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This edition of the *Peoples Paper* is indexed No. 1 of Volume 100.

The first edition of the *Peoples Paper* was issued on 1 July 1918, which means that, if it continues to be published until 30 June 2018, it will have been published for 100 years. While the first two issues planned for 2017 are in the 99th year of publication, it is considered noteworthy that this edition opens Volume 100 (research indicates that Volume 1 was used for the 6 issues published each month from July 1918 until December 1918; the January 1919 issue opened Volume 2. It is planned, D.V., to reprint the first article of the first edition in the July-September 2018 issue: No. 3 of Volume 101).

Their expectation

One may wonder which subjects were exercising the minds of the publishers almost 100 years ago, and whether they had any expectation that the *Peoples Paper* would continue until Volume 100.

In the early years of the twentieth century some Bible students expected that by, or shortly after, 1915 the present order (kosmos) would be dissolved and God's kingdom would be established. Indeed, a list titled "*Twenty Time Proofs That The Reign of Evil Will Cease and The Earthly Phase of the Kingdom of God Be Established in 1914-1915*" was compiled and distributed prior to 1914. The articles and publications referenced in the list were compiled between 1895 and 1907, which means the earliest of the articles mentioned in the list was written about 20 years before its expected fulfillment, and the latest article was written just 7 to 8 years before its expected fulfillment.

However the events that transpired during the twentieth century, and that are now occurring in the twenty-first century, indicate that evil has not ceased. Indeed a broad scale summary of the evil in the world today may be justifiably interpreted to mean that evil is waxing worse and worse, as Paul warned Timothy: "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own*

elves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth... evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:1-13).

On a national level

While Paul's warning related to the corruption that would characterize many individuals, the same characteristic of unrest and conquest has been evident at the national level in the form of wars. Some of the more significant wars fought during the twentieth century were:

- 1914-1918:** World War I;
- 1915-1918:** Armenian Genocide;
- 1917:** Russian Revolution;
- 1918-1921:** Russian Civil War;
- 1919-1921:** Irish War of Independence;
- 1927-1937:** Chinese Civil War;
- 1936-1939:** Spanish Civil War;
- 1939-1945:** World War II;
- 1950-1953:** Korean War;

In This Issue

Volume 100	1
Global Messiah Happening	3
The Gospel Hope For Young And Old	6
Convention Broadcast	7
A Broken and Contrite Heart	8
God Lives Under the Bed	10
The Children of God	11
Preaching the Word	12

1954-1962: French-Algerian War;
1955-1972: First Sudanese Civil War;
1959-1973: Vietnam War;
1980-1988: Iran-Iraq War;
1990-1991: Persian Gulf War;
1991-1995: Third Balkan War;
1994: Rwandan Genocide.

The nations that fought the wars listed above are nations other than Israel, that is, they are Gentile, and hence the twentieth century may justifiably be considered to be a fulfillment of Joel 3:9-12: *“Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about”*.

In stark contrast to the present situation, the kingdom of God will be a kingdom without war as Psalm 46:8-9 prophesies: *“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire”*. It is not clear how God will *“break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder”*, but one strategy might be energizing the nations to stop manufacturing armaments, as prophesied by Isaiah: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (Isa. 2:2-4).

Israel’s wars in the twentieth century

Both Joel’s and Isaiah’s prophecies relate to the Gentile nations. God’s dealing with Israel was also significant during the twentieth century, not only because the State of Israel was established in 1948 but also because of the struggles that beset the fledgling nation. Some of Israel’s battles during the twentieth century were:

1948: War of independence;

1956: Suez war;
1967: Six day war;
1973: War of Yom Kippur.

A broad view

Yet another interpretation of the events of the twentieth century and how they fit into God’s plan is that the early part of the century was the beginning of the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy. Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a giant man to be the fore-telling of four world empires, in sequence, starting with Babylon and ending with one that would be composed of several dynasties. It was to be in the days of those kings that God would set about setting up His kingdom. Daniel 2:44 reads: *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”*.

Daniel’s prophecy declares that it will be God’s kingdom that will *“break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms”*. The current kingdoms have to be removed before God’s kingdom can be established, and thus it may be understood that World War 1 was the beginning of the removal of those kingdoms. Some historians record that at least 11 kings began to lose their realms as a consequence of World War 1. The kingdoms included the Turkish Ottoman Empire (which had been in power since the fourteenth century), Serbia, Russia, Romania, Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Germany, Austria and Belgium. Thus it may be that the reign of evil, as perpetrated by those dynasties, is continuing to be “gradually” overthrown, and the transition from the previous regimes to God’s kingdom is a process that God will accomplish over a period of time, the length of which is not disclosed in the Scriptures.

God is working out all things

It is now almost 100 years since the first edition of the *Peoples Paper* was issued, and the kingdom for which Jesus taught His disciples to pray—*“Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matt. 6:10)—is not yet a reality. However, whether the events of the last 100 years constitute the first stages of the establishment of God’s kingdom—*“the removing of those things that are shaken”* (Heb. 12:27)—or whether they are the last stages of Satan’s rule, one can be assured that all things are working out God’s plan for the eventual welfare of all mankind: *“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (Rom. 8:20-21).■

“Global Messiah Happening” as Saudi-Iran Conflict Presages Prophesied Nuclear War

“And when ye go to war in your land against the adversary that oppresseth you, then ye shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before Hashem your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies” [Numbers 10:9 (The Israel Bible™)]

Joel 3:1-2 harbours two important elements of God’s plan. It reads: *“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land”*.

The two elements are:

- God has a time schedule; and
- Israel has a special place in God’s plan.

The first element—that God has a time schedule—is entwined in the statement *“in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem”*. The statement is prophetic in that it declares that God would not carry out certain actions immediately but would perform them at a later time.

The second element—that Israel has a special place in God’s plan—is entwined in the statement *“my people and for my heritage Israel”*. As Deuteronomy 7:6-8 declares, Israel is God’s special people: *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”*. Hence it is that God would *“plead for them”*.

Those two elements of God’s plan were manifest at Jesus’ first advent: *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”* (Gal. 4:4). Jesus did not come to earth until God’s appointed time—*“the fullness of time”*—and *“He came unto His own”* (John 1:11)—Israel. And regarding the future, Paul wrote *“God has not cast away His people”* (Rom. 11:2).

Jesus’ coming to earth

Before Jesus came to earth, Israel was made aware of the imminence of Jesus’ coming: *“... the word of God*

came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Luke 3:2-4).

John was not the only one to whom God revealed that the coming of their Messiah was nigh: *“And as the people were in expectation and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ”* (Luke 3:15-16). The expressions *“in expectation”* (Strong G4328: *prosdokaō*: to anticipate) and *“mused in their heart”* seem to indicate that the expectation was widespread and hence it seems unlikely the people were aroused because of John’s preaching alone, but that God revealed the time to others also: *“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel”* (Matt. 2:1-6). God revealed to the wise men that the time had come for the fulfillment of the prophecy He gave to Micah centuries earlier (Micah 5:2). However the Scriptures do not give any detail regarding how God revealed His secret to the wise men.

Israel’s rejection of Messiah

In spite of what God had done for Israel—His special people—in times past, the Israelites did not accept that Jesus was the Messiah: *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not*

see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:37-41).

In that context Romans 11:25-27 is particularly precious because it proclaims that, in His time, God will open the eyes of the Israelites and enable them to recognize their Messiah: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”.

Being fulfilled today?

And so it may be wondered whether today—in 2016-17—the time has come for God to begin the process of revealing their Messiah to the Jews.

The following article is printed with the kind permission of *breakingisraelnews*. It was written by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz on November 8, 2016. Adam made aliyah to Israel in 1991 and served in the IDF as a combat medic. For more information see <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/78225/alliance-israel-saudi-arabia-presage-propheisied-nuclear-war/#YP3cvLvEo0cjX67L.99>. **The text below in bold type has been highlighted by the Peoples Paper to emphasize those statements.**

* * * *

“The aftershocks of the US-brokered deal with Iran concerning their nuclear program have left many political analysts stymied, but **one ancient Jewish source presents a scenario, unthinkable just a few years ago, which is now a strong possibility: a nuclear war between Saudi Arabia and Iran that leaves Israel untouched and makes way for the coming of the Messiah.**

So much is still unclear about Iran and the Middle East, but the Yalkut Shimoni, **a collection of Biblical teachings believed to have been arranged in the 13th century, predicted a scenario that is becoming more relevant as time goes on, anticipating our present political reality.**

Rabbi Yizchok said: “**The year that Melech HaMoshiach [Messiah the King] will be revealed, all the nations of the world will be provoking each other. The King of Persia (Iran) will provoke the King of Arabia (Saudi Arabia), and the King of Arabia will go to Edom (the West) to take counsel, but the King of Persia will in turn, destroy the entire**

world. The nations of the world will be outraged and panicked. They will fall on their faces, and they will experience pains like birth pangs. Israel too will be outraged and in a state of panic and ask, where do we go? But say unto them, ‘My children, do not fear, the time of your redemption has come. And in the last redemption will be different from the first which was followed by further bondage and pain. After this last redemption, you will not again experience any further pain or subjugation.’”

The Yalkut Shimoni predicted a global conflict involving all of the nations. The focus of the conflict, though, will be Iran pitted against Saudi Arabia, resulting in total apocalypse which, in light of today’s weapons technology, would likely be nuclear.

With radical Islam stoking the flames, and the opposing sides of the Islamic world arming up, the nuclear showdown prophesied by the Yalkut Shimoni now looms closer than ever, especially in the wake of a recent clue that **Israel and Saudi Arabia may be approaching an unlikely partnership.**

Just a few weeks ago, Salman Al-Ansari, the founder and president of the Washington DC-based Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee (SAPRAC), made waves when he published an article in *The Hill* suggesting that Israel and Saudi Arabia form an alliance.

Al-Ansari noted many mutual interests (financial, technology, water engineering), claiming that “it is common knowledge that Saudi Arabia and Israel have committed to rational and balanced foreign policies over the past 70 years, never seeking any provocative or hostile actions against each other.”

Al-Ansari stated that the basis of this revolutionary coalition would be a shared threat: “The totalitarian government of Iran which is classified internationally as a global sponsor of terrorism.” Implicit in Al-Ansari’s article is that the catalyst for this new era of cooperation between Israel and the leader of global Sunni Islam is the looming threat of a revived Iranian nuclear program.

Until recently, conflict with Saudi Arabia would not have included a threat of nuclear escalation, since they were not known to have a nuclear weapons program and were a member of the coalition of countries demanding a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East. This changed as a result of the P5+1 agreement brokered by US President Barack Obama last year. In May 2015, *The Sunday Times* of London reported that the Saudis had “taken the ‘strategic decision’ to acquire ‘off-the-shelf’ atomic

weapons from Pakistan amid growing fears of a nuclear-armed Iran.”

Professor Ze'ev Maghen of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic studies agreed that the situation is close to exploding. “Iran and Saudi Arabia are indeed poised with knives at each other’s throats,” he told *Breaking Israel News*. “This can certainly explode, as Saudi Arabia is the leader of Sunni Islam and Iran is the leader of Shi’ite Islam.”

However, he expressed doubt at the idea of an Israeli-Saudi alliance. “I’ve heard reports of cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, but I am not sure how far that can actually go.”

Rabbi Yosef Dayan, a member of the nascent Sanhedrin who can trace his lineage back to King David, thinks that current events fit perfectly into the Yalkut Shimoni.

“The Yalkut Shimoni emphasizes that Messiah is a process that includes the entire world, not just Israel. It involves the entire world,” explained Rabbi Dayan to *Breaking Israel News*.

He emphasized that the prophecy is a prediction of modern, tangible events. “It is not a supernatural process, brought about by angels coming down from heaven,” he said. “These things we hear about in the news, happening between nations, this is the Messianic process unfolding in front of our eyes.”

Rabbi Dayan connected the prophecy to non-Jews outside of Israel who see Biblical prophecy.

* * *

Comment:

While it is recognised that not all of the contentions mentioned in the article above have clear Scriptural support, several of them might indicate that God is beginning to open Israel’s eyes. As the article states: “These things we hear about in the news, happening between nations, this is the Messianic process unfolding in front of our eyes”. It is a process, which means it is not an instantaneous work but it will be accomplished over a period of time. Some statements that indicate God’s time might have come to remove Israel’s blindness are:

- The “strong possibility” of war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, “considered unthinkable just a few years ago”. If war eventuates, will it be a fulfilment (at least in part) of Ezekiel 38:21: “And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother”? In a broad sense, can Saudi Arabia and Iran be regarded as Islamic brothers?

- The statement that one prediction is based on “Biblical teachings from the thirteenth century” raises the question whether it could be a parallel to Daniel 12:4 in that the book has been sealed from Daniel’s time until now?: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased”;
- When Messiah comes “all the nations of the world will be provoking each other”. At the present time there is friction between many countries;
- Adam questions the likelihood of an alliance between Israel and Saudi Arabia, in spite of their seemingly co-operative attitude towards each other. The borders of Arabia are not defined in the Scriptures, there being only seven references to Arabia (1 Kings 10:15; 2 Chron. 9:14; Isa. 21:13; Jer. 25:24; Ezek. 27:21, Gal. 1:17; Gal. 4:25). Hence it is unclear whether the suggestion of Israel and Saudi Arabia coming together **might in any way** relate to Isaiah 19:23-25: “shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria”.
- The prediction that at the time of Messiah’s coming “the nations of the world will be outraged and panicked”. Is that an alternative expression for Luke 21:25: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring”?;
- At that time Israel “will be in a state of panic”. It is difficult to be certain about when all the prophecies concerning Israel will be fulfilled, but maybe this statement reflects Isaiah 26:17-18: “Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD”;
- Another Scripture which might foretell Israel’s fear is Jeremiah 30:5: “And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?”;

Perhaps the message for the students of God’s Word at this time is to heed Jesus’ words: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is... And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:32-37).

Is it possible articles such as the one above are part of God’s way of revealing where the twenty-first century fits into God’s time line?■

THE GOSPEL HOPE FOR YOUNG AND OLD

The previous two articles in this issue focus on change: the changes that have occurred during the last 100 years and the changes that are occurring today in Israel and neighbouring countries. This article focuses on the unchanging gospel, both during the course of an individual's life and throughout history the hope of the resurrection of all who have ever lived is unchanging. The text is almost verbatim of an address given in a convention in Australia some 40 years ago.

* * * *

Young and old alike are to share the blessings of God's kingdom promised to all. Youth in good health and in vigor of life may still find satisfaction to some extent in the present unsatisfactory world ruling conditions, but it still leaves a vacuum, acknowledged or not, to all who have no belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But when we grow old it is different.

Merely to grow old is in itself not a bad thing if one continues to enjoy the faculties of youth. But when our faculties and abilities fail and we require others to assist in the supply of our needs, it is a sombre experience. To lose the sense of independence is a tragedy we all wish to avoid.

Those who read God's Word and have any faith in it know that God has promised a kingdom upon earth wherein all subjects will find complete happiness with good health and provision of all needs without stress or strain.

Isaiah in his prophecy mentioned such in many places. Without referencing them all in full we will use a verse or two which give us a glimpse of this wonderful time to come.

In Isaiah 25:8 we read "He will swallow up death in victory (in other words death will not be allowed to deny the privilege of opportunity to enjoy this time) and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces...". And again in Isaiah 35:1: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, it shall blossom abundantly...". And in verse 5 "the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man shall leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing, in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert...". These verses are telling us that there will be no more droughts or famines and all the afflictive diseases and infirmities of mankind will be healed away.

The 33rd chapter of Isaiah has a lot to say about

conditions leading up to this wonderful time and declares in the last verse "and the inhabitant shall not say I am sick...". Can we imagine a world inhabited by people who will never be sick? According to the last book of the Bible it is going to come!

Revelation 21 from verse 3 onwards reads that when this time comes it can be said that the tabernacle of God will be with men (that is, all his favours will then be poured out upon them), that He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, there will be no more sorrow, or crying, or pain and no more death!

The majority of people still turn away in total unbelief that such a time will ever come upon this earth. But some, although the prospect seems to them to be too good to be true, still have hope that it might be true.

Many say, "it will be wonderful if such a time does come and they will be blessed indeed who live to see it; but what of us elderly ones who are on the brink of the grave, it means little to us".

This is where a knowledge of God's plan and the gospel of the resurrection become so precious. The Scriptures we have been referring to are not picturing events and conditions which will ever take place during the present world order. They refer to a new day that will come in the future. The present life will end in death when each one is laid in the grave.

The joys of the kingdom of God which will be made available to all, do not occur now, for it is Satan's deceptive evil reign we are presently participating in.

Not that there are no present experiences that believers in Christ may now enjoy, but they are experienced midst the tribulations of the present time, and they are related to the hope set before us in days to come. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:19 declare "if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable".

The blessings God has promised to mankind because of the sacrifice of His Son come through a resurrection from the dead. Every person who has ever lived has a right to resurrection, but it is still the same today as it was in the apostle's day—men will listen to a hope or remedy for mankind's ills which can become operational now, through man's effort, but they are not privileged to believe in the resurrection of the dead. It has ever been thus: many in the Apostles' day scoffed at the hope of a

resurrection of the dead: “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Act 4:1-2). A few did not out rightly reject the hope, but it did not influence their present thinking—“we’ll hear you again perhaps some day” (Acts 17:32).

In view of the fact that the Bible so fully substantiates a resurrection from the dead we would echo Paul’s words in Acts 26:8; Why do you think it incredible that God should raise the dead? Did not Jesus himself say “Marvel not at this for the time is coming in the which all that are in their graves will hear my voice and will come forth?” (John 5:28).

Everyone will share in the benefits accruing from resurrection. It doesn’t matter if one died thousands of years ago, or if you only go into the grave tomorrow, all will live again and in vastly different circumstances to those with which they were acquainted in their former life.

So now we meet with the hypothetical question that Paul presented in 1 Corinthians 15:35: How then are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?

Exact detail as to how the dead will be brought back to earth for a new life is not given us, but there are enough assurances in God’s Word to give us faith that it will occur.

Most certainly the literal graves will not be opened to return men and women to this earth with bodies of disability. The old worn out bodies return to the dust as it was from the dust they were first formed (Gen. 2:7). God will give to each a new body as it pleaseth him (1 Cor. 15:37-38).

However there will be one sense in which the dead will return as they were before: they will be brought back to life with the same character they had before. If in this life they had endeavoured to live justly and righteously they will retain that character in resurrection. If they had lived selfishly, were hard hearted and unmindful of goodness they will come back with similar character disposition.

If the teaching of Jesus Christ had prompted the development of character to any degree, it will provide a great start to the new life. If His teachings had been ridiculed and perhaps His name used only in blasphemy, they will come back to the sterner “judgement” (John 5:29; the word “damnation” is incorrect). In such scriptures as Matthew 11:20-24 we see clear intimation that rejection of any light

given in this life for the formation of good character will have a mitigating influence in the day of resurrection; it will be more tolerable for some than others to come into line in the new world where only God’s righteousness will be acceptable.

God is no respecter of persons and he will not be mocked—as a man sows so shall he reap.

In the new world of resurrection, in the day of true judgement the wicked will no longer “prosper as the green bay tree” (Psa. 37:35), as they can now under the rule of Satan; but men everywhere will be obliged to amend wrong character and come into line with the precepts taught by Jesus so that all can prosper and be at peace (Micah 4:3,4): no wars, every man having his own vine and fig tree (ample food requirements is thus pictured) and nothing to make them afraid.

God is all powerful and absolutely just. He is merciful, kind and good, and none will be denied because of ignorance—His requirements for enjoyment of His beneficence will be made clear to all. Every person that has ever lived will receive opportunity to enjoy the “times of restitution” which all the Holy prophets have foretold from the beginning (Acts 3:21). It is the wisest counsel that can be given to young and old: “Fear (reverence) God”, seek to understand his requirements and rest assured that no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

There is of course another very important segment of Gods’ purpose: the call and preparation of His true church during the present time, to become associates of Christ in establishing the “times of restitution” referred to. That work seems nearly complete and because it involves only a small portion comparatively of human kind, this message is sent out to arrest the attention of all who will heed, of the countless millions of those who will soon receive opportunity to enjoy resurrection conditions and the fulfilment of the prayer: “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.■

CONVENTION BROADCAST

The annual convention sponsored by the Berean Bible Institute Inc. is to be held from Friday 20 January through Monday January 23, 2017.

For details and the program see:

www.bbi.org.au/node/374.

The broadcast link for the broadcast will be:

<http://biblestudents.acrobat.com/australia>.

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

“Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds: He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names. Great is our God: His understanding is infinite. The Lord lifteth up the meek. He casteth the wicked down to the ground” (Psalms 147:1-6)

God is the Great One who numbers the stars, whose power and understanding are infinite, yet He deals with mankind in the most compassionate way: *“He healeth the broken hearted”*.

There are several examples in the Scriptures that record God’s dealings with individuals, and their different reactions to those dealings. Consistent with Paul’s instruction to the Romans—*“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom. 15:4)—it is profitable to reflect on those examples, and to realise afresh that God, the Creator of the Universe, is dealing with every individual whom He has called. Such reflection should spur every individual to run the race with increased zeal (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

David

David was one who responded to the lesson God gave him through Nathan the prophet after his transgression with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1-12:13). David acknowledged his transgression and sought the Lord’s forgiveness: *“When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”* (Psa. 51:1-10). David continues his repentance and concludes that the most precious sacrifice of the Lord’s people is a broken and contrite heart: *“For thou desirest not burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psa. 51:16,17). [The word “contrite” occurs only five times in the Scriptures and means ‘bruised or smitten’ (Young’s Concordance).]

Nathanael

David’s yearning for a pure and contrite heart may be attributed to some extent to his realisation of his transgressions. However not every one has to experience such errors; Nathanael was one who had a pure heart, seemingly without having committed any

gross errors: *“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile”* (John 1:46-49). Nathanael’s heart condition was as the Lord desires: *“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”* (Isa. 66:2). Notwithstanding all the honour and glory that is due to God because of His wondrous creation, His greatest treasures are those who have a contrite heart.

Cornelius

The example of Cornelius, a devout Gentile who feared God, reveals that a righteous heart is not solely the province of God’s chosen people of Israel: *“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always”* (Acts 10:1-2).

Not only did God acknowledge Cornelius’ right heart condition but He used him to open the gospel to the Gentiles through the agency of Peter: *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him... While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 10:34-45). Thus began the grafting in of the Gentiles: *“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name”* (Act 15:14).

Peter

Peter was one of Jesus’ disciples but he was given an experience that caused him some anguish of heart: *“The Lord Jesus said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Peter said, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and into death. Jesus said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me... And about*

the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed saying *Of a truth, this fellow was also with him, for he is a Galilean... Peter said, I know not what thou sayest, and immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he remembered the word of the Lord, before the cock crow he would deny him thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly*" (Luke 22: 31-62). That experience broke Peter's heart and maybe it was necessary for him to suffer such an experience because of the work that God had for him later: "*and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*". Peter's experience was both severe and strengthening.

Paul

Paul also experienced anguish of heart, although his trial erupted after the Lord had dealt with him; it related to his actions prior to his conversion. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, taught under Gamaliel, and he persecuted the early church of God beyond measure, even consenting to the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1, 3). Acts 9:1-2 records Paul's actions against the early church: "*And Saul, yet breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem*".

However in the Lord's due time He opened Saul's mind to understand what the Lord had planned for him: "*And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do*" (Act 9:3-6). Such a dramatic experience was a necessary first step to prepare Saul for the work the Lord had planned for him: "*the care of all the churches*" (2 Cor. 11:28).

Paul's experience before his conversion is also a lesson for those who follow after in that it presents an example that nothing is too grave for the Lord to forgive: "*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all*

acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:12-18).

Stephen

The individuals mentioned above experienced personal correction. Stephen was an agent God used to cause others to realise the need for them to change their heart. However the immediate effect was to increase their animosity: "*The elders and scribes came upon him, caught him and brought him before the Council*" (Acts 6:12-7:60). Stephen had recounted Israel's history from Abraham, their exodus from Egypt, their forty years in the wilderness, and their idolatry. And he had rebuked them: "*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted and slain, them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers... When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth... and stoned him*". Although "*they were cut to the heart*", the effect was not to produce a remorseful or repentant attitude; they didn't have a contrite or broken heart. The Christian should ensure they recognize God's chastening, accept they needed correction and modify their character accordingly.

Pentecost

On the other hand those to whom Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost were corrected: "*...at that time there were many devout men, Jews and proselytes, in Jerusalem, who heard these Galileans speak in their own language and were amazed. Others mocked, saying, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, said these are not drunken as ye suppose, for it is the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy...*" (Acts 2:5-17).

Peter went on to tell them about Jesus' life and how they had put Him to death: "*When they heard this they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and*

be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... Then they that received his word were baptised..." (Acts 2: 37-41).

Our day

Thus it is apparent that individuals respond in various ways to the experiences God gives them. In general terms, in our day the majority react as described in Revelation chapters 9 and 16: *"The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hand, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, silver and brass and stone and of wood, which can neither see or hear nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"* (Rev. 9:20-21). Such a reaction is consistent with the warning Paul gave to Timothy: *"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived"* (2 Tim. 3:13). Evil seems to be flourishing in this present evil world, as prophesied in Revelation: *"... they blasphemed the name of God and repented not of their deeds or to give him glory"*. (Rev. 16:9).

Summary

In general terms it may be said that individuals react to God's dealing in either of two ways: either a contrite heart to repent, or to continue in their own determined way. The Christian should be exercised by every experience God gives them to develop a contrite heart. The attitude of a contrite heart should be carried over into all their activities. In that vein Peter exhorted his readers: *"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair and of wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"* (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Although Peter's words were addressed to the women in the ecclesia, the principle applies to the men also: *"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you in due time. He is the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, who knows all the stars by name, who counteth the hairs of our head — who dwelleth with those also who have a broken and contrite heart. He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. He lifteth up the meek"*. Contrition and humility go hand in hand!■

GOD LIVES UNDER THE BED

Kevin was born 30 years ago, mentally disabled as a result of difficulties during birth.

He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7-year-old. He will probably always believe that God lives under his bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas and that airplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them.

Up before dawn each day, he goes off to work at a workshop for the disabled. He does not seem dissatisfied. He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears.

His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be. He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others.

His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue.

Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God.

In my moments of doubt and frustrations with my Christianity, I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions. Kevin has spent his whole life in that kind of innocence, praying after dark and soaking up the goodness and love of God.

It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap. I am. My obligations, my fear, my pride, my circumstances—they all become disabilities when I do not trust them to God's care.

And one day, when the mysteries of heaven are opened, and we are all amazed at how close God really is to our hearts, I'll realize that God heard the simple prayers of a boy who believed that God lived under his bed.

Kevin won't be surprised at all!' —Anonymous
* * *

Kevin's story is simple, and in one sense heart-breaking. Nevertheless it is true of so many who have lived in the past and who are living today.

His acceptance of his situation—albeit largely in ignorance—provides an example and lesson to all who consider themselves to be of some worth. Surely Kevin has a contrite heart!■

THE CHILDREN OF GOD

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26)

There are at least three senses (or concepts) in which the terms “child” and “children” are used in the Scriptures. Distinguishing the difference between them adds to the grandeur of the privilege of being one of God’s church.

Jesus Christ

John 3:16 declares: “... God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus is a child of God.

It is pertinent to note that, in the context of John 3, Jesus is called the “only begotten Son”. Jesus was with God at the very beginning: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (a deity). The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). John clarifies that “the Word” was Jesus: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). [Dr. Strong explains the meaning of the term “the Word” (#G3056) as “the Divine Expression (that is, Christ)”].

It is also pertinent to note that Jesus was “the firstborn of every creature”, and that He was God’s agent in all subsequent acts of creation: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:14-16). Hebrews 1:1-2 confirms that Jesus was God’s agent in creation: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”.

Israel

God regards the nation of Israel also as His child: “Ye are the children of the LORD your God... For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deut. 14:1-2). Israel’s place as a child of God was on the basis of God choosing them, after they existed, in the days of Jacob: “And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Gen. 32:27-28).

The name Israel extended from Jacob to the whole nation: “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod. 19:6).

While God regarded the nation of Israel as His son, their role was that of a servant: “And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deut. 10:12).

The Church

The members of the church are also children of God. Galatians 3:26 (quoted above) states they are children “by faith in Jesus Christ”: Whereas Jesus was the first created Being and hence was the begotten One of the Lord, and Israel were deemed to be sons of God because God chose them to be a special people unto Himself, the church are sons by faith because God has given them of His Spirit: “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

The privilege of the church being sons of God promises the reward of heirship: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (sonship), whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:14-17).

The sonship of the church sets them apart from the sonship of fleshly Israel because fleshly Israel were servants whereas the church are heirs, and have the prospect of being “priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

However the hope of heirship and living and reigning with Christ does not provide any cause for pride because it is God, who “of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18). As John declares: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...” (1 John 3:2).■

PREACHING THE WORD

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2)

The Apostle Paul regarded Timothy as a son: *“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:2).* As such He exhorted Timothy to *“...continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14-15).*

Regarding the Scriptures, Paul continued: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16).*

Every aspect of the Scriptures that Paul listed deserves emphasis. Firstly, that all Scripture is given *“by inspiration of God”*. There is no higher authority than God: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding” (Isa. 40:28).* It is consistent with Him being the creator of the earth that there is *“no searching of His understanding”*. As Paul confirmed: *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?” (Rom. 11:33-34).*

Omnipotence

God is all powerful—omnipotent—as Revelation 19:5-6 declares: *“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:5-6).*

God’s omnipotence cannot be over emphasized. Every benefit to mankind promised in the Scriptures is dependent on God’s omnipotence, that is, His ability to carry out every one of His promises. Those “promises” include the resurrection from the grave of all mankind and the restoration of the earth (to the glory that existed in the garden of Eden?). In summary *“... the times of restitution of all things,*

which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

The fact that God has delegated His power to His glorified Son—*“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18-20)*—has not diminished God’s overall power, as Paul explained to the Corinthians: *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24-28).*

Charge to Timothy

When the supremacy of God, and the fact that the Scriptures have been given by Him, are borne in mind, the authority of Paul’s letter to Timothy takes on an air of substantial importance. Paul wrote: *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ...” (2 Tim. 4:1).* “Therefore”—that is, it was because of the authority of the Scriptures, and that Timothy had known them *“from when he was a child”*—that he “charged” him (that is, commanded him) with the responsibility of preaching “the Word”, that is, the gospel, to all, regardless of the consequences: *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).* ■

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Email: EnquiryBBI@gmail.com

Internet: www.bbi.org.au

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