An Enemy of Israel is Dead

(Another Chance at Peace?)

"Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."
—Psalm 34:14

YASIR ARAFAT, AN ENEMY of Israel is dead. The news media in mid-November kept telling of his illness and closeness to death. He apparently died of liver failure. His funeral in Cairo was orderly, but when the helicopters from Egypt brought him to Ramallah on the West Bank to be buried, there was a mob of followers and worshippers that gave security forces problems in control. The *New York Times* (November 13, 2004) said:

"'An Emotional Funeral for Arafat in Ramallah.' Yasir Arafat was buried in an extraordinary scene of grief and chaos, with thousands of Palestinians climbing the walls of his compound in Ramallah, surging around his coffin and trying to bear it aloft. His coffin was buried in a prepared spot of Jerusalem stone and black-and-green marble in the compound, under five conifers."

Earlier, the *New York Times* spoke of the funeral in Cairo with commentaries:

"It was a state funeral service for a man without a state.

"Speaking at the mosque prayers, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, the grand sheik of Al Azhar and Egypt's highest religious figure, said brief prayers over the coffin as it rested on the patterned black-and-white marble floor. 'He has served his people all his life, until he faced his God, with courage and honesty,' the sheik said. 'Let us pray for his soul.'

PROMINENT STATESMEN

"Most of the pantheon of Arab leaders flew in for the occasion, some landing at the last minute and choosing to overlook often bitter differences with Mr. Arafat. President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and King Abdullah II of Jordan, both of whose fathers had long sparred with Mr. Arafat, attended, as did Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The presidents of Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Sudan and Lebanon were there, along with a host of princes from the royal houses of the Persian Gulf.

"From farther afield, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa came as did the presidents of Indonesia, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. There were a few prime ministers, though European Union nations sent their foreign ministers. The United States sent Assistant Secretary of State William J. Burns.

"Yossi Beilin, dovish Israeli politician and former peace negotiator, said of Mr. Arafat: 'It's very rare when a leader dies, that an era actually does die with him. But in this case, today, it would appear

actually to be true. And the new era depends to a great extent on us, on us and on the Palestinians, and we have a great responsibility.'

"Shlomo Avineri, a philosopher and former Israeli Foreign Ministry official, said Mr. Arafat had failed, unlike Anwar Sadat, to 'reach out to Israelis and address their fears and hopes.' Mr. Arafat was more like Fidel Castro, Mr. Avineri said, 'He gave his people a symbol, but he failed them in real life.'

The *New York Times* also said:

"President Bush, at a joint news conference with Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, said there was a 'great chance' to establish a Palestinian state and that he would invest the authority of the United States to try to accomplish that goal during his second term. Mr. Bush also signaled his intention to mend fences with the European allies."

On the next day, the *New York Times* reported:

"'Assisting Palestinian Elections.' Israel, acting under American encouragement, and in some cases pressure, had quietly taken steps aimed at facilitating Palestinian elections in the next two months, according to American and Israeli officials.

"Yasir Arafat's death brought the Palestinian factions together in a rare display of unity, which the emerging leadership is hoping to cement. But the armed militant groups say they will not agree to any cease-fire as long as Israeli forces remain in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian officials vowed elections within 60 days for a president with the authority to resume peace talks with Israel."

We note the intense desire for the Palestinians to have their own state. They had that opportunity in 1948 when the United Nations partitioned Israel.

The Israelis set up a state and were recognized by the United States and United Soviet Socialist Republic. The Palestinians were told to withdraw from their land as the Arab nations vowed to push Israel into the sea and claim all the land. Wars raged for years, culminating with the six-day war in which Israel gained possession of most of the land. The Palestinians never set up a government and Yasir Arafat became their spokesman and leader.

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Although Arafat won the Nobel peace prize, along with Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, for peace in 1993 at the Oslo Accord, and was known as a negotiator for peace, yet it was known that he encouraged and sponsored the suicide bombers that wrought havoc in Israel. He distinctly became an enemy of Israel. Now that he is gone, everyone wonders if the chances for peace will be better.

The November 22, 2004 issue of *Time* magazine has an article, "After Arafat, What is Next?" They answer that question by saying that it depends upon the new leadership and whether the militant Palestinians will insist on fighting.

A question was raised in the *Time* magazine issue as to where Arafat's money is, and how much is left? It has been estimated that Arafat controlled a three billion dollar financial empire. It is thought that only one billion is left. He used these funds to terrorize Israel.

TRUE PEACE

Bible Students know that the only one who can bring true peace is our Lord Jesus. Biblical prophecies tell how Israel will receive their Messiah who

they rejected so freely at his First Advent. One of these says, "He cometh with clouds [trouble]; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."—Rev. 1:7

Before this blessing can come to Israel they have to endure some very difficult experiences. We read, "The day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zech. 14:1,2) Then the prophecy tells of a change that comes. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."—vs. 3

The details of this change are given earlier by Zechariah when he wrote, "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of

Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

"In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; and the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the

families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." (Zech. 12:1-14) The important part of this prophecy tells how Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah.

ISRAEL NOT REJECTED

The Apostle Paul, in telling of Israel's rejection in Romans, chapters 9 to 11, makes it plain that they have not been rejected forever. He quotes two beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament, Isaiah 59:20 and Psalm 14:7. As he said in Romans 11:26, "All Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." As Paul said it was written, we read in Isaiah 59:20, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD," and in Psalm 14:7, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

The Deliverer is the Christ, head and body, so we know this prophecy will not be fulfilled until the church is complete. It will be then that the Prince of Peace will establish true peace for Israel, and all nations. Glory to Jesus and to our wonderful Heavenly Father for his plan of mercy and love. ■

"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 of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

—Romans 11:33,36

"By love serve one another."—Galatians 5:13

Let us judge of our love for others, for the Lord, for the brethren, for our families, for our neighbors, for our enemies even, by our willingness to sacrifice in their interest and for their highest welfare. If we find ourselves sacrificing nothing in the interest of the Lord's cause, let us not delude ourselves by saying that we love the Lord. If we find ourselves unwilling to endure, to sacrifice in the interests of the brethren and others dear to us, let us not mistake the matter and call it love. If we find ourselves unwilling to do kindness even to our enemies when they are in need, let us make no mistake; for the Lord hath declared that a course of goodness and mercy and self-denial is the only index of a loving heart.

—January 22, *Songs in the Night*