Violence Will Cease: The Branch Will Sprout

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." —Zechariah 3:8

THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH, writing many centuries ago, spoke of the future time when our Lord Jesus will rule over the affairs of the human family in the glorious capacity of two offices, as both priest and king. The prophet again wrote, "Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Behold, a man whose name is Branch [sprout, *Marginal Translation*], for He will branch out [sprout up, *MT*] from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD."—Zech. 6:12, *New American Standard Bible*

This wonderful promise is yet in process of fulfillment as we further read, "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."—vs. 13, *NASB*

TWO OFFICES

Zechariah's words were addressed to the literal high priest, Joshua, who was the son of Jehozadak. He served the people of Israel as their first high priest over the repatriated nation, following their return from Babylonian exile. (Hag. 2:2-4) Zerubbabel was the first governor of the liberated Jews when they returned from Babylonian captivity. (vs. 21) He was also a descendant of King David, and an ancestor in the lineage of our Lord Jesus' birth as a perfect man.

The Israelites did not realize that each of these two men—their high priest and king—served as important types that portrayed the combined offices of our glorified Lord Jesus in his role as king and high priest, during the administration of his future kingdom and rule over all the nations of the world.

This future time was also foreseen by the Prophet Isaiah, when he wrote, "In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."—Isa. 4:2

SEPARATE FROM SINNERS

This wonderful scene will become a reality as a result of the earthly ministry that was accomplished by the Master at his First Advent nearly two thousand years ago. Jesus had not been born

of the old and decaying lineage of Adam, but by the wonderful wisdom and working power of our loving Heavenly Father. He had produced a new 'sprout' with fresh life and vitality, and he had come among fallen men to save them from their inherited penalty of sin and death.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this marvelous grace when he wrote, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [evermore, *Marginal Translation*] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25) Jesus had come to save the fallen race and was the only one who could accomplish this stupendous task. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (vs. 26) He had none of the defilements that are common to the rest of mankind, but was a new sprout of life.

THE ROD OF STRENGTH

Of this glorious time, we note the words of the psalmist David who proclaimed, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."—Ps. 110:1-4

The Heavenly Father will have prepared at his right hand a throne for our dear Lord Jesus who is to reign in power and great glory. We look forward

to this long-held promise while the great work of the kingdom is in preparation for the future blessing of mankind.

The glorious future rule of 'the Branch' and his kingdom of righteousness is reflected in Israel's typical roles of king and high priest. Our Lord Jesus will soon assume power and authority over the affairs of mankind under the administration of his glorious kingdom of righteousness and truth.

EARTH'S PRESENT RULERSHIP

Many people today are watching with much fear the chaotic scenes of misery and woe that are present in our world, and they continue to wait, largely in ignorance, for the time when our Lord Jesus will assume the ultimate power and purpose as arranged by our loving Heavenly Father.

The Middle Eastern nations are constantly in the news as the situation grows more desperate to find a way for peace and stability. In the meantime, conditions of everyday life continue to deteriorate and an ever violent scene escalates. This is particularly true in Iraq and Afghanistan.

WORLDWIDE TERROR REPORT

This situation is brought to our attention in a news item that was published by the *Los Angeles Daily News* (April 28, 2007) under the caption "Worldwide Terror Attacks Up." The article was submitted by staff writers Warren P. Strobel and Johnathan S. Landay. They related to the State Department's recent report on terrorism that indicated that there was a 30% increase, including more than 14,000 worldwide attacks, over previous years, mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The staff writers wrote, "The annual report's release comes amid a bitter feud between the White House and Congress over funding for United States troops in Iraq and a deadline favored by Democrats to begin a United States troop withdrawal. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her top aides, earlier this week, had considered postponing or downplaying the release of this year's edition of the terrorism report, officials in several agencies and on Capital Hill said. Ultimately, they decided to issue the report on or near the congressionally mandated deadline of Monday, the officials said. 'We're proceeding in normal fashion with the final review of this and expect it to be released early next week,' State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said.

"A half-dozen United States officials with knowledge of the report's contents, or the debate surrounding it, agreed to discuss those topics on the condition they not be identified because of the extreme political sensitivities surrounding the war and the report. Based on data compiled by the United States intelligence community's National Counterterrorism Center, the report says there were 14,338 terrorist attacks last year, up 29% from 11,111 attacks in 2005. 45% of the attacks were in Iraq. Worldwide, there were about 5,800 terrorist attacks that resulted in at least one fatality, also from 2005. The figures for Iraq and elsewhere are limited to attacks on noncombatants and don't include strikes against United States troops.

"Even after this year's report was largely completed and approved, Rice and her aides this week called for a further round of review, in part to avoid

repeating embarrassing missteps of recent years in the report's release, officials said. The review process is being led by Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, formerly the nation's intelligence czar. The United States intelligence community is said to be preparing a separate, classified report on terrorist 'safe havens' worldwide, and officials have debated whether Iraq meets that definition.

IRAQ: THE CENTRAL FRONT

"President Bush and his aides routinely call Iraq the 'central front' in Bush's war on terrorism and likely will say that the preponderance of attacks there and in Afghanistan prove their point. But critics say the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq have worsened the terrorist threat. The contention by Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney that Al-Qaida terrorists were in Iraq and allied with the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein before the invasion has been disproved on numerous fronts."

THE VOICE OF TERROR

It is well known that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was either the mastermind of, or directly involved in, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City in September, 2001. He has also played a direct role in other Al-Qaida terrorist conspiracies in various places. He was hunted down and captured in Pakistan four years ago and subjected to harsh interrogation. He has recently admitted his role before a military tribunal at the American base at Guantanamo, Cuba. He is reported to have said, 'I was responsible for the 9/11 operation from A to Z.'

As the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks draws near without a similar or even worse attack on United States soil, many Americans have grown complacent concerning the possibility of new and greater threats to our society. The scale of horror on that day makes it difficult to continue viewing the catastrophe as the work of a few determined terrorists. K. S. Mohammed reminds us that the future holds dangers from others who share his faith-based hatred against the United States and other Western nations. His rationalization for his actions are appalling. He has compared the mass murder of innocent people at the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon Building in Washington, D. C. to the War of Independence conducted by George Washington against England. Furthermore, bogus apologies have been offered on behalf of terrorist activities worldwide.

By whatever name it may be labeled, whether militant Islam, Islamic fascism or a clash of civilizations, they have declared war on the United States and other Western nations. This is not a figment of President George Bush's imagination, and neither is it a byproduct of the Iraq war. Americans may disagree as to how to deal with the present situation, but the existence of a very cruel confrontation is undeniable. So is the willingness of its adherents to kill and die for their cause. Although the passage of nearly six years since the devastation of 9/11 may be fading away to memory, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's confession to the crime has brought the dangerous possibility of other more deadly terrorist attacks against America and its people on their own soil.

VIOLENCE ON TV

Studies have been conducted in recent years in an attempt to demonstrate a link between violent images shown on television and an increasing aggression in children. The message seems clear that the more violence children watch on television, the more aggressive they become, especially at school. During the past several years during which violence has been increasing, television executives have objected to the suggestion that there was a link, but it is now admitted by many that the correlation is undeniable.

The psychologist Leonard Eron, who died in May, 2007 at the age of 87 years, conducted a landmark research project during recent years to help establish a link between images shown on television and the rising tide of aggressive behavior in children. His research started a trend that has led to a substantial influence in public interest, but has not had a dramatic effect as yet on government policy. Nearly every major public policy organization that is interested in children's health has opposed exposing children to media violence.

During the early years of Eron's research, the field of mental health was little understood and parents were apprehensive to participate in the study. When it was learned that it only involved simple questions involving the habits of television viewing in young people, parents began to relax. Extensive interviews were conducted involving school age children, and it was found that young boys who showed no evidence of aggressive behavior and watched violent acts on television, were more likely to become aggressive by the time they graduated from high school.

These and other findings of the study were submitted to the Surgeon General who in turn brought them before the Congressional Committee of the United States. This was the start of a long-lasting debate over the matter. Eron continued to observe his subjects as they became adults, and found that some who had developed aggressive traits as younger children had police records for felony assaults, drunk driving and speeding. He also said that aggressive children were more likely to have grown up to work in blue collar jobs, to be unemployed or to have spent time in jail. He pointed out that kids learn a certain behavior pattern that usually sticks with them. Eron's research contradicted the previously held belief that aggressive children grew up to be 'successful go-getters.'

LEARNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Prophet Isaiah looked forward in time to the establishment of a new world order under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. Concerning that time he wrote, "In the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:8,9

We are blessed by the wonderful promises of God which is 'the desire of our soul' and portrays the ultimate hope for the faithful body of Christ. They will share with Jesus in the great work of raising up the world of mankind in the kingdom. Each called

one has been inspired as reflected in the prophet's words, 'with my soul have I desired thee in the night.' This call has been offered to the footstep followers of our Lord Jesus during the present Gospel Age. It has been a nighttime of sin and death, and the faithful continue to 'seek thee early' as the new millennial morning draws near. The glorified Christ will administer justice—'when thy judgments are in the earth'—and all will be given ample opportunity to walk in the ways of holiness because 'the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.'

IT SHALL COME TO PASS

Our loving Heavenly Father, through the writings of his servant Isaiah, has given us a preview of his ultimate purpose and glory concerning the world of mankind. All peoples and nations of mankind will be taught the ways of Truth and righteousness. In beautiful symbolism, the prophet has thus written, "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

In this wonderful passage of scripture, we are given a glimpse of the time when the last member of the faithful body of Christ will have passed beyond the veil of death into the glorious house of God. The Apostle Paul was speaking of this time when he wrote, "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:6) Christ's kingdom will be established in the top of the mountains, and will operate as the chief ruling power over all other earthly kingdoms. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (Matt. 5:14) The 'house of the God of Jacob' represents the church or the temple of the LORD that will be established over the people of earth.

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

We also see the two phases of Christ's kingdom as shown in 'Zion'—the spiritual phase of the glorified church—with our Lord as the Head, and the 144,000 faithful members of his body. (Rev. 14:3) The church will administer the law of God, and they will then be in control over the affairs of men for the correction and lifting up of the sin-cursed world of mankind.

'Jerusalem' represents the earthly phase of the kingdom which will be under control of the faithful worthies of old. (Isa. 1:26) The psalmist identifies this group when he wrote, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." (Ps. 45:16) Paul puts in perspective these faithful servants of God who lived before the First Advent of our Lord Jesus. These will be the earthly representatives of the kingdom.

"These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:39,40) They will be the earthly 'princes' through whom the laws of the kingdom will be taught to the world of mankind.

NO MORE WAR

During the time of Christ's future kingdom all unrighteousness will be destroyed, and many people will be rebuked. At that time, the nations will learn to beat their weapons of war into 'plowshares' to be used for useful and more meaningful purposes. Nothing will hurt nor destroy during the kingdom rule and all unrest will be taken away. The peoples and nations of earth will no more raise their swords against their neighbor and war will cease forever.

NO MORE VIOLENCE

With violence and corruption manifest everywhere in our present world, we yearn for the promised better day of tomorrow when our blessed Lord Jesus and the faithful members of his spiritual bride class will share in blessing all the families of the earth. The prophet pointed forward to that time when he wrote, "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."—Isa. 60:18 ■

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will toward men."—Luke 2:14