimentary constitution that holds the promise of a better future.
- Syria, free from the threat of Iraqi oil being shut off, seeks to reopen talks with Israel.
- After 25 years of diplomatic “cold war,” Iran and Egypt have agreed to resume full diplomatic ties.
- Syria and Turkey, with decades of frosty relations and a near-war six years ago, have likewise decided to shore up their ties under the auspices of “shared concerns about the territorial integrity of Iraq.”
- Official U.S. spokesmen have recently stated that 70% of al Qaida has been “neutralized,” and that the U.S. military expects to have Osama bin Laden in custody “by Christmas” 2004.

There is more to each of these events than meets the eye, and it will likely be some time before all of the details and motivations come to the fore. In addition, a great deal of “spin” is involved in the reporting of these dealings. On one hand, it is clearly too early to announce that the enemies of Western interests are “spinning into control.” But on the other, a tremendous amount of geopolitical upheaval is being wrought, and it is impossible to know how these things will ultimately shake out. U.S. foreign policy appears to be effecting great change on its own behalf, but history proves that a period of “peace and safety” usually precedes war and destruction.

Political Correctness (PC)

Ever hear the story about the student who was punished because he built a snowman? Seems his university’s thought-police deemed Frosty to be a “white ‘male icon’ that perpetrates ‘a gendered spatial/social system.’” No joke. A British university actually outlawed building snowmen on campus last winter.

PC is everywhere:

- “Learning disabilities” has become “learning differences” so as not to offend little Johnnie.
 - The BBC has duly notified its employees that they must refer to their “partner” rather than their husband or wife, since those more conventional terms con-
- note the “obsolete belief” that heterosexual marriage is “somehow preferable to other possible models of sexual cohabitation.”
- Some major American newspapers will reject a rental ad if it mentions the property’s “good view” (unfair to the blind), suggests that it is in close “walking distance” to schools (unfair to the lame), or situated on a “quiet street” (unfair to the deaf).

Roger Kimball, in a lecture delivered in Wales, May 2003, asserts that PC stems from today’s intellectuals, those he defines as “characterized by a certain lofty moralism—smug, progressive,

abstract, activist.” They possess a “self-infatuated conviction of virtue.” These “more-enlightened-than-thou” people seek “to bring about a moral revolution by changing the way we speak and write about the world: a change of heart instigated and embodied by a change of language. . . . The secret hope is that by refusing to speak the truth, we can change the truth.” Sacrificed is the common man’s freedom to speak and write; for, “the imperatives of political correctness are at odds with the principles of open debate.” The result? PC becomes an elitist “campaign to legislate virtue, . . . to smother individuality, to barter truth for the current moral or political enthusiasm.”

NEWS AND TRENDS
Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:13)

BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLES OF COUNTING THE COST

Self-renunciation is an indispensable condition of following Christ, required for accurately counting the true cost of allegiance to Him. This condition of full and selfless service to God demands our hearts and minds, not just our bodies. In Luke 14:25-33, two parables and an exhortation urge us to forsake all that we have as a mandatory condition to becoming Christ's disciples. One main lesson is emphasized in these scriptures: the nature and influence of true discipleship.



1. Is that which costs nothing worth anything? Luke 14:25-27.

COMMENT: When King David needed to build an altar to the Lord, he would not accept the free gift of the threshing floor because it cost him nothing (II Samuel 24:21-25). To David, a sacrifice was worthless if it cost the offerer nothing. The discipleship to which Christ calls us means a life of surrender to God's will and sacrifice for His cause. If we count the cost of a full submission to Christ's claim on us, we also must count on His grace and help to become one with Him. His disciples do not make the journey to His Kingdom for free—it costs them their lives.

The costliness of commitment to God's will is seen in the example of Jesus. He requires nothing of us that He Himself has not done. Christ lived with the humiliation and agony that often accompanies living according to the will of God. Both the Father and the Son counted the cost before proceeding with their plan for the salvation of humanity. In being sent into the world, Jesus knew ahead of time what it would take to accomplish the divine goal. He left His Father's house to build His church so that the gates of Hades could never prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

2. What is the significance of the tower-builder? Luke 14:28-30.

COMMENT: This parable contains three principles: 1) The truth is a costly thing; 2) before we enter into God's way of life, we should estimate the cost; and, 3) whatever it costs, it is worth it. Although it pleases Jesus when a person is called and responds with zeal (II Corinthians 7:11), He is far too humble and wise to pride Himself on the numbers of converted. Instead, He cares for quality rather than quantity, and He promotes truth and loathes counterfeits.

A builder who does not count the cost before laying the foundation is humiliated as a disgraceful failure, yet an unfinished life is far more tragic than a rock foundation without a building. Jesus warns, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Thus, failure to count the cost of following Christ results in an incomplete life. "Holding fast to the word of life" is part of the solution for finishing one's life successfully (Philippians 2:16).

3. What is the significance of a king going to war? Luke 14:31-32.

COMMENT: The parable of a king going to war continues the theme of the previous parable: Both must count the cost. The king has to estimate men's lives, as well as money and equipment. He knows he must have resolve and fortitude to

enter the battle. The king represents Jesus, who has already counted *and paid* the cost in His flesh, setting us an example. As King, Jesus must choose just the right people for the battle—those who will listen and obey with determination. He must test the quality of His potential soldiers to determine whether they can be used for such an important task.

The king also represents the saints battling against spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:12). In preparation to be kings in the Kingdom, the saints must also count the cost of their lives. Solomon says, "By wise counsel wage war" (Proverbs 20:18), so with good advice we must enter upon religious dedication. We must be willing to be driven to triumph over Satan, the world, and our own human nature. Perseverance, endurance, willpower, and willingness to sacrifice are all traits of a king in time of crisis.

4. What does Jesus mean by forsaking all? Luke 14:33.

COMMENT: Not only must we count upon forsaking all, we must also be willing to run the full distance to arrive at the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 12:1). In the two illustrations, Jesus teaches that discipleship must include planning and sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). In the first, He instructs that, before a person begins to build, he should be sure he is willing and able to pay the full cost of the project. Similarly, Jesus' followers must be sure they are willing to pay the full price of discipleship.

In the second, He explains that we must be willing to sacrifice pleasures, distractions, material possessions, even family, if we are unable to prevail with them—that is, if they would prevent us from serving God. This principle of sacrifice is essential in the realm of discipleship: One must be willing to give up *everything* for Jesus. Many professing Christians have been unwilling to renounce former, false beliefs. They syncretize God's truth with doctrinal baggage brought from their previous religious fellowships, never quite forsaking the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8; Galatians 1:13-14).

The first parable represents deliberation and adequate preparation, and the second calls for stamina and fighting strength to face a foe with greater strength. In this war against our powerful enemies—Satan, the world, and our human nature—we must be willing to count the cost and to sacrifice. We cannot enter the fray hastily or carelessly, but we must exercise self-control. Paul writes, "Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" (I Corinthians 9:26-27). We will overcome them only with the help of the Spirit of our King.

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